Modalities of Desire

Representations of Sadomasochism in Popular Music

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Introduction

Fairytales of Slavery: Narrating Sadomasochism in Popular Music

The S&M world is a secret world. It has been described as a “velvet underground.”
(Weinberg 1995: 22)

In 1967, the band The Velvet Underground released their first album, *The Velvet Underground and Nico*. The lyrics on the album dealt with a palette of topics including sex, drugs, and narcissism, and also showed some very interesting theatrical traits. Among the songs was “Venus in Furs”, whose lyrics were based on the singer/songwriter’s reading of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s novella by the same name. In the song’s narrative, the band’s singer Lou Reed performs a persona which comes across as a composite of the various characters in the story, but also with the detached attitude of an external narrator. By staging a story of domination and submission, where the range of emotions stretches from scornful laughter to the mention of “different colors made of tears”, Reed creates a narrative that works on several levels, and therefore is able to inject an ambiguity into both the story and the narrative voice. When the narrator commands Severin down on his bended knee, we cannot tell for sure who plays the role of the person who tells him to “taste the whip”.

This was an unprecedented exhibition of sadomasochistic aesthetics in popular music. Earlier occurrences were mostly unsubtle, either in a context of love songs (The Crystals’ ”He Hit Me (It Felt Like A Kiss)”, 1962) or comedy (Tom Lehrer’s “The Masochism Tango”, 1959). While the latter example suggests that the record-buying audience was indeed familiar with a term such as “masochism” in the late 1950s, the Velvets’ music was a definite step up the educational ladder. With “Venus in Furs”, the Velvets demanded attention from their audience, not just to the music, but also to the surrounding elements: literary influences, sexual ambiguity, the theatricality and theatricalisation of identity politics.
In retrospect, “Venus in Furs” marks a turn in popular music on several levels. Recorded and released during the years when The Beatles abandoned the concert halls and opted to explore the possibilities of the recording studio with albums like *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and The Beach Boys made similar progress with orchestral pop of *Pet Sounds* and *Smiley Smile*, the Velvets’ track stands out with its austere sound (one guitar, bass, a stripped-down drum kit, and a viola perform the backing track for Reed’s disinterested, almost monotone vocals), which is more reminiscent of the live-in-the-studio aesthetics of the garage rock of the preceding decade. Their connection with pop artist Andy Warhol made them part of a larger context where art, film and music were juxtaposed by Warhol in his *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like Factory studio. Richard Middleton describes this as “a center for a ‘postmoral’ philosophy of sexuality and of a brand new form of performativity – a sort of cool, indeed blank narcissism” (2006: 101). The notion of blank narcissism recalls Fredric Jameson’s theory of “blank parody”, or “parody that has lost its sense of humour” (see McClary 2000: 140), a trait that could also be indicative of the growing pains of popular music, especially with regard to the Velvets. As Matthew Bannister observes, “Andy Warhol took [Phil] Spector’s combination of the disembodiment, ‘distance’ and refinement of high culture with the ‘immediacy’ of mass cultural forms like rock and roll several stages further” (2006: 40).

Given Lou Reed’s mastery of detachment, decadence and sexual ambivalence during his solo career in the 1970s, the aforementioned turn was in no small way informed by changing attitudes to gender and sexuality, an ability on the part of popular music which would also enable groups like Blue Öyster Cult to play with notions of subversive sexuality in the 1970s, and engender a cornucopia of variations on the twin theme of gender and sexuality by the time bands like Depeche Mode broke through to the masses in the 1980s.

This also had important implications for the construction(s) of masculinity in popular culture. Middleton points to the fact that one of Warhol’s affiliates, the photographer Robert Mapplethorpe, would document the gay S/M subculture of New York (2006: 101) at roughly the same time that Reed would cultivate his androgynous 1970s persona in the spotlight. This androgyny was informed by the professed bisexuality of
contemporaries like David Bowie, leading to the notion that “by the mid-’70s an image of bisexuality was decidedly cool” (ibid.). Such an ability to blur the boundaries between sexualities was certainly part of the evolution into the 1980s, when, as Stan Hawkins has suggested, “the emergence of the male pop artist was contextualized by representations of a more sensitive, less macho type” (2006: 280) than the rock musician of the 1970s. Even so, the 1980s was also the decade of artists like Prince and Madonna, who would themselves challenge gender norms and contribute to the deconstruction of heteronormative stereotypes.

Any such norms will be contingent on the pointing out and the policing of deviations from the perceived norm. This policing is acted out through the double mechanism of normalising and pathologising, where the deviant Other is identified and categorised as non grata. Such assumptions rest on basic notions of difference: As Sander Gilman writes of the Others, “[w]e assign them labels to set them apart from ourselves” (1985: 15). The display of images of gender and sexuality since the Velvets has, without doubt, developed accordingly in the years since “Venus in Furs”. As the researcher Margot D. Weiss suggests, “[m]ainstream media representation of alternative sexualities, including [sadomasochism], has increased dramatically in the last 20 years” (2006: 104). This would imply that such representations of sadomasochism “have shifted from images of the shocking, dangerous other to representations both pathological and normal” (ibid.). If the taste of the whip has become mainstream, we do indeed have a lot to catch up on.

Seen from the perspective I take in this thesis, The Velvet Underground expose and utilise strands of sadomasochistic imagery and theatrics that are also found in my examples: the narrative, literary or otherwise (Blue Öyster Cult), the deconstruction of masculinity (Depeche Mode), and the aestheticisation of violent acts (Naked City). These may be employed in a number of ways, but one common trait in all of them is the potential to render visible the fluidity and constructedness of hegemonic ideas of masculinity. As Bannister observes in regard to the “cool” bisexuality of artists like Reed and Bowie, “[h]omosexuality and androgyny were, for Bowie and the other glam rockers, personae that could be employed, but also taken off again” (2006: 45). This is a crucial observation because it exposes how the signifiers of sexuality may be employed. Constructing oneself as androgynous and employing “homosexual”
signifiers is not without its problems: as Philip Brett has pointed out, it could encourage severe policing “by offering a view of gay identity, and furthermore desire, as merely a cultural production – with the notion that this production can simply be unproduced, erased, silenced” (Brett 1994: 10). Brett’s words of warning are heeded by Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston, who point out that an inversion of dominant narratives of gender and heterosexuality “interrupts a linear continuity among gender, heterosexual norms, and human sexuality by showing how heavily heterosexuality and gender depend on gay identities to idealize, humanize and naturalize their own definitions” (1995: 5). With this in mind, I would argue that Reed’s and Bowie’s employment of androgynous personae has provided them with an insight into how masculinity is constructed, and a flexibility as to how it is acted out.

Just as problematic is the eroticisation of pain and violence which is part and parcel of popular depictions of sadomasochistic acts. Despite all efforts on the part of S/M researchers and practitioners to explain the phenomenon as having a nonsexual purpose (e.g. Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 3, McClintock 2004: 239, Weinberg and Kamel 1995: 19), the practice of sadomasochism as violent acts is chained (or, perhaps more appropriately, handcuffed) in the mind of the general public to sexual pleasure thanks to pioneering books such as Venus in Furs and its contemporary counterparts such as Marquis de Sade’s Justine. Even though the book originates in the literary tradition of decadence, the marketing of the book in English-speaking markets as “a classic literary statement on sexual submission and control”1 and in its recent Norwegian translation as “a pornographic classic” (Sacher-Masoch 2002) are both significant of the focus on violence in sexuality in the reception of S/M imagery in popular culture – a familiar theme of male dominance and female submission.

What I propose in this thesis is that popular music can create or contribute to creating alternatives to gendered behaviour and our experience of sexuality as it is influenced and shaped by images of sexuality and gender conveyed through popular culture. In a heteronormative society, the concept of sadomasochism arguably provides us with one of the most powerful representations of sexual Otherness, while also apparently

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1 Amazon.co.uk, URL: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Venus-Penguin-Classics-Leopold-Sacher-
Masoch/dp/0140447814/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1200344793&sr=1-1 (downloaded 14 January 2008)
making the eroticisation of pain and violence available to us through emphasis on the theatricality of sadomasochistic play. This is not new – some forty years ago, the Velvets brought the message “taste the whip” to the general public through popular music. Weiss pinpoints this with her observation that sadomasochistic imagery “has saturated popular culture, and in this saturation, SM has come to mean something more mainstream and less risqué, more conventional and less exotic” (2006: 104). This mainstreaming of “kink” is certainly contingent on a corresponding de-saturation of its subversive potential. My aim is not to find out whether the medium of popular music may offer up different ways of retaining that potential, but rather how this would be achieved.
Chapter One

Modalities of desire: Traits of sadomasochism in popular music

[The images within which the subject “finds” itself always come to it from the outside.
– Kaja Silverman (1992: 6)

In popular culture we are surrounded by a multitude of images that are not necessarily relevant to us in our daily life. Nevertheless it is uncanny that representations of gender and sexuality inform our perception of ourselves and of others. In no uncertain terms these images shape our own performance of gender and our construction of sexuality, contributing significantly to how we perceive the world around us. The conditions for gendered behaviour that shape our identities adhere to a set of similar codes and conditions. In a predominantly heteronormative culture, specific cultural and social conditions regulate perceptions and hegemonic assumptions of “normality”. As musicologist Ruth Solie puts it, when we perceive deviations from such norms, “[t]here is a kind of circular relationship between ideology and representation, in which each creates and reinforces the other” (Solie 1993: 12f). Consequently, normality appears as “the neutral structuring of a threatening chaos, void of normativity” (Sirnes 2006: 122). In this way, the myriad of images and representations mediated in our everyday lives has a double effect by conveying influential images of something exciting or Other while serving to maintain that which we perceive as a normal condition.2

My application of the term “Other” throughout indicates that any idea of normality is contingent upon notions of difference. Accordingly, perceptions of images and representations of sexuality and gender are invariably bound up in the construction and performance of identity. Arguably a result of the individual’s negotiations with one’s surroundings, identity is performatively constituted and inseparable from the context in which we participate and operate. In this respect, as Stan Hawkins asserts,

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2 Stan Hawkins has discussed a similar trait in his consideration of queer masculinities in mainstream culture. Hawkins argues that male queering “seeks entry into mainstream culture through acceptance as much as resistance” (2006: 279). This is also valid for my arguments about the twin mechanisms of normalisation and pathologisation throughout this thesis.
it "might be considered as flexible and free-floating and not divided into clearcut groups: women and men" (Hawkins 2002: 13). Within the context of popular culture, sexual identity might be perceived as an a priori quality which is given, stable, and immutable. As Thomas Laqueur has observed,

>[s]ex, like being human, is contextual. Attempts to isolate it from its discursive, socially determined milieu are as doomed to failure as the philosophe’s search for a truly wild child or the modern anthropologist’s efforts to filter out the cultural so as to leave a residue of essential humanity. And I would go further and add that the private, enclosed, stable body that seems to lie at the basis of modern notions of sexual difference is also the product of particular, historical, cultural moments. It too, like opposite sexes, comes into and out of focus. (Laqueur 1990: 16)

Here, Laqueur opens up a possibility for us to make inroads into considering the constructedness of sexual identity, and how such a construction might take place in terms of our perceptions of sex, and of gender and sexuality. I would suggest that in cultures of plurality and increased permissiveness, notions of “normality” take on a stronger significance. For to perceive oneself as “normal”, the individual needs to exercise a permanent readiness to perceive external signals. In other words, the individuals of normality are always oriented towards, and judged by, the external, the surface (Sirnes 2006: 123). This opens up a discussion of the world of fashion as a disseminator of images and representations, a point I will return to below.

Any discussion of the term “sex” needs to address the notion of ”gender” in order to scrutinise the social construction of these twin terms. As Judith Butler points out, ”the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subjct is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex” (Butler 1990: 9f). In Butler’s radical deconstruction of the sex/gender divide in Gender Trouble, she theorises that “perhaps ’sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (op.cit. 10f). While Butler’s theories have been criticised by a
number of scholars and modified by herself in recent years,\(^3\) her views on the sex/gender divide assume significance with respect to my discussion.

A Butlerian position can be further illuminated by exploring how the troubles of gender can also affect the ”opposite”, in terms of a need for consolidation. In another investigation of gender as both the product and the process of “social technologies”, Teresa de Lauretis points out some important factors. In her view, gender is “(a) representation”, but not at all without implications; in fact, on the contrary, “[t]he representation of gender is its construction”, a construction which is as old as all of Western art and culture (1987: 3, emphasis in original). De Lauretis also makes the pertinent observation that while it becomes the subject of academic scrutiny, ”the construction of gender is also effected by its deconstruction; that is to say, any discourse … that would discard it as ideological misrepresentation” (ibid.). Taken as a factor in the dissemination and representation of heteronormative ideology, the construction of gender as ”normal” or ”natural” may well be reinforced by any attempts at deconstructing it. This is also not without its problems as it validates hegemonic representations of gender-ness, since both gender and sexuality tend to be perceived as indispensable parts of the holistic Self – the ”I” – that we establish in our daily interaction with popular culture.

The point I wish to make is that as soon as sexuality is perceived as an essential and indispensable part of our identity, ”gender” is in danger of becoming invisible, of being regarded as an immutable component of our identity; a cardinal point of the compass by which we navigate as individuals. As Kath Albury asserts, “[l]ike heterosexuality, pop culture often seems to be both ubiquitous and straightforward: a case of what we see is what we get” (2002: x). In a heteronormative society, the technologies of gender (as well as those of sex) therefore need to be rendered invisible in order for people to be able to perceive gender and sexuality as stable components of their identity rather than performative aspects of identity politics, something which controls them rather than vice versa. This would not only naturalise sexual difference and the idea of biology as destiny, but also serve to disguise humour

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\(^3\) One especially thorough critique of Butler’s theories in *Gender Trouble* worth mentioning, even though it is not readily relevant from a musicological point of view, is made by Toril Moi (1998) in *Hva er en kvinne? Kjønn og kropp i feministisk teori* (also available in English as *What is a Woman? And Other Essays*, Oxford University Press), Oslo: Gyldendal, pp. 53–121.
and play as components of sexuality, replacing them instead with the gravity and constraints of normality.

Such an orientation also relies on notions of difference. As Hawkins makes clear, “[g]iven that patriarchal male identity is acquired through the idea that biology is destiny, patriarchal culture can never exist in isolation” (2002: 13). The point here is that the dominant group “must set itself apart, from what it is not, in order to seek that which it wishes to be” (ibid.). This is indeed the juncture where popular music enters the discourse: “How we experience sound, how we respond to it, how we engage in it through various forms of participation (listening, performing and dancing) is inextricably tied to the question of one’s own identity” (op.cit. 15). This would highlight not only the importance of music in identity politics, but also the role of popular music as medium for representations of gender and sexuality. Susan McClary sheds further light on this: “The codes marking gender difference in music are informed by the prevalent attitudes of their time. But they also themselves participate in social formation, inasmuch as individuals learn how to be gendered beings through their interactions with cultural discourses such as music” (1991: 7f). The important issue here, which Hawkins builds on, is “not only one of interpreting the links between music and identity within a specified space, but also of working out the coded features of music in relationship to the socially constituted forms of identity in question” (Hawkins 2002: 16). This would imply that popular music serves not only as a vehicle for normative or hegemonic images, but also as an arena for alternatives to hegemonic constructions of gender and sexuality within a cultural framework that makes it intelligible.

How, then, does popular music create or contribute to establishing alternatives to gendered behaviour and our experience of sexuality from the way sexualitites and gender are conveyed through popular culture? Throughout this thesis, I will attempt to answer this question by analysing songs by three bands or artists, all of which take up the subject of sadomasochism. This is grounded in my view that the aesthetics of sadomasochism provide us with one of the most powerful representations of sexual Otherness, while also eroticising pain and violence through an emphasis on the theatricality of sadomasochistic (fore)play.
To this end, I intend to present analyses of three musical examples, all of which, I will argue, can be placed within a context of popular music: one song each by Blue Öyster Cult and Depeche Mode, and a small selection of songs by Naked City. In order to see how these examples can take on significance in a discussion of representations of sadomasochism in popular music, I also identify four potentially problematic areas, formulated as what I regard as four pertinent questions to the text:

- How can popular music draw on various cultural sources in order to create representations of sadomasochism legible to us?
- Why does popular music mediate impressions of a masculine position in a narrative through representations of sadomasochism?
- To what extent does popular music function as an arena for playing out alternatives to a hegemonic version of gendered behaviour and normative sexuality?
- How can popular music create or reinforce our perception of pain and violence in sadomasochism, and (un)mask the aestheticisation of violence?

In my attempt to address these questions, I will set out to deconstruct the representations of sadomasochism in the above-mentioned three separate examples. My goal is thus to uncover the workings of popular music as a function for staging alternatives to hegemonic masculinity and gendered behaviour.

**Sadomasochism: The eroticisation of pain**

[Pop music is, first and foremost, about sex.]

The sexualisation of S/M in popular culture

From the outset I wish to argue that it is vital to take a close look at sadomasochism and how this can be identified as a cultural artefact. The phenomenon referred to as

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4 Mick Brown, on Prince’s 21-show run at the O2 Arena in London; *Daily Telegraph*, 20 December 2007, p. 28.
sadomasochism, which I will refer to from now on chiefly as S/M,\(^5\) has been described within gender studies as “… a combined term that has traditionally been used for the giving and receiving of pain for erotic gratification” (Weinberg and Kamel 1995: 15). Thomas Weinberg and Levi Kamel here emphasise a very important point, namely the presence of eroticism in S/M, or vice versa: As I will argue in the following pages, S/M as cultural artefact and popular representation is always already linked to the function of generating erotic pleasure.

Despite assertions that S/M is not necessarily sexual (Kleinplatz & Moser 2006: 2f), any discourse on gender and sexuality needs to place emphasis on the playing out of sexual preferences and urges. The discourse I present inevitably entails the expression of lust and desire and their goal of pleasure, as the question of sexual practice always surfaces. Therefore, the question of desire becomes central to any discussion of S/M. This underpins the point I wish to labour: that sadomasochism \textit{qua} bodily practice in a context of popular culture, meaning a context where it will have to be made legible to a broader public, is \textit{always already} sexualised. One important factor is the element of pleasure in the aestheticisation of pain; another is the fact that as long as we read S/M in a context of pleasure, it is not separated from a discourse of deviance from sexual norms, and thereby not sufficiently independent of the norm of sexual reproduction.\(^6\)

Sadism and masochism: A historical overview

The two terms that make up the composite term sadomasochism – sadism and masochism – have their origin in the field of literature. The former is named after Marquis de Sade, whose novels “were intended to describe forms of sexual diversion”

\(^5\) Scholars and writers use several abbreviations of “sadomasochism”, including S/M, SM, and S&M. I have chosen the variant “S/M” because, from my point of view, it spells out both a tension and a distinction. These are traits that are not sufficiently visible in variants like SM (which veils the tension to a certain degree, as it creates an impression of the terms as always already juxtaposed and equal) or S&M (which indicates a mutual dependence on the other for sadomasochistic “interaction”).

\(^6\) Jennifer Ailles, in her discussion of the concept of “pomosexual play” as a viable alternative to (hetero)normative sexual practice, includes S/M as one of the categories in such an economy (2003: 75). Her conclusion, on a pessimistic note, is that such “play” is not enough to subvert any normative system: “Pomosexual play … cannot occur without the Normative existing as something to subvert and though the goal of pomosexual play is the transgression of the Normative, pomosexual play can never accomplish this goal without re-substantiating the system and all of its inherent violence” (op.cit. 77).
Foucault makes an interesting connection between the changes following the French revolution and the modern age: “[t]he obsessive conjunction of sex with cruelty in Western literature and visual art does seem to explode with Foucault’s hero, Sade, and with the revolution” (Edmundson 1997: 130). This view is not to be overlooked, as it suggests the early dissemination of sexual violence and the eroticisation of pain through popular culture. As Foucault goes on to note in his own text, sadism “… appears at the very moment that unreason, confined for over a century and reduced to silence, reappears, no longer as an image of the world, no longer as a figura, but as language and desire” (2001: 199). Through literature, the new phenomenon of sadomasochism becomes gradually more accessible, a development which also informs the staging of S/M aesthetics in popular music.

The term “masochism” is derived from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, almost exclusively because of his novella *Venus im Pelz* (*Venus in Furs*), published in 1870 and which allegedly reflected the author’s “preoccupation with pain, humiliation, and submission” (Weinberg and Kamel 1995: 16). Even though Sacher-Masoch himself was alive at the time and expressed misgivings as to the use of his name in such a context (Ridinger 2006: 192), the reason stated for the coining of the word “masochism” was that ”this perversion … was quite unknown to the scientific world as such” (cited in Dijkstra 1986: 393). Bram Dijkstra makes the observation that the attempts of female authors such as Emily Brontë or Christina Rossetti to “turn their marginalization into a source of dramatic longing … were not deemed to merit the same sort of attention as the scientists came to bestow upon the more violent male
expressions of a similar desire” (ibid.); this would also inform us of the role of masculinity, or rather the beginnings of a gradual rethinking of the role of masculinity in popular culture. The point here is that despite the evident privileging of male authors over female in the construction of masochism, we nevertheless see the beginning of what, mutatis mutandis, is conveyed in popular music as a possible alternative to hegemonic masculinity.

The terms sadism and masochism were coined in 1885 by Richard von Krafft-Ebing, a doctor and sexologist who also “medicalised [both terms] as individual psychopathologies of the flesh” (McClintock 2004: 237). Krafft-Ebing’s groundbreaking observations of sadism and masochism are some of the most widely read urtexts in gender studies, and they also have their highly problematic aspects. As Anne McClintock points out, Krafft-Ebing saw sadism as ”an aberrant and atavistic manifestation of the ‘innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound or even destroy others in order thereby to create pleasure in one’s self’”, and that women were to blame for sadistic streaks in their men because of ”their very shyness” would provoke male aggression (op.cit. 237f). Masochism was, therefore, a ”normal” female trait to Krafft-Ebing – ”Nature’s way of saying that women are destined for a passive role in society [and] natural to women but not to men” (op.cit. 238). Robert Ridinger emphasises that Krafft-Ebing “regarded the sole purpose of sexual activity to be procreation” (2006: 192), a view which enabled him to categorise sadism and masochism alongside both homosexuality and cannibalism as “perversions of normal sexual instincts” (ibid.). Weinberg and Kamel make the observation that while Krafft-Ebing believed that sadism ”occurred frequently among the ‘sexual perversions’” (1995: 15) and that masochism was unnatural for men’s sexual instinct (op.cit. 17), he nevertheless acknowledged that ”horseplay” like teasing, biting and other sub-sadistic play was frequent among (heterosexual) lovers and young married couples: ”Thus, even the roots of extreme displays of sadism were to be found in normal sexual activity” (op.cit. 16).

Several important issues arise from this. First, that while the terms sadism and masochism were not formulated until close to the end of the 19th century by a contemporary of Sigmund Freud. Second, that in effectively sexing sadism and masochism by designating them as respectively male and female traits, Krafft-Ebing
not only adhered to a predominant patriarchal ideology but also grounded the popular view of sadomasochistic acts as reiterations of existing power structures, a view that is no less prevalent today. And third, the compartmentalisation of sexuality into procreative and non-procreative; once again seen through patriarchal spectacles, the kinds of sexual orientation which do not produce offspring are often deemed less worthy than those which people indulge in for pleasure, especially if practised by women. This would suggest that despite, or rather because of, Krafft-Ebing’s views on sexuality and gender, any discourse on sadomasochism would need to take into consideration the way his work has been read, and the possible effects it might have had on a popular understanding of S/M at any given time.

A final issue, and one which I would give precedence to in this thesis, is the situating of “extreme displays of sadism” within “normal sexual activity”. On the one hand, it would link the practice of sadism – and, by implication, its counterpart, masochism – explicitly to sexual activity. On the other hand, it provides us with a prime example of how the normalisation of aberrant sexual phenomena can take place in a broader context. While Krafft-Ebing’s own definition of the term would imply a pathologisation of sadism and masochism, the variant where heterosexual couples practice something that probably amounts to the same can be accepted because there has been a process of normalisation. I will return to this later in this chapter.

Tainted Love: De-exoticizing Sadomasochism

In the light of the discussion above, I will now attempt at delimiting the phenomenon of S/M. Kleinplatz and Moser suggest, in their reply to the question “what is SM?”, that it is "easier to say what it is not” (2006: 3). As Nordling et al. further point out, "there is no commonly accepted definition of what constitutes sadomasochistic sexual behavior” (2006: 43); to remove some of the mystique, however, they identify six features they refer to as characteristic of a sadomasochistic scene: "a relation of dominance and submission, infliction of pain that is experienced as pleasurable by both partners, using fantasy or role-playing by one or both partners, deliberate

\footnote{Pat Califia notes that "[b]ecause sadomasochism is usually portrayed as a violent, dangerous activity, most people do not think there is a great deal of difference between a rapist and a bondage enthusiast” (1994: 167). To this I would add that representations of S/M in popular culture are often bound up in stereotypical depictions of male/female and the aestheticisation of violence (see Chapter Four).}
humiliation of the other partner, fetishistic elements (clothes, devices, scenery), and one or more ritualistic activities, e.g., bondage, whipping” (ibid.). This highlights not only the eroticisation of pain and the possible aestheticisation of violence, but also emphasises the theatrical aspect of sadomasochistic play as it is made legible through popular culture: fantasy/role-playing (the designation of roles as an alternative to the everyday grind), fetishistic elements (theatrical props) and ritualistic activities (the staging of sexuality as theatre). As we will see, several of these features are employed in the various narratives that make up the songs I use as examples in this thesis.

This would not mean that ”sadomasochistic play” can be seen as tantamount to the visual representation that so often occurs in order to connote S/M in popular culture (usually the theatrical props, such as high heels, handcuffs, whips and leather garments). Nor would it mean, as Nordling et al. make clear, that there are any unambiguous common denominators for the various activities that, to make it facile, can be lumped together as ”sadomasochistic”. As I have endeavoured to make clear, the debate surrounding S/M is not in the slightest unproblematic. This would equally apply to a consideration of difference from any normative conceptions of sexuality. Reiersøl and Skeid refer to the fact that the common assumptions about S/M are often based on such normative conceptions: “The rationale for clustering these sexual behaviors [i.e. ’abusive’ and ’non-abusive’ interests] in one category … is based on moral and ’normative’ issues. Hence, both professionals and the public view these behaviors as pathological sexual interests” (2006: 250). This would further highlight the importance of resistance, or at least of presenting alternatives, to hegemonic assumptions of non-normative practices through popular culture, specifically the arena provided by popular music.

Pointing out S/M as a non-normative practice certainly requires some clarification. Because I enter into this field of knowledge from an academic point of view, it is not relevant to speculate on the reasons for “becoming sadomasochist”. It is not my intention to search for psychological reasons for such choices, as it is not of importance for this thesis why people would choose to participate in sadomasochistic scenes. Nor do I intend to reduce sadomasochistic orientation to any single cause-and-effect axis or innate, “essential” trait. Rather, my aim in this thesis is to show how the visual depiction of “sadomasochism” in popular culture creates and/or reinforces a
common opinion as to what constitutes S/M, and how popular music can contribute to this. Thus, what role does music play, and what is the significance of its codes?

**Musicological considerations**

Another way of approaching the hypothesis of this thesis is through the question: What is the significance of music within a context of gender and sexuality? Even though the question needs to be asked, one vital part of the answer is that music is especially significant in the context of popular culture, where it is not only a commodity alongside other media, like film, but also a mobile factor in the construction of identity.8 As McClary states in *Feminine Endings*,

> music does not just passively reflect society; it also serves as a public forum within which various models of gender organization (along with many other aspects of social life) are asserted, adopted, contested, and negotiated. (McClary 1991: 8)

This indicates a reflexivity found in music as an art form that equips music with the potential not only to mirror the social and cultural conditions from which it arises, but also to influence our perceptions of these conditions. This would imply that issues of gender and sexuality intersect with music as part of the process through which they contribute to the ways in which we perform gender and shape ideas of sexuality. McClary thus offers a crucial insight for this study in terms of the possibilities made available to us for understanding the construction of subjectivity and individual identities within popular music. This enables access to a more flexible approach to the study of music.

McClary’s view of music as a public forum emphasises not only the importance of music in identity politics, but also how listeners’ identities are shaped by any extramusical discourses. Here, her insights run parallel to Richard Middleton’s investigation into the “popularity” of popular music:

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8 For a more detailed discussion of popular music as both a commodity and a marker of identity, see Marie Strand Skånland (2007), *soundescape. en studie av hvordan musikk blir integrert i hverdagen til brukere av mp3-spillere*, master thesis, Department of Musicology, University of Oslo.
The ideological work responsible for the social organization of musical taste is not the product of a simple, identifiable ideology, still less is it reducible to economic class forces; rather, it is the articulation and inflection of a multitude of lines of force, associated with different sites, audiences, media, production apparatuses and discourses, together creating the changing positions available to us on the map of pleasure. [...] We do not, then, choose our musical tastes freely; nor do they reflect our ‘experience’ in any simple way. (Middleton 1990: 248f)

Careful not to postulate any universal solution to the question of how music “functions”, Middleton pinpoints the multilayered process by which we relate to music via the performative process of taste in the construction of identity: “The involvement of subjects in particular musical pleasures has to be constructed; indeed, such construction is part and parcel of the production of subjectivity” (op.cit. 249). To this, we could add McClary’s point that music “… is also very often concerned with the arousing and channeling of desire, with mapping patterns through the medium of sound that resemble those of sexuality” (McClary 1991: 8). The function of popular music, then, seems significant for understanding our individual perceptions of sexuality and gender. Not only does this apply to our sexual preferences but also to the way we perceive and, indeed, learn the normative codes and conditions for gendered behaviour.

The point I wish to make here is that in order to fuse the radical insights provided by scholars within gender studies with the necessary apparatus for musicological inquiry and popular music analysis, we need to take into account the importance of music as a factor in identity politics and the construction of gender and sexuality.

Both McClary’s and Middleton’s approaches can be located within the field of poststructuralism, defined in a cursory, lexical way as “a theoretical field traversing traditional limits of disciplines such as philosophy, literary science, sociology and psychology” (Lothe et al. 1997: 200), or, in Allan F. Moore’s words, as “… a group of methodologies which go beyond the seeking of solutions in the ways cultural products and practices are structured” (Moore 2003: 5). This approach is not without its obstacles and pitfalls, as Moore also observes: “The interface between musicology on the one hand, and the social sciences and other humanities on the other, is often highly problematic, and will remain so unless we can be quite explicit about our normally unexamined assumptions” (op.cit. 7). This is reminiscent of Judith Butler’s
subtle warning in *Gender Trouble* that “… in some of its guises, poststructuralism appears as a formalism, aloof from questions of social context and political aim”, which can make the approach come across as “something unified, pure, and monolithic” (1990: ix). The absence of monolithic approaches and awareness of social and political dimensions are (and should be) hallmarks of poststructuralism, and these traits also enable the discipline of popular music analysis in no small way.

With this in mind, and taking heed of both McClary’s and Middleton’s observations, I feel compelled to emphasise the importance of music’s role as “a public forum”, an arena for the playing out of alternatives to normative ideas on gender and sexuality, and the “multitude of lines of force” which grant us access to the field(s) of pleasure. Some of these lines of force are made less oblique by Robert Walser, who states that “[I]t is true, scholars who interpret cultural texts should notice the commercial processes and power struggles that make those texts available to their attention, as well as the social structures and tensions that make them meaningful” (Walser 1993: xi). Rather than neglecting the musicological aspect of popular music studies, Walser here reminds us that popular music can and should be placed under scrutiny as we would other musical categories: “If it makes sense to study specific operas as sites of the exchange and contestation of social meanings, rather than as interchangeable epiphenomena of a patronage structure, it makes equal sense to treat more recent popular texts with similar specificity and care” (op.cit. xii). As Walser also states, “popular music’s politics are most effective in the realm of gender and sexuality, where pleasure, dance, the body, romance, power, and subjectivity all meet with an affective charge” (op.cit. 126). This, then, becomes a primary impulse for my fusing musicology with gender studies in this thesis; and as a poststructuralist approach opens the field for intersecting fields of study, my approach to popular music studies allows me to concentrate especially on the music while paying attention to the interaction between the music and its cultural context.

My approach is based upon several important models of popular music analysis to have emerged in recent years. In his work on popular music and identity politics, Hawkins has made crucial observations concerning how we read meaning into pop songs. Acknowledging that popular music “is about shifting levels of styles, texts, genres and responses, and how these engender feelings”, (2002: 3), Hawkins
emphasises that “any claims to extracting musical meaning […] depend on identifying the performers and their music within their social and cultural context” (2002: 152). The various levels are interwoven and can be read as a performative whole: “Moving more freely in terms of their signification than codes in language, musical codes can only assume meaning through the cultural context of their location” (op.cit. 9). This approach entails a flexibility that runs parallel to Walser’s observation that “basic questions of analytical method deserve to be continually rethought, since interpreting the musical texts and activities upon which pleasures and powers of popular music depend ought to constitute one of the central activities of popular music” (2003: 16f).

While Hawkins, McClary and Walser emphasise the intersecting lines of force that cut across issues of ethnicity, class, race, sexuality and gender, scholars such as Susan Fast (2001), Sheila Whiteley (2006) and Freya Jarman-Ivens (2007) afford primacy to the study of gender and sexuality in their respective cases. The value of these similar approaches is to demonstrate that the study of music in an intertextual relationship with gender studies can give rise to relevant notions of representation in popular music.

**Searching for a method**

From what I have outlined so far, it should be evident that my methodological approach turns to musicology and gender studies in almost equal measure. The method needed for approaching the subject in question – how popular music can create or reinforce notions of sadomasochism – is unavoidably flexible. My method will therefore involve a double approach: on the one hand, a hermeneutic inflection; on the other hand, an intertextual reading.

The hermeneutic approach can be broadly described as a movement in the interpretation of a given text between the parts and the totality. The parts can thus only be understood in the context of the text as a whole, but this perception of a whole is in turn dependent on – and continually modified by – the understanding of the parts (Lothe et al. 1997: 98). This implies the process known as the hermeneutic circle,
where we read a text with a set of given prejudices (ibid.), a process by which the reader’s position is made visible and takes on significance.

This also allows me to ask pertinent questions as part of my strategy, questions which in turn will illuminate the examples I choose: “The questions we ask of artefacts derive from our own horizon, but we also respond to questions generated by works themselves” (Williams 2001: 17). This pertains not least to the role of music in the construction of identity: “Indeed all forms of music play a decisive role in the way people locate themselves in and between traditions. In short, music is one of the processes by which human subjects establish identities and generate affinities” (op.cit. 20). The intersections of gender studies and musicology will be fruitful in both cases.

The dialectical relationship between part and totality which is central to a hermeneutic approach also presupposes a flexibility on the part of the texts, or rather the relationship between the various texts – academic or otherwise – that I have chosen for this thesis. Originally formulated by Julia Kristeva in her book Séméiôtiké in 1969, the term *intertextuality* refers to a reading strategy by which each text assumes the shape of a mosaic of quotations, and absorbs and transforms other texts (Lothe et al. 1997: 115). This also entails that any utterance in language necessarily enters into a dialogue with an infinite number of other texts and types of texts (ibid.). Consequently, in a context of analysing musical texts, intertextuality as a strategy “can be mobilised as a concept that illuminates the dialogues that transpire between authors and texts and between one genre and the next” (Richardson and Hawkins 2007: 17), and arguably as a tool for deconstructing any dialogue between author (artist) and reader (fan) pertaining to perceptions of gender and sexuality, or the arousing and channeling of desire.

In a popular music context, this strategy enables us to juxtapose several readings and thereby circumvent the domination of one interpretation over another. The dialectic of intertextuality, which Hawkins also refers to as “dialogism”, is especially useful in the study of popular music as *musical* texts: “When reading pop texts, dialogism opens up new approaches to the structural space of the musical text” (2002: 23). This shows how an intertextual approach to the analysis of popular music would be necessary: “… the pop text becomes mobilised only through its contact with other texts”, a
mobilisation that “relates both to the listening and the reading process” (ibid.). As I have chosen to approach music as a predominantly auditive medium, consciously bypassing a medium like music videos, the process of reading will inevitably be bound up with the process of listening.

This alone does not clarify why I have chosen an intertextual approach. It would certainly be easy to call any process of reading and comparing different texts “intertextual”, a term that can just as easily be dismissed, as Kevin Korsyn puts it, as “pure jargon”. Hawkins has stressed a similar point: that the concept of intertextuality “is often misunderstood as being only a matter of influence by one author on another” (Hawkins 2002: 28). Clearly there is much more to this. Korsyn, for instance, draws on the theories of Saussure, Barthes, and Kristeva in order to render visible a relevant use of the term: “Although traditional source criticism has long enumerated borrowings, quotations, allusions, and parody among works, intertextuality goes beyond these to embrace the sort of anonymous citationality that Roland Barthes calls the déjà lu, the already read, that is, the effect of textual codes that operate in an impersonal manner over many texts but have no origin” (Korsyn 2003: 37). This would mean that intertextuality signifies a change in approach, “from thinking in terms of entities to recognizing mobile fields of relations” (ibid.). This would in turn, once again, shed light on the importance of the reader’s, or interpreter’s, position in an intertextual reading: “It is a question of acknowledging other unities, other sources of coherence, that may cut across and subvert those we have been trained to recognize” (op.cit. 38). In this thesis, the sources which belong to the field of gender studies inevitably cut across the discipline of musicology, and vice versa. My point is that this will not only enrich my readings of the songs I have selected, but also enable me to emphasise details and draw conclusions which would not have been within my reach in a predominantly musicological or gender studies-based reading.

An intertextual approach suggests that meaning occurs between texts, not within them (op.cit. 2003: 37). In a situation of popular music analysis, this serves as a reminder that there are no impermeable boundaries between texts, and that the fluidity of genres and styles is crucial. As John Richardson and Stan Hawkins have suggested in Essays on Sound and Vision, “the notion of intertextuality assumes an absence of fixed boundaries: in a sonic text, other sonic texts are always present within the text,
and as temporal event, musical sound is produced as a mediator of values in relation to other texts” (2007: 17). Furthermore, in a context of gender and sexuality, this also serves to make us aware of the lack of fixed boundaries and watertight bulkheads in constructions of identity as well as gender and sexuality: as Butler puts it, “… in and through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated, and recirculated only within the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations” (1990: 161f). This awareness also enables us to pose important questions regarding identity as perceived in connection with music, gender, and sexuality.

Another important insight formulated by Richardson and Hawkins is found in the observation that there are multiple ways of reading popular music texts: “In sum, the musical text is indefatigable in terms of how we read it, and only gains its meaning through an active reading” (2007: 17). This could easily be expanded to encompass every conceivable possibility, and the futility of proposing any one reading. I would argue that such an insight instead brings our attention to the importance of a thorough reading of a given musical text. Walser makes this clear in his reading of the country hit song “Feed Jake” and the issues and values – fear of mortality, compassion, loyalty – addressed in the song: “If we don’t recognize how the song invokes and appeals to these emotions and values, we haven’t analyzed it at all. No matter what else is done, with whatever sorts of diagrams and technical terms, to stop short of reaching this level of analysis is to produce only a partial description of certain abstracted features of the performance, one that does not explain why people have been moved by it” (2003: 29). If anything, an intertextual approach to popular music analysis can serve to enhance and enrich our understanding of the musical text and of the various layers of meaning that are available and legible to us as listeners.

The double gaze: regarding sadomasochism

How, then, can we perceive that popular music as it is transmitted to us through popular culture, transports with it layers of meaning? In regarding popular culture as an arena for the dissemination of music, I draw on Walser’s view of this arena: “Popular culture is important because that is where most people get their
‘entertainment’ and information; it’s where they find dominant definitions of themselves as well as alternatives, options to try on for size” (1993: xiv). This would also entail that popular culture offers a range of possibilities for negotiating identity. Popular music is of importance here because music is made legible through popular culture in a number of ways, and some of the most crucial are “concerned with the arousing and channeling of desire, with mapping patterns through the medium of sound that resemble those of sexuality” (McClary 1991: 8).

In her reading of the film Secretary, Margot D. Weiss has observed that the representation of sadomasochism and S/M aesthetics (such as the eroticisation of pain and dominance) relies on a mechanism of rendering visible the titillating aspects while not removing the mythology or mysticism that would be necessary to keep it exotic for the mainstream. She states that “SM has saturated popular culture, and in this saturation, SM has come to mean something more mainstream and less risqué, more conventional and less exotic” (2006: 104). This means a change of representation in popular culture, as “[p]opular depictions of SM have shifted from images of the shocking, dangerous other to representations both pathological and normal” (ibid.).

This binary divide is also the starting point for Weiss as she asserts “that popular images of SM promote the acceptance and understanding of sexual minorities through two mechanisms: acceptance via normalization, and understanding via pathologizing” (op.cit. 103, emphasis in original). Seen in tandem, these mechanisms of representation function as what Weiss terms a “double gaze”: ”The authoritative gaze of power here offers subjectivity only insofar as sexual minorities conform to the categories a disciplinary society offers” (op.cit. 119).

Weiss’s model is binary, and not necessarily one of optimism: “Instead of promoting politically progressive forms of acceptance or understanding, [representations of S/M in popular culture] offer acceptance via normalization, and understanding via pathologizing. In the former mechanism, SM is acceptable only when it falls under the rubric of normative American sexuality. In the latter mechanism, SM is understandable only when it is the symptom of a deviant type of person with a sick, damaged core” (105). I propose that even though the representations of
sadomasochism presented in this thesis are in danger of presenting either a normalised or a pathologised version of S/M, the fact that they are transmitted through music makes them less likely to be judged as either one or the other. Rather, they escape such easy categorisation and thus enter the mainstream without pathologising (offering “understanding”) or normalising (rendering harmless or unthreatening).

While this model clearly has an important function in the policing of sexualities that deviate from heteronormativity, the double gaze is also about making things legible, in this case through the screen of popular music, for a broader public. This provides us with an opportunity to use Weiss’s theory of the double gaze in a context of popular music and its possibilities to escape such a binary division, instead offering alternatives to a strict binary division of the (hetero)normative and its discontents.

This would prove useful also because Weiss does not touch on the subject of music, apart from a cursory list of bands and artists in recent years whose lyrics “celebrate SM dynamics”, from Nine Inch Nails to Janet Jackson and Britney Spears (2006: 109). While she is certainly right in bringing these artists to the fore, she does not go past the level of lyrics. What is absent from her essay is also a deeper discussion concerning not only the abundance of examples, but also the potential in such themes for destabilising gender norms and generating alternatives.

While Weiss herself offers that “both mechanisms offer a form of acceptance or understanding”, she maintains that none of them furthers “the cause of sexual freedom”: “They allow the mainstream audience to flirt with danger and excitement, but ultimately reinforce boundaries between protected and privileged normative sexuality, and policed and pathological not normal sexuality” (op.cit. 105). I would argue that the problem that arises here is one of clear-cut boundaries between sexualities. The sociologist Willy Pedersen has pointed to the fact that as our sexual identities can be understood as “personal narratives, which give coherence and meaning to the lives we actually live” (2005: 10). He points to the fluidity of sexualities, and the dilemma of separating them with clear borders, a point also made by Rebecca Plante: “The sexual self is clearly fluid, variable, and is simultaneously individually and culturally contextualized” (2006: 77). This enables us to bring the question of boundaries between normal and not normal sexuality into a context of
popular music. In the light of this, it will hopefully be evident that my examples in
this thesis have the potential to avoid such a rigid categorisation.

“Why an S/M approach?”: Empirical reflections

Voice, performance, and representations

It should be clear by now that my main purpose in this thesis is to investigate how
popular music can engender, or reinforce, alternatives to gendered behaviour and our
perceptions of sexuality as ideas of sexuality as effected through popular culture. The
three examples of representations of sadomasochism in popular music are intended to
help me to argue this point. All three examples illustrate aspects of the cultural
construction of masculinity, and the way music can assume the function of arena for
alternative modes of normative masculine behaviour.

I am writing this thesis in the double capacity of popular music student and
performing musician. Consequently, I see the notion of conveying representations of
sadomasochism through music as closely bound up with the situation of performance.
This raises the question of the physicality of music, particularly in connection with
what Simon Frith calls the shifting boundary between the “staged” and the everyday
(1996: 204). I will argue that in the situation of performance, both for musicians and
listeners, the presence of the body as a medium for sensations is crucial, not least
concerning the body as originator of a voice, as transmitter of meaning.

In his discussion of the relation between aesthetics, art and sensation Erik Steinskog
has argued that the relation between the different senses comes across as hierarchical.
The point emphasised here is one of privileging vision: “An interesting aspect of
aesthetic discourse in the last decades of the twentieth century, and the so-called
‘visual turn’, was the emphasis on the importance of the sense of vision, and the
domination this sense has had both on aesthetic discourse and the vocabulary used to
think and express aesthetic judgements” (Steinskog 2003: 22). He goes on to note that
“[a] consequence of this division is that hearing becomes ‘the second sense’” (ibid.) – that is, after vision. This illuminates further the primacy afforded to visual representations and the possible blind (or deaf, as it were) spot listeners may have when it comes to how the act of hearing music, especially the voice, can signify or represent issues of sexuality.

The question of signification is certainly interesting, not least because, as Steinskog further observes, music “follows a long tradition within Western aesthetics in seeing music as non-referential, and thus as, in a profound sense, unavailable for language” (op. cit. 38). In reference to the theories of the philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy, he quotes the claim that “in relation to touch, there are two different unities, one of signification and representation, and another where signification has been suspended, and that these two meet, or touch each other” (ibid.). I would argue that this could also be used to mark a juxtaposition of music and image in a context of representations of sadomasochism: While the images can convey representations that come across as familiar or recognisable to us, the music – as “unavailable for language” – both amplifies these images and makes a physical impact on us as listeners.

Undoubtedly a vital part of musical performance is the voice, not so much as transmitter of the words as the direct reference to the body that produces it. In his theorisation of the voice in popular music, Frith observes that “the voice draws our attention to something happening to the body itself; which is why we don’t think of the microphone as a musical instrument: we don’t expect voices to need anything outside the body in order to be heard” (1996: 191). This perceived corporeality of the voice is thereby what makes it seem “particularly expressive of the body; it gives the listener access to it without mediation” (ibid.).9

While Frith concedes that the voice “is the sound of the body in a direct sense” (op. cit. 192), he recognises that this alone is not sufficient for explaining how the voice can have an erotic charge, or how the attraction of a singing voice can relate to

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9 The question of the body also pertains to the corporeal aspect of hearing music, and consequently to dance. Stan Hawkins, in his essay on temporality and corporeality in dance music, observes that “the type of subjectivity a specific culture or sub-culture fosters is always determined by sets of expectations that are linked to corporeal response” (Hawkins 2008: 122). Although it is outside the scope of this thesis, I would suggest that the function of dance in the context of a band like Depeche Mode could be a useful supplement to any discourse on the corporeal dimension in music.
sexual attraction (op.cit. 193). As I will show in my examples, particularly in the analysis of Depeche Mode in Chapter Three, the question of the voice is not only one of hearing "a body" or sensing physicality. The transmission of the voice on record is dependent on technology, an aspect that also influences our modes of hearing it. Frith traces this to the inventions of the early twentieth century, when “the simultaneous emergence […] of the telephone, the gramophone, and the radio meant that the people became accustomed, for the first time ever, to hearing a voice without a body” (op.cit. 196). This impacts on our listening to music and to the voice in no small way.

One question that remains is nevertheless how the sound of the voice influences us in a direct physical sense. Frith, from his sociological point of view, observes that we as listeners have “learned to hear voices as male and female (in terms of a biologically based but not determining low/high register, for example), and the singing voice carries these codings with it […]” (op.cit. 193f); consequently, “we hear voices as male or female and listen to what they say accordingly – according to our own sexual pleasures and preferences” (op.cit. 195). The capacity of reading not only gender, but also preferences into a voice is a very important point when we consider the question of lust, the ability we assign to music of evoking desire and creating pleasure. Thus, the disembodied voice that we always hear on record takes on renewed significance as soon as we hear it as metonymy for a physical presence, namely the body:

[T]he voice is the sound of the body in a direct sense. Certain physical experiences, particularly extreme feelings, are given vocal sounds beyond our conscious control – the sounds of pain, lust, ecstasy, fear, what one might call inarticulate articulacy […] vocal noises that seem expressive of their deepest feelings because we hear them as if they’ve escaped from a body that the mind – language – can no longer control. (1996: 192)

This has a resonance in Steinskog’s valid point that “[t]he voice is an exposure in a manner comparable to the exposure of the naked body” (2003: 40). While both statements recall Roland Barthes’s idea of the “grain” of the voice, that is “the body in the voice as it sings” (Barthes 1977: 299), they also suggest that there are multiple layers of meaning, and several attendant discourses going on, when we hear a voice. The voice becomes almost an audible touch, as Steinskog suggests, one that “removes the dualism of exterior and interior” (2003: 40). This is of great importance to the
listener when tackling the question of meaning, and also to the dissemination of any representation through music.

Taken together, these two extracts amplify not only the significant function of the voice, but the problematics of identity in music. On the one hand, when we hear a voice, we also hear a body, and music therefore has the ability of touching us in a more sensual way than images and visual representations. On the other hand, the theatricality of sadomasochism is also made visible the moment we consider the element of fantasy in listening to music. Frith states that an important aspect of musical pleasure “lies in the play we can make of both being addressed, responding to a voice as it speaks to us (caressingly, assertively, plaintively), and addressing, taking on the voice as our own, not just physically […] but also emotionally and psychologically, taking on (in fantasy) the vocal personality too” (1996: 198, emphasis in original). He goes on to assert that “[i]n taking on a singer’s vocal personality we are, in a sense, putting on a vocal costume, enacting the role that they are playing for ourselves” (ibid.), and thus presents us with an explicit link to the insight “into S/M as high theatre” (McClintock 2004: 237). As I intend to show in all my examples in this thesis, the theatricality of the voice in popular music goes well with the staging of sexual acts in sadomasochism – in a more playful manner than most representations transmitted to us in the context of popular culture.

Illusions of transgression: S/M as patriarchal strategy

A common denominator in my examples, and the theme that runs through the thesis, is the use of aesthetics that connote sadomasochism. This way, they can function not only as a display of the exotic Other in a context of normative hegemonic sexuality, but also as examples of the performative aspect of gendered identity: In S/M scenes, the theatricality is always present. I will argue that the use of scripts, props, and role play in these examples can not only contribute to a more nuanced understanding of S/M through popular music; it can also shed light on how ideas of gender and sexuality are always constructed through our own perceptions of normativity.
How, then, is S/M usually depicted in the public space? At this point it will be relevant to take a look at some examples of this type of representation. In the June 2007 issue of [mag], a Norwegian self-proclaimed “magazine for young women”, a young, urban, heterosexual couple is portrayed under the heading “Espen and Julie are turned on by sadomasochism”. 10 Espen, the male, is dominant, while Julie, his female partner, is submissive. In an interesting employment of the double gaze, they normalise their own interests and pathologise other forms of what they term S/M: While she states that they practice ”pet play, which is about one part being like a small animal, and the other its owner and caretaker”, he stresses that “it is just like a normal upbringing” (71). On the question of switching – the alternating between top and bottom – Julie states that this would be unthinkable for them: “Imagine a dog and its owner. A dog walking on two legs with its owner on a leash would be completely wrong” (72). Even though she asserts that “there are many female dominatrices [sic] and loads of submissive men” (74), the fact that their power relation replicates patriarchal gender roles is not problematised by the couple themselves or the journalist. On the contrary, Julie dismisses the idea of S/M as misogynistic by referring to her own “natural” inclination11 and the fact that “she gets her way”: “I do not understand why people think this is oppressive!” (ibid.). Nor does she express disapproval when Espen explains their version of monogamy: “We have a very good girlfriend who sometimes plays with us. She is more into the pain part than Julie […] but that does not mean that she gets as much as Julie does” (ibid.).

The assumption here is that a sadomasochistic lifestyle relies on patriarchal notions of sexual difference.12 The recourse to animal instincts for justification of the couple’s

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11 This view is similar to the one expressed in the film Body of Evidence (Uli Edel, 1993), which follows the tendency of stories like The Story of O: the depiction of sadomasochism as something of an inherent trait in “certain people”. This can be interpreted as a demarcation of difference and identity as well as an exoticisation of “sadomasochism”.

12 The patriarchal view is expressed more or less explicitly throughout the magazine. While the editor’s comment about how “girls love a trip to the hairdresser’s, while boys see it as a necessary evil” (9) can easily be read as essentialising gender differences, it can also be read as an expression of the magazine’s attitude: On the hand, in the column called “Sex & Love”, the anonymous writer states that “girls with red hair are more sexually active than their fellow sisters” and that “when men see a redhead, they take for granted that she is not interested in anything but going to bed with him” (75); on the same page and throughout the magazine, there are frequent references to “us girls” when it comes to matters of taste. Another, potentially more worrying example is when, in an interview, the male TV host Stian Barsnes-Simonsen states that “it is much easier with girls if you are a bit nasty. If you are
preferences recalls not only the nature/culture divide (and, by implication, a female/male binary), but also the idea that human sexuality is, or ideally should be, something pure and “unconstructed” – and that the male should always be the active one. The self-proclaimed “sex-positivist” Kath Albury brings a refreshing perspective to this: to her, “the misrecognition of [heterosexual] desire serves a dominant culture of heteronormativity – the subtle or not so subtle enforcement of particular kinds of heterosexual identity as the norm. [...] By arguing that most men are sexual aggressors, and most women are sexually put-upon, we support normalising stereotypes where Male = Active/Strong/Desiring, and Female = Passive/Weak/Desired” (2002: xxi). The proponents Espen and Julie – together with the journalist – nevertheless strive to depict patriarchal “sadomasochism” as liberating and not repressive, despite the fact that the prevalent view resembles Krafft-Ebing’s ideas of male sadism and female masochism more than anything.

The theatricality of S/M play is implied here in a cursory discussion of which acts may be labelled sadomasochistic: “Everything from the use of handcuffs to spanking can fit the definition” (71). The theatrical props, in other words, are the markers that are expected to connote S/M to the readers. The comment on Espen’s key chain, where he keeps the keys to Julie’s handcuffs, makes it even more obvious: “the handcuffs, by the way, are the same kind as the ones used by the American police” (74). This discloses not only the theatrical aspect, but also an inflection of popular culture (e.g. American “cop shows”) the partners may not be aware of.

On a different note, the lingerie company Agent Provocateur issued a catalogue in the fall of 2007 which bore more than a fleeting resemblance to an erotic photo novella. The catalogue resembles a “diary” with illustrations and photographs; the text creates the illusion that it is being written by one of “the lady’s maids” at the fictional Muckington Manor, and, consequently, that we are invited to share a very private piece of writing. The narrative is structured as a series of erotic incidents and stories, all of which invariably end with the “lady” giving her scantily clad “maids” a spanking. The drawings are sexually explicit, mostly depicting lesbian situations too kind to them, there is a bigger chance that they will show their worst side, or just want to remain friends” (20); the statement is not contested by the journalist.

13 “The Lady of the Manor by Agent Provocateur” (n.d.).
between the “maids”. The photographs, though complementing the drawings, are not explicit; they depict the “maids” modelling the latest collection of Agent Provocateur’s underwear, albeit solely in titillating poses.

While the photographs are theatrically staged and often subtly comical in their portrayal of the models, they seem to pander to a gaze which is probably expected to be male (in the photograph showing the underwear series “Fanny”, the model poses, in underwear and high heels, on the hood of a car, demurely returning the camera’s gaze). The presence of whips and corsets, meanwhile, suggests the master/slave relationship between the lady and her maids. As Valerie Steele observes, “[t]he maid is an obviously submissive role, which indicates the power differential implicit in traditional gender stereotypes”, and unlike the virginal figures often played by prostitutes in brothels in the nineteenth century, the maid “was not virgin but victim, sexually servicing her master” (1996: 172). The staging of a sexual master/slave relationship between lady and maids can thus be said to connote sadomasochism on more than the visual level. Then again, the absence of male figures almost throughout is arguably more indicative of patriarchal ideas than of lesbian S/M.

Humour and theatricality are evident in some cases of S/M. On a commercial website like Kink.com, the various films on offer – which all portray sadomasochistic acts, mostly with a sexually explicit content – clearly depict the actions as staged, as performers sometimes make mistakes which generate on-camera laughs; goofs that in turn are used to reinforce the dramatic action (e.g. through the need for further punishment). In other cases, like [mag], the playfulness is rendered less visible through the tight connection with the participants’ patriarchal notions of identity and sexuality as well as the construction of non-normative (read: non-patriarchal) aspects of S/M as fundamentally Other, and therefore unfit.

What arises from these examples is a common assumption that “sadomasochism” should not threaten male, heterosexual hegemony – in short, patriarchy.14 Kath

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14 On a different note, this reflects the views of a female member of a swinger’s club who is portrayed in the book Oslos underliv: While she states that she participated in a threesome with her boyfriend and another woman at an early stage, she emphasises that she does not expect to want to do it again “now it has been tried”, and that now she and her boyfriend “only have sex with each other” (Aabel et al. 1997: 109). The option of two men and one woman is not mentioned.
Albury embellishes this point when she observes, with reference to masculinities pioneer Lynne Segal, that “the specific details of heterosexual women’s desires and practical pleasures have been discussed less and less in feminist theory, as heterosexuality has become more and more identified with heterosexism” (Albury 2002: xxi). From this, a view that any popular representation of S/M is dependent on patriarchal structures and the inherent fear of the female can easily be gleaned. While this is clearly not the case for all such representations, it still makes a relevant case for my investigation of representations of sadomasochism in popular music, and how these can offer alternatives to hegemonic assumptions of patriarchy and male dominance.
Chapter Two

Idols of Perversity: Queering the Narrative Voice in Blue Öyster Cult’s “Dominance and Submission”

To what extent can the notion of sadomasochism carry with it the potential to queer its subjects? I will argue, in this chapter, that popular music opens up the possibility of a queering of both the subject matter at hand and the musical performance – both gender and genre conventions. The case in point will be the depiction of masculinity in the song "Dominance and Submission” by Blue Öyster Cult, and how popular music – or, in this case, heavy metal – can contribute to a different coding of the masculine in light of sadomasochistic imagery, while not losing any of its mass appeal.

Secret Treaties: BÖC and popularity

In the development of hard rock in the years following the rise and fall of The Velvet Underground, there are few more appropriate examples of this potential than the American heavy metal band Blue Öyster Cult (BÖC). They came together in the late 1960s and made their début album as early as 1972. Robert Walser places them in the "second generation of heavy metal" following the preceding “wave” (Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Led Zeppelin), and also the first wave of bands “to claim the name [heavy metal] unambiguously” (Walser 1993: 10). It is pertinent, then, that their music has been described as "the thinking man’s heavy metal group”15 and "intelligent heavy metal” due to "a combination of Black Sabbath-styled riffs and obscure lyricism".16 Their formula proved quite successful, as BÖC would enjoy a steadily growing popular following “as American rockers accepted [BÖC] at a level previously reserved for U.K. bands only” and they “steadily ascended to headlining

status, notwithstanding the absence of a Top-40 single or million-selling gold LP sales”.

On their first two albums, they built their image in no small part on such “obscure” elements in their songs: in "She’s as beautiful as a foot", from their eponymously titled first LP, they take up the subject of fetishism, while "I’m on the lamb but I ain’t no sheep" from the same album, with lyric couplets such as "Got a whip in my hand baby/ And a girl or a husky at leather’s end", is an early take on the subject of sadomasochism, with its theme of dominance and submission. The title of their second album, *Tyranny and Mutation* (1973), has been interpreted as an expression of "the terror of those subjected to extreme power" (Stratton 2005: 98); the "tyranny" may well be interpreted as a further exploration of the S/M theme, with "mutation" as one possible result of (sexual) experimentation. The band’s early forays into sadomasochism on the first two albums can nevertheless be said to indicate a potential for exploring such a field in detail – and to provide us with an unexpected twist of the straight as well.

By the time of their third album, *Secret Treaties*, in 1974, the band had refined their lyrical approach as well as their historical references. While the lyrics on the album deal extensively with topics pertaining to the Second World War, the band display a significant humour in their use of German Nazi imagery: the song "ME 262", the title an abbreviation of the name of the plane Messerschmitt 262 (depicted on the album’s front cover), fearlessly opens with the lines "Goering’s on the phone to Freiburg/ Says Willie’s done quite a job/ Hitler’s on the phone from Berlin/ Says I’m gonna make you a star”, and the protagonist goes on to wonder "Must these Englishmen live that I might die?" while he wants to "see these English planes go burn”. Any connection between Nazi Germany and sadomasochistic imagery notwithstanding, given the fact that at least one of BÖC’s members, singer/guitarist Eric Bloom, is Jewish (Stratton 2005: 92), we also have the possibility of reading the band’s "obscure" lyricism as governed by both humour and theatricality. In this case, the play with signifiers

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18 On this subject, one of the "user comments" on the album *Secret Treaties* on the Amazon.ca website bears the telling title "Gotta love jew boys doing nazi fascism [sic]", followed by a top-marks review.
suggests an intrepid use of taboos. As Hawkins notes, such playfulness is intrinsic within pop expression, and all aspects of this playfulness are “cleverly attached to the spectacles and sounds of performance” (2002: 19). These traits may also well be seen as governing principles of sadomasochistic role play.

The point I wish to make in this analysis is that BÖC manage to display a sense of playfulness through a successful attempt at destabilizing both the subject’s sense of masculinity and the listener’s conception of representations of sadomasochism. To this end, I will argue that the “twist” the band brings to the lyrical content also permeates the music – and thereby queers the performance.

"Dominance and Submission” is the third track on BÖC’s third album, Secret Treaties. Released in April 1974, the album became the band’s first to break into the Top 100 bestsellers; its successor, Agents of Fortune (1976), would include the band’s biggest hit, ”(Don’t Fear) The Reaper”, and become the band’s first platinum album seller.19 This suggests that the band were attracting a steady stream of new fans, and by the time of their third album, they were exposing their music – and lyrics – to a considerable amount of both American and European record-buyers. As I have mentioned above, the band take up the theme of World War Two in at least one of the songs on this album; other song titles may hint at the same – ”Subhuman” may be about the Holocaust, ”Career of Evil” may be portraying Hitler – but overall, the lyrics steer well clear of these topics (Stratton 2005: 99). While the band likewise makes no explicit connections between the topic of WW2 and discussions of sexuality, ”Dominance and Submission” sticks out like a sore phallus, so to speak, as the subject of the lyrics differs – at times radically – from the other songs on this record.

The song’s title gives a good indication as to the lyrical (and, I will argue in the following, musical) content, as ”dominance” and ”submission” appear as key terms in several analyses of the field(s) that can loosely be termed ”sadomasochism”. Sadomasochism ”... can include spanking, [...] various forms of restraint and

19 allmusic, ibid. (Downloaded 1 December 2007)
bondage, domination and submission … and so on” (Sullivan 2003: 153); it also implies “[t]he appearance of dominance and submission; the appearance of rule by one partner over another” (Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 4); and is “… a shorthand term for any of the multiple variations of sexual power play that could be described as dominance and submission” (Albury 2002: 39). As I intend to focus on possible representations of sadomasochism in the song in question, I take these descriptions into consideration in my search for activities that can be described as “sadomasochistic” in the lyrics, as well as a number of other factors which can shed light on the complex interplay between music and words in the song. In order to make an outline of the music, I will give a short musical analysis before moving on to my reading.

The music can be analysed as a three-part structure (fig. 1): part one contains a short introduction, the first two verses and bridges; part two consists of a mainly instrumental middle part; and part three contains a third vocal part and guitar solo, before the final downbeat. These various parts underline the song’s narrative, each in its own significant way. The story which unfolds in the lyrics takes place in the space of one night, New Year’s Eve 1963 (leading into New Year’s Day 1964) – or, as Stratton (2005: 92f) points out, so it seems to be. A closer scrutiny of the words in the song reveals that not everything necessarily makes sense if we take it at face value. It is important to take a closer look at the lyrics at this point:

**Dominance and Submission**

Oh yeah

**Verse 1**  
I spent ten years, half my life  
Just getting ready, then it was time  
Warpage in my figures, radios appear  
Midnight was the barrier, back in 1963

**Bridge 1**  
Each night the covers were unfolded  
Each night it’s Susie’s turn to ride  
While Charles, the one they call her brother  
Covers on his eyes  
Murmurs in the background  
It will be time
Verse 2  
Susan and her brother, Charles the grinning boy  
Put me in the backseat, and they took me for a ride  
Yeah, the radio was on – can’t you dig the Locomotion  
Kingdoms of the radio, 45 rpm  
Too much revolution, then

Bridge 1  
Each night the covers were unfolded  
Each night it’s Susie’s turn to ride  
While Charles, the one they call her brother  
Covers on his eyes  
Murmurs in the background  
It will be time

Bridge 2  
“It’s past midnight,” said Charles the grinning boy  
And looking at me greedily, said “it’s 1964”

Verse 3 (Call-and-response)  
In Times Square now people do the polka  
(Dominance… submission… radios appear)  
This New Year’s Eve was the final barrier  
(Dominance… submission… radios appear)  
We took you up and we put you in the back seat  
(Dominance… submission… radios appear)  
From year to year we looked out for the venture  
(Dominance… submission… radios appear)  

Dominance… submission…  
(Repeat)  

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Part one</th>
<th>Part two</th>
<th>Part three</th>
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<td>Bridge 2</td>
<td>Verse 3 (Call-and-response)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental intro (band)</td>
<td>Guitar interlude</td>
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<td>Verse 1</td>
<td>Drum break</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
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<td>Guitar solo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instrumental interlude</td>
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<td>Bridge and final downbeat</td>
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<td>Verse 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridge 1</td>
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*Figure 1. Basic structure of Blue Öyster Cult’s “Dominance and Submission”*
This three-part division works on several levels. Based upon the lyrics, the three sections can be interpreted as both a linear narrative (before midnight, midnight, and after midnight) and, more metaphorically, the build-up to a climax (e.g. foreplay, empowerment, and intercourse). The term "empowerment" in the latter reading is what binds these two together: If we read the lyrics as a description of a rite of passage, the "empowerment" in question is the realization that a new experience is taking place, an experience which enables the subject to carry on with the performance. Musically, the significant moments reside both in the “gaps” and with the guitar arrangements, as well as with the vocals.

"Steaming man sex": “Dominance and Submission” and the gaze

Appearing out of the ringing final chord of the previous song on the album, “Subhuman”, the beats of a cowbell introduce the song, resembling the ticking of a clock. What is the significance of this? Given that the few cowbell beats create a false start, as they are in a different time than the song, they can be seen to indicate something different altogether. As we can see from the lyrics, “midnight” appears as a demarcation in the first verse, as well as in Bridge 2. The symbolism of midnight often suggests a barrier, on the one hand between tension and release, as in a song like Wilson Pickett’s "In the Midnight Hour”; on the other hand between repression and release of sexual activity, as in J.J. Cale’s "After Midnight”; and yet on the other hand between the "normal” and the "deviant”, a point arguably made by a band like Judas Priest in "Living after Midnight" from their 1980 album British Steel, one of the songs which fuelled fans’ and critics’ speculations as to the sexuality of the band’s lead singer, Rob Halford. In her investigation of the development of the gay "butch” image in the 1970s, Sheila Whiteley has emphasised that Halford’s stage image of black leather, chains and studs drew evoked images of "both bikers and sadomasochism” (2006: 258). Whiteley also observes that while Halford actually came out as gay in the 1990s, the band at that point had a long history of performing songs like "Living after Midnight” "with straight faces but with carefully choreographed movements” (ibid.). While such choreography could also be interpreted as an ironic gesture, Whiteley argues that such a display of innuendo and a
body language signalling "steaming man sex" can also be marked as a source of "the fan’s own (male) pleasure and strength" (op.cit. 259). Given that BÔC sported a similar image in the 1970s, we can see a common aesthetics with Judas Priest that achieves significance also with regard to the lyrics.

Another case in point is the image of the radio, which suggests the presence of the music. This is also a marker which helps to situate the song in a context of the music of its time, as the song being played in Verse 2 is Little Eva’s hit "Locomotion". Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie, in their influential essay on rock and sexuality, stress the importance of mediation: "Rock is mediated by the way its performers are packaged, by the way it is situated as radio and dance music. Rock reaches its public via the 'gatekeepers’ of the entertainment industry, who try to determine how people listen to it" (1978: 373). The fact that "Locomotion" was written by the songwriting husband-and-wife team Carole King and Gerry Goffin, themselves an early example of "entertainment industry" employees through their work as assembly line songwriters at The Brill Building in New York (together, the couple wrote over 100 chart hits in a vast range of styles, including four Number One hits, the third of which was “Locomotion”20), further enhances the element of determination – the possible dominance of the "industry" over the consumer. In the case of "Dominance and Submission", this can also indicate the mediation of popular music via the radio: even when the narrator and his two nemeses are in the car, the music is there with them.

The spoken words "It will be time" at the end of the first two Bridges, on a different note, signifies a break with the "room" of the voice in heavy metal. Appearing in breaks when the rest of the band is absent, they take up the "gaps" of the music and are given the function of harbingers: not so much vocal matter out of place as the presence of something alien to the musical environments, they signify the coming of an entirely different experience. This is underlined by the fact that the speaker, "Charles", also appears to be in the narrator’s position – and performs in a singing voice – from the third Bridge onwards.

The opening riff, in G minor, is played by a single rhythm guitar over a backing of
drums alone. The figure played is based on pairs of open fifths, but without the
"power" one would expect from the employment of a power chord; in Walser’s
words, the chords "lack sufficient sustain and distortion", and the staccato character
of the riff "gives them an anticipatory air" (1993: 119). The riff’s most surprising trait
is the movement in the third bar from G minor to D flat, the diminished fifth or
tritonic which has been termed diabolus in musica in the early history of music.21 In
the intro, not only does this interval anticipate the move to the dominant fifth and the
turnaround in the riff, but also, metaphorically, that something unforeseen is about to
happen. The riff maintains this particular trait throughout the song; after the intro, the
anticipation grows stronger as the band comes in – the bass grounding the riff – and
the singer22 shouts "Oh yeah” in what appears to be his highest singing register – the
gesture begins on D and descends to G, two octaves above the guitars’ low G.

The first two bridges also indicate a further heightening of the tension. The guitars
play a syncopated riff underpinned by the drums, a move which removes the actual
downbeat from the first beat of the following bar, placing it instead on the four-and-a-
half in the preceding bar. Not only does this generate an unexpected, almost
stumbling rhythm, it also creates small gaps, pockets of silence, in the downbeats of
the bridge where the listener might expect the more typical sonic treatment of "vocal
extremes, guitar power chords, distortion, and sheer volume of bass and drums”
(Walser 1993: 109). Underpinning the lyrics, the music amplifies such lines as "Each
night the covers were unfolded” and, at the end of each bridge, introduces the
character Charles with "covers on his eyes". This type of blindfolding hints at
sadomasochistic play: Rebecca Plante situates it within "broader bondage,
domination, and sadomasochistic activities,” which she describes as "a very wide
range of practices, including but not limited to flagellation, humiliation, restraints,
torture, and blindfolding” (Plante 2006: 61). Charles speaks in a deep, croaking voice,
possibly veiling something which is to come: In my discussion of part two of the

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21 See, for example, Michelsen, Kari (ed.) (1978), Cappelens musikkleksikon, Oslo: J.W. Cappelens
forlag, Volume 2, pp. 244–45, for an account of the history of the diabolus in musica interval. In
Michelsen (1978), it is also noted in passing that this interval "is very difficult to sing" and that it
"should be avoided, both melodically and harmonically" (my translation).

22 The vocals on this song were sung by the band’s drummer, Albert Bouchard, both on the album and
in subsequent live appearances, according to the liner notes of the 2000 CD reissue of Secret Treaties.
song, I will argue that the transformation of the narrator, which I touched on above with my mention of a rite of passage, is caused not so much by the protagonist’s actions as by the gaze which is about to be unveiled.

The second section is signified by the song’s first regular major chords, the dominant D and subtonic C, as the character “Charles the grinning boy” appears to have the covers on his eyes taken off. As he looks “greedily” at the narrator, he triumphantly states – now in a singing voice – that “it’s past midnight … it’s 1964”, making no bones about the fact that the threshold of midnight has been passed. Before the band reaches the downbeat of what I have termed the ”guitar interlude”, the subject or ”I” is in this way constructed as an object of desire for the character Charles – an object which clearly connotes to-be-looked-at-ness. This expression was coined by film theorist Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay on visual pleasures of cinema. She terms one of these pleasures scopophilia, ”pleasure in looking”, the basis for a model of the ”gaze” rooted in sexual difference:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle … she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire. (Mulvey 1975: 19)

In Mulvey’s theory, the gaze is ”male” and controls the female object. If we take into consideration the status of ”midnight” I have mentioned above, then the ”past midnight” of the narrative is evocative of an act of transgression, creating the sense that from now on anything can happen.

If we view the narrative of Bridge 2 through Mulvey’s model, I would contend that BÖC also queers the narrator’s position (and the significant male perspective of the music) in the way Charles looks at the narrator greedily and thus constructs him as an object of desire – a strategy which will be crucial for the narrator’s development in the story. The protagonist appears in the song as ”coded for a strong visual and erotic impact” and becomes ”the leitmotif of the erotic spectacle” through the way he is displayed, both for Charles and the listener, as a ”sexual object”. This opens up the
possibility of transferring Mulvey’s emphasis on women as "to-be-looked-at" to the narrator, as he is put om display for Charles’s male gaze: according to Teresa de Lauretis, Mulvey’s essay “… precisely identifies the ’system of the look ‘ as the foremost semiotic mechanism that operates in classical cinema to produce the representation of woman” (1987: 98). This reconfiguration of the narrator into a position coded as "female” – and the subsequent queering of the male "I” – is especially pertinent in a popular music context, as Freya Jarman-Ivens has also observed in the case of Elvis Presley: "The male body on display, positioned or positioning itself as "to-be-looked-at" is thus a patricularly feminizing subject position in these terms” (2007: 162).

Mulvey’s model of the gaze has been criticized by scholars in recent years. As Hawkins points out, it ”situates questions relating to gendered identity alongside that of sexual looking” and becomes problematic through the implication that "the straight male is unable to bear the gaze” (2002: 19, emphasis in original). Similarly, Walser suggests that the world of cinema had "only recently begun to present the masculine as spectacle, in something like the way that women have been so presented” (1993: 123–24). Hawkins certainly is right in his assertion that owing to the extent to which men have been made the object of the gaze in the 1980s and 1990s, "esssentialising the male gaze clearly renders Mulvey’s earlier model quite obsolete” (Hawkins, ibid.). This point is also taken up by Susan Fast, who notes the absence of any discussion of popular music in the lion’s share of the critique directed at Mulvey’s essay: ”certainly in performances of so much rock music it is the male body that is displayed – as a symbol of masculine strength and power to male and female spectators and as an object of erotic desire for female (and probably also male) spectators (Fast 2001: 186). The male spectator in question in "Dominance and Submission” is undoubtedly Charles, who, however, makes the narrator the object for his gaze. Thus Mulvey’ model, while most useful, also fails to take in not only the female gaze, but also the male object – an object which is definitely on display in "Dominance and Submission”.

The three-part guitar break after Bridge 2 extends the change in narrative while also preparing us for the developments to come. While the band plays the chords of the song’s signature riff, the two guitarists play a duet/duel consisting of a four-bar
section repeated four times: while the first two bars are similar, the melodies differ during the last two bars. To heighten the tension, a third guitar also comes in halfway through, adding a melody on top of the other two. This can be heard as signifying three perspectives in the narrative: as it is now after midnight, the protagonist’s rite of passage is well underway. If this is so, one of the voices clearly belongs to the character Susan, adding to the mysticism of having a girl present in a heavy metal narrative: According to Walser, women “are presented [in heavy metal] as essentially mysterious and dangerous; they harm simply by being, for their attractiveness threatens to disrupt both male self-control and the collective strength of male bonding” (1993: 118). In this song, on the contrary, Susan can be seen to deliver a potential in BÖC: in addition to the two guitars normally heard, a third guitar is added halfway through the break, creating a three-way junction of voices (sexualized voices, if we read the closing guitar solo as the climax, the moment of transcendence). If we also take into consideration that BÖC principally had only two guitarists in their line-up (keyboardist Allen Lanier, though he is also credited as playing rhythm guitar, plays the Hammond organ in this song), the band is thus given an extra musical voice, just as the song shifts gear into the call-and-response part which leads to the narrator’s own audible climax.

After a four-bar drum break, where drummer Albert Bouchard adds to the anticipation by just playing four-to-the-beat without any tom-tom fills, the band enters the call-and-response build-up. Here, the previously authoritative lead guitar rests menacingly on one note (the high tonic) in the left speaker, while the bass and drums once again create “gaps” with their emphasis on the beats of one and two in each bar. The only instrument which hints at a build-up is the rhythm guitar (followed halfway through by the Hammond organ), which plays a diatonic figure of tonic minor and subtonic major, g and C. This movement underpins the entire part, starting as a careful hint of a rocking motion underneath the narrative of the lyrics, and becomes the foundation for the build-up to the moment of transcendence, the narrator’s climax and the ensuing guitar solo.

The lyrics evoke the freedom and transgression of the nightly scene. The connotations of ”polka” in the lyric line ”In Times Square now people do the polka”, set against the timeless elegance and allure of Times Square in New York, suggest that while the
"normal" ones are out there doing unhip (or rather "square") things, the narrator is definitely up to something more fulfilling. In the chant of "Dominance… submission… radios appear", the song’s title appears for the first time, heralded by the three-part guitar break which can be read as suggesting the three participants in the narrative – be that a *ménage à trois* or something more deviant, like an S/M session.

The layering of the vocals suggests yet another triad of voices. While the high chant of "dominance", in a three-part harmony with the tension-creating minor seventh F on top, is assertive; the narrator’s "submission", sung an octave lower, sounds almost naïve, as if the singer is trying on a new vocal mode. The growled "radios appear" in a bass voice on the low tonic G continues the spoken-word function of Charles’s statements of "It will be time" in Part One; this time, though, the function could be rather more like the narrator’s inner voice. The presence of the radio, in contrast to the spoken words, again might suggest the music’s function as narrative presence: Just as Charles’s gaze constructs the narrator as "object" within the music, so can the "radio" be read as a signifier of the music which transgresses the limits of the narrator’s sexuality, the "warpage in his figures".

At this stage the narrator’s position has shifted from the "I" of the song so far to one of the "abductors", most likely Charles, who spoke the incantatory words "It’s past midnight… It’s 1964" in the bridge preceding the three-part guitar break. Now, Charles takes on the role of master of the choir as the call-and-response part begins: the high-pitched chorus of "dominance" remains constant while the half-spoken "submission" rises – over a build-up of 40 bars, growing in intensity from a moderate *mf* to an appropriate *fff* – from a timid mutter to a raging growl, the singer finally shouting his *shibboleth* of "submission!" at the top of his lungs as the band segues into the instrumental break which underlies Bridge 1.

I want to suggest that this disrupts the sexual charge of the lyrical delivery – or, rather, our expectations of the gender-ness of the voice, first and foremost because the protagonist, the "I" of the narrative, is the one brought to a climax in this section. Within the paradigm of heavy metal or implied "cock rock", a term I will return to shortly, this kind of voice would usually connote male sexual aggression: As
Middleton states, vocality "is always sexualized, and this quality comes to us through the screen of gender difference, albeit a screen rendered less than stable in recent years through feminist and queer critiques" (2006: 91). As I have argued, and will argue below, BÖC queer the male singer/protagonist’s position to the degree that he is placed in a masochistic position, which he is consequently able to enjoy. Not only does this disrupt the heavy metal notion of the male protagonist’s agency, but also of the male singer’s: if "the voice [is] felt to be a key marker of identity, representing a person and (usually) carrying the machinery of (always gendered) subject-positions embedded in language” (ibid., 92), then the supposedly powerful male voice queers this by shouting out the joys of "submission!”. This speaks more of sexuality than gender, and as Middleton also observes, the “voice can be figured as standing for, that is, metonymically representing, our sense of sexuality as such. But the sexual positioning of voices is not fixed” (ibid., 93). This theatricalisation of masochistic pleasure is taken to the limit of reversing the traditional gender roles – and then the limit is transgressed, in a spectacular display of male masochism.23 This display subsequently finds its release in the guitar solo: a male masochism which, despite the renunciation of power, provides pleasure.

Underlying the vocal build-up is the chord progression of tonic and suspended fourth, which displaces the linear dynamic of the vocals. While the music builds steadily on this progression, the vocals, a reversed call/response pattern of the chanted “dominance” and the protagonist’s “submission”, are arranged with a pause, or rather a gap, between the words “dominance” and “submission” (fig. 2). This creates a musical narrative which places the chant of “dominance” alternately on the tonic and suspended fourth (the subdominant, as it were). The result is not only mounting tension, but also an emphasis on the unpredictability or "unexpectedness” of the game in question. The harmonic ”action” takes place as a rise-and-fall movement, contributing to the build-up towards the climax, the moment of transcendence, which is brought about by the final guitar solo.

23 I am referring here to Suzanne R. Stewart’s book on male masochism at the end of the 19th century, *Sublime Surrender*, especially her assertion of the “theatrical aspect of masochism, as well as its reversal of gender roles and its explicit linking of sexuality with political power” (1998: 2), which, she argues, has contributed significantly to “the renewed interest in masochism today” (ibid.).
VOCALS | Dominance (-) | Submission | Dominance (-) | Submission [etc.]
MUSIC | Gm C/G Gm C/G Gm C/G [etc.]

Figure 2. Harmonic build-up of the call-and-response part in "Dominance and Submission"

The term "sore phallus", which I have employed earlier, is by no means coincidental, as the build-up in Part 3 is blatantly "phallocentric" in a number of ways. Let me explain. The drum pattern is driven on two and four by what Hawkins refers to as "phallic snare shots on the second and fourth beats" (2002: 56), and to drive the point home, the break connecting the singer’s climactic shout and the guitar solo is dominated by near-rolls of snare beats – possibly the orgasmic speeding-up of "the phallic beat of cock rock" (ibid., 57). The distorted, "menacing" guitar (a possible display of what is referred to on the band’s early record covers as "stun guitar") starts playing a melodic improvisation which both adds tension and leads directly to the release in the final guitar solo; by this time, the guitar is moved from the left speaker and "centered" in the sound. The electric guitar, then, takes centre stage for the final display of virility and hypermasculinity, the delivery of the musical "load". Phallic power is thus "blatantly symbolised by instrumental virtuosity – harking back to the ideological core of heavy metal" (Hawkins 2002: 163f). Under these conditions, the vocal delivery of the lead singer can easily be placed within "an overtly phallocentric performance style" (Whiteley 1997: 72), "allied to the phallus" (ibid., 73), reinforcing the "phallocentric drive" (ibid., 75).

**Cock rock: The voice and the phallus**

While it is clearly problematic to refer to the lyrical narrative as either phallic or hypermasculine, due to its element of masochism, this nevertheless brings into to the discussion another phallocentric discourse that relates to the equally problematic term "cock rock". In "Rock and Sexuality", Simon Frith and Angela McRobbie make the pioneering point that rock music is both socially situated and plays a major part in the construction of sexuality: One central reason why rock, of all the mass media, is "the most explicitly concerned with sexual expression" (1978: 371), is that it is ubiquitous in youth culture. "[R]ock treats the problems of puberty, it draws on and articulates
the psychological and physical tensions of adolescence, it accompanies the moment when boys and girls learn their repertoire of public sexual behavior” (ibid.).

The word *learn* is crucial here: "For a large section of postwar youth, rock music has been the aesthetic form most closely bound up with their first sexual experiences and difficulties, and to understand rock’s relationship to sexuality isn’t just an academic exercise – it is a necessary part of understanding how sexual feelings and attitudes are learned” (ibid.). The radical point being made, then, is not only the deconstruction of rock as mediated by the way its performers are packaged and the way the music is situated as radio and dance music (ibid., 373), but also the part rock music plays as an ideological component in the social and cultural construction of sexuality – a process which takes place within a field in which representations of sadomasochism are also being produced.

This is a field that is not sufficiently problematised in Frith and McRobbie’s essay, however. They appear to focus primarily on the separate roles of women and men in popular music, maintaining that "numerous cock rock songs … express a deep fear of women” and that cock rock "presents an ideal world … in which all men are attractive and potent and have endless opportunities to prove it” (ibid., 382). They also remain in the frame of mind that rock’s displays of masculinity are less problematic: "our comparison of cock rock and teeny bop does make clear the general point we want to make: masculinity in rock is not determined by one all-embracing definition. Rather, rock offers a framework within which male sexuality can find a range of acceptable, heterosexual expressions” (ibid., 375). A substantial critique is offered by Susan Fast, who points to the fact that Frith and McRobbie maintain the binary divide between "rock” and "pop", but also that the definitions themelves have to be placed under scrutiny –"the interpretation that what is being produced is at a performance by a male rock band is solely ‘male sexual performance’ … and that both males and females perceive sexuality and gender in the way that Frith and others suggest” (Fast 2001: 163). This recalls Richard Middleton’s observation that "[a]ctual songs present a range of sexual images within this ideal-type polarity; but given the position adopted, these can only be interpreted and assessed in terms of their ‘realism’ and ‘authenticity’ (Middleton 1990: 260). It also paves the way for my argument that
BÖC utilise the typical "cock rock" format for finding a less acceptable, and (hetero)sexually ambiguous, expression in "Dominance and Submission".

Frith and McRobbie’s essay was first published in 1978, which situates it in the heyday of Blue Öyster Cult ("Don’t Fear the Reaper" and "Godzilla", their biggest chart hits, were released in 1976 and 1977, respectively). The context for their term "cock rock", then, would include the band’s own territory of the United States during the 1970s and 1980s, both "a period that saw a series of damaging economic crises" and "[a] social climate, besides shaping lyrical concerns and distributive networks, which provided the context within which heavy metal became meaningful for millions of people" (Walser 1993: xvii). Thus the term "cock rock" would appear to be highly appropriate for BÖC in general, and "Dominance and Submission" in particular.

The term is defined by the authors as "music making in which performance is an explicit, crude, and often aggressive expression of male sexuality" (the cases in point include The Rolling Stones’ Mick Jagger and Led Zeppelin’s Robert Plant); they add that cock rock performances "are explicitly about male sexual performance” and that the musicians’ skills "become synonymous with their sexual skills” (Frith and McRobbie 1978: 374). My reasons for calling the term problematic are threefold. The first becomes evident not only in my view of the narrator’s lack of agency and the antagonists’ control of the situation in the lyrics, but also the sexual opacity which characterizes the members of BÖC in a heavy metal context. This is parallel to the sexual ambiguity of a performer like Mick Jagger. Arguing that an examination of Jagger’s performance style suggests a more complex gendered identity (Whiteley 1997: 67), Sheila Whiteley contends that "while the music and publicity would suggest a phallicentric drive and so conform to Frith and McRobbie’s definition of

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24 For a recent critique of Frith’s and McRobbie’s "cock rock" theory, see Buanes, Marita (2007), ‘It makes no difference if you’re black or white, if you’re a boy or a girl? En undersøkelse av kjønn, seksualitet, race og sosial klasse i musikkvideoen, master thesis, Department of Musicology, University of Oslo. Buanes suggests the term "clit rock" – an expression coined by Skunk Anansie’s singer Skin – as a supplement and a development of the terminology in a context of female musicians.

25 One extramusical example is singer/guitarist Eric Bloom’s statement in an undated interview that his public persona’s dress code of black leather and mirror shades demanded that in the early days, he find "alternative” sources for his clothing, as it was difficult to find leather outfits then: “You couldn't get that stuff in those days, I had to buy it in gay shops or sex shops.” Hellenic Cult, ibid. (downloaded 2 December 2007)
cock rock, certain songs would suggest that the mode of address was not confined simply to the heterosexual male” (op.cit., 75). What makes this especially relevant is that the sense of sexual ambivalence she detects in Jagger’s performance pertains not only to “Jagger’s essential androgynity, an identity which is arguably synchronized in its affirmation of bi-sexuality” (ibid.), but also, by implication, “the dominatrix, skilful and fully aware of her [!] ability to control experience” (op.cit. 77). Whiteley thus provides us with a link between sexual ambiguity and sadomasochism – witness the dominatrix – which is an apt connection for the equivocal actions of ”Charles” as well as the sexual fulfilment the protagonist achieves during the song’s climax.

The second reason is taken up by Walser as he pays respect to the perceived ”sexism” of heavy metal. While he concedes that rock music can never invoke gender neutrality because it is ”intelligible only in its historical and discursive contexts”, he points out that rock may well be antisexist: ”we can spot many extant examples of rock music that use the powerful codings of gender available in order to engage with, challenge, disrupt or transform not only rock’s representations of gender but also the beliefs and material practices with which those representations engage” (1993: 135). To this I would add that in the case of ”Dominance and Submission”, any phallocentric musical discourse is disrupted by the ambiguity of the characters in the lyrics, which pertains not only to the shifting position of the narrator, but also to the transformation of the protagonist, the ”I”, especially considering that the (male) protagonist achieves sexual fulfilment while in a masochistic position: If cock rock is ”explicitly about male sexual performance”, then Blue Öyster Cult effectively destabilize ”the beliefs and material practices” traditionally perceived as ”male” in heavy metal as well as in a patriarchal society in general.

The last reason gives this destabilizing of gender roles yet another twist, now in regard to the ”gaze” of the listener. If we consider the construction by ”Charles” of the narrator as object of desire once again, we can see another interesting point with regard to ”cock rock”. In her analysis of Led Zeppelin’s concert film The Song Remains the Same, Susan Fast has observed that Jimmy Page’s appearance during the guitar solo in ”Since I’ve been loving you” can be seen (indeed, gazed upon) as something other and more than just a display of masculine prowess or phallocentricity. Starting with the (delighted) reaction of a female member of the
audience to the on-stage spectacle, Fast reads Page’s performance using Judith Butler’s concept of gender performativity. Adding to her analysis the pertinent observation that “the spectacle of male hard rock and metal performance is a powerful reversal of Laura Mulvey’s theory of the male gaze” (Fast 2001: 186), she goes on to note that “the very sight of guitar and body rubbing together is sensuous, regardless of whether one construes the guitar as phallic or Page as a man” (ibid., emphasis in original). In this way, she insists, the female fan’s gaze upon the male rock star as erotic object can be just as empowering as the ”male gaze” – ”their gaze on these men offers them an opportunity to to explore and express something important about their sexuality” (ibid., 187). Following on from this, I would argue that the exploration of sexuality is made considerably less liberating from social constructions of sexuality if the listener construes the ”I” of ”Dominance and Submission” as a woman; on the other hand, this exploration becomes incredibly more radical if we read Charles’s gaze as objectifying, and thus queering, the position of the male narrator. The positions of narrator and scopophile are thus seen to be either masculine with a twist of the straight – or open to interpretation as to whether Charles is to be perceived as a man.

This brings us to the last point I wish to make in this chapter, namely the relation between Susan and Charles in the narrative. In the first lines of the lyrics, the narrator states that ”I spent ten years, half my life/ Just getting ready, then it was time”, which has led some critics to speculate that he must be ten years old at the time these events take place. Stratton refers to the storyline as ”the narrator… observing an incestuous scene between Susan and Charles, sister and brother” (2005: 92), while the lyrics are frequently read as depicting such a scene of incest, and referred to as ”… the true story of an automobile ride taken with Suzy [sic] and her brother […] in which some unexpected sexual actions were suggested”.26 Is this a case of ”musical realism”, then, ”simply a matter of accurate description and consequent acceptance of ’the way things are’,” or can it also, in Frith and McRobbie’s words, ”involve the analysis of appearances, a challenge to ’given’ social forms” (1978: 385)? I propose a reading in

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26 “BÖC FAQ: Frequently Asked Questions about Blue Öyster Cult”, URL: http://members.aol.com/bocfaqman/boc_faq.html (downloaded 16 November 2007). This view is also expressed on the Hellenic Cult website, which is referenced by Stratton as “the biggest BÖC website” (2005: 97).
light of the latter, in which neither factor – not the narrator’s age, nor the ”truth” of the story, nor the relationship between Susan and Charles – are to be read literally.

Given that the band’s singer and frontman Eric Bloom (who, although he does not actually sing on this song, is listed on the record as co-composer) was born in 1944, the reference to ”1964” could just as well indicate that ”ten years, half my life” would mean the narrator’s teen years, suggesting the age of twenty rather than ten at the time the story unfolds. Bloom’s age also gives us an indication as to the age of the other group members, suggesting that they all reached their twenties in the mid-1960s. This way, the rite of passage I suggested earlier could just as well be a lyrical (and, consequently, fictional) depiction of the narrator’s transition from teenager to young man.

The key to the theatricality of the story is to be found in Bridge 1. Contrary to Stratton’s straight reading of Susan and Charles as ”sister and brother”, I would argue that the reference to Charles as ”the one they call her brother” (emphasis added) in both Bridges in part one suggests otherwise. Kleinplatz and Moser cite an anonymous interviewee who states that ”[s]adomasochism is only violence by metaphor: a closer metaphor would be to view sadomasochism as theater” (2006: 10). Anne McClintock offers the observation that ”in S/M, social identities shift libidinously” (2004: 241) and emphasizes ”the taboo paraphernalia of S/M: whips, belts, chains, a dog collar, and assorted sticks and leather items” (ibid., 244) – an assortment to which Blue Öyster Cult might possibly want to add the incest taboo. Perhaps the most powerful statement in this case, however, comes from Madonna, herself no stranger to the theatricalisation of sexual activities. She bluntly concludes in her foreword to the book Sex that ”nothing [in this book] is true. I made it all up.” (1992: n.p.) Even though this type of disclaimer would possibly remove the allure for some listeners, I find it useful for my interpretation of the narrative in ”Dominance and Submission”. As the very mention of a sister-brother situation threatens to place the song, and consequently the best-selling heavy metal idols themselves, in the realm of the really perverse, my reading, in offering a look behind the stage curtain to reveal the ropes, suggests a theatrical reversal of the ”normal” rather than attempting to normalise or pathologise the sadomasochistic aspects of the song.
Chapter Three

Slave to the Rhythm: Depeche Mode’s "Master and Servant" and Negotiating Masculinity

Accepting that the thrill of music is wrapped up in the exploration of identities, positioned not only in proximity but also at a distance from our own, the pursuit of escapism and pleasure in pop music is about rediscovering, rejecting or even reconstituting personal concepts of identity. (Hawkins 2002: 134)

We kind of subtly corrupt the world.
– Martin Gore

To what extent can popular music function as an arena for playing out alternatives to a binary, heteronormative perception of sexuality and gendered behaviour? In my attempt to answer this question, I intend to take a closer look at the construction of masculinity in Depeche Mode’s song "Master and Servant" and the subsequent negotiation of alternative modes of masculine behaviour through sadomasochistic role play. One of the best examples of the way popular music performers have made use of both The Velvet Underground’s employment of the theatricality of masochism in popular music and Blue Öyster Cult’s destabilising of the narrative "I" through allusions to dominance and submission is arguably the British band Depeche Mode and their use of sadomasochistic imagery, in this case the (voluntarily) masochistic position of the (male) narrator. As Kath Albury asserts, “there is no universal consensus as to which sexual activities demean and debase, and which do not” (2002: viii). Nevertheless, in the predominantly heteronormative context of popular culture, an alternative view on sexual activities and their subsequent conditions for gender issues can come across as refreshing. In this chapter I will argue that Depeche Mode offer such an alternative view in their representation of sadomasochistic play in “Master and Servant”.

27 Quoted in Malins 2006: 105.
Outside the world of academia, writers like Jonathan Miller (2003), Simon Reynolds (2005) and Steve Malins (2006) have emphasised Depeche Mode’s importance in the development of popular music, albeit from either the journalist’s or the fan’s point of view. So far, surprisingly little has been written about the band in a musicological context. I use the term ”surprisingly” because throughout their career, from the presence of sadomasochistic themes on their 1984 album *Some Great Reward* to the explicit linking of pain and pleasure on their 2006 album *Playing the Angel*, the band has recorded several songs which, in my view, offer listeners ample opportunity to re/consider normative ideas of gender and sexuality. Within the field of gender studies, Thomas Weinberg and Martha S. Magill have made an explicit connection between Depeche Mode’s song ”Master and Servant” and sadomasochism: ”Some popular music and music videos contain explicit S&M themes […]. Videos by Madonna are cases in point. Depeche Mode’s song ’Master and Servant’ and the Rolling Stones’ ’Under My Thumb’ are other examples” (1995: 227f). Even though the song is only mentioned in passing, this nevertheless provides us with a link to the various discourses of gender studies.

Depeche Mode are acknowledged as one of the greatest British bands to originate in the synth pop genre, along with bands like the Human League and Soft Cell, and later Erasure (led by Vince Clarke, formerly of Depeche Mode) and the Pet Shop Boys. Historically, the band can be identified as continuing the tradition initiated by the German group Kraftwerk. Pioneers of synthesiser-based popular music, Kraftwerk has made music exclusively with synthesizers and sampling technology since their breakthrough in the 1970s. This exerted a great influence on British groups and musicians, and in the early 1980s, Depeche Mode was among a number of British pop groups who adopted a similar approach to music technology (Warner 2003: 91). Timothy Warner points out that the band’s success would also be indicative of the public’s acceptance of the extensive use of synthesizers in pop music, an effect of the studio produced aesthetics of disco (op.cit. 92). This point is also laboured by Jon Savage, who has equally emphasised the importance of bands like Kraftwerk to the development in Britain of electronic dance music. Savage also refers to late 1970s

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28 Before deciding on ”Master and Servant”, I considered readings of several other songs by Depeche Mode which deal with sadomasochistic themes, either implicitly (”Behind the Wheel” and ”Pleasure, Little Treasure”, both 1987) or explicitly (”A Question of Lust” (1986), ”Strangelove” (1987), ”In Your Room” (1993)).
bands like Throbbing Gristle as examples of the new generation of British synth groups that moved from “brutalist noise” to “industrial dance rhythms” in the late 1970s (Savage 1996: 314). This not only helps us historicise Depeche Mode as early proponents of an aesthetics of synthesesers, but also sheds light on the band’s parallel views with bands like Einstürzende Neubauten, a band which has employed the post-World War Two industrial society as a frame of reference, not least in their use of scrap metal as percussion instruments. In sharing the same producer, Gareth Jones, Depeche Mode were able, as Martin Gore put it, to ”nick a few of Neubauten’s ideas” (Reynolds 2005: 490). At the same time, they would administer these ideas in a different and musically more accessible context, by using samplers and processing sounds, ”using [them] in a different context, in the context of pop” (ibid.). The result was an even more elegant and refined variant of the industrial aesthetic expression, without abandoning the effects or inspirational sources entirely – both the ”metal effects” and the lyrical themes, taking up sexualities in a 1980s context, are audible in Depeche Mode’s most famous songs.

They can also be situated in a period of new ideas and representations of masculinity. In his analysis of the Pet Shop Boys, Hawkins has historicised the 1980s as a period of changes in the British pop scene: “Ever since the early 1980s, when the eroticisation of the male body within popular culture moved gay erotica into the mainstream marketplace, pop music has exhibited an array of disparate and conflicting localised narratives” (2002: 135). This visibility of sexual Otherness in mainstream popular culture did not come overnight, but is an effect of a number of causes. One important factor as regards popular music, Hawkins points out, was the hegemonic representations of masculinity prevalent in rock in the preceding decades (ibid.). As we have seen in my previous chapter, the arena of pop and rock could contain examples to the contrary, but – especially in the case of Blue Öyster Cult – situated within an aesthetics of hard rock bound up in notions of power and control (Walser 1993: 108). With the advent of synthesiser-based pop, then, came a new generation of pop stars ”commodified through the bombardment of media technology into an aesthetic which was constructed around fluid constructions of identity” (Hawkins 2002: 134). As I will argue in this chapter, Depeche Mode provides us with a pertinent example of this, not least because they have managed to maintain their popularity while challenging gender conventions.
"Master and Servant", the band’s 11th single, was released in August 1984 and reached number six in the British singles charts (Malins 2006: 87) and number 87 in the American Billboard chart (Miller 2003: 196). Unlike Blue Öyster Cult at the similar point in their career, Depeche Mode had not touched on this particular theme in their songs up to this point, at least not explicitly. With regard to this, I would also argue that "Master and Servant" is an important song in the band’s own history, initiating a series of thematically related songs such as "A Question of Lust", "Strangelove”, and "In Your Room”, all of which have become hit singles.

Reading the script: The lyrics
As Simon Frith has suggested on the importance of song lyrics, "arguments about pop’s political and social value are still more likely to refer to pop words than to pop sounds" (1996: 159). Although this would have less to do with thorough readings than with the recognisable signifiers by which we identify a song, the lyrics are still a paramount part of how we hear popular music, not least because of the role of the voice. As in the previous chapter, I will use the lyrics as a frame of reference:

Master And Servant

Verse 1
There's a new game
We like to play you see
A game with added reality
You treat me like a dog
Get me down on my knees
We call it master and servant
We call it master and servant

Verse 2
It's a lot like life
This play between the sheets
With you on top and me underneath
Forget all about equality
Let's play master and servant

29 A possible early, convoluted hint at the theme of sadomasochism appears in the lyrics of the band’s 1983 single, "Love, in itself”, which contains the lines “There was a time when all on my mind was love/ Now I find that most of the time, love’s not enough/ In itself”. The idea of love being “not enough/ In itself” is open to the interpretation that the “added reality” of "Master and Servant” is a welcome addition.
Let's play master and servant

Chorus
It's a lot like life
And that's what's appealing
If you despise that throwaway feeling
From disposable fun
Then this is the one

Verse 3
Domination's the name of the game
In bed or in life
They're both just the same
Except in one you're fulfilled
At the end of the day

Let's play master and servant
Let's play master and servant
Let's play master and servant
Come on master and servant

Notably, the use of the plural “we” rather than the singular “I” in the opening lines (“There’s a new game/ We like to play you see”) is just as indicative of a “normal” heterosexual couple as of any subculture of S/M. Sadomasochism as consensual activity in an S/M subculture carries with it important factors in the participants’ negotiations of identity. Those in the know use it to set themselves apart, to make a difference: as Kleinplatz and Moser observe, “some do not regard SM as a set of interests or desires but as an identity, just as some, but not all, individuals who engage in homosexual acts adopt a gay identity” (2006: 3). This indicates not only the possible condemnation of the passive male as homosexual, but also the very fluidity which characterises all gender roles, as well as the identity politics that shape people’s interaction with each other. “Play” is also a useful indicator in the context of the opening line, in terms of the administration of roles: The theatre scholar Richard Schechner has theorised the term “play” in a theatrical context as “‘free activity’ where one makes one’s own rules” (Schechner 2003: 15), and sets this up in contrast to the tradition of ritual, which “epitomizes the reality principle, the agreement to obey rules that are given” (ibid., emphasis in original). As sadomasochistic play is arguably primarily about the staging of people’s private fantasies, the definition of play can also be applied to S/M scenes, where the participants certainly set the rules in accordance with their own desires.
Theatricality, then, is an important part of S/M play, and the next line, “A game with added reality”, indicates that the game comes first, resulting in an enhanced reality – or, rather, a constructed reality within which the role-play can take place. This brings to mind Michel Foucault’s statement that “the S&M game is very interesting because it is a strategic relation, but it is always fluid. Of course, there are roles, but everybody knows very well that these roles can be reversed” (1997: 169). Any assumptions of "everybody" notwithstanding, when we add to this Nikki Sullivan’s observation that "S/M is a game in which the participants create their ‘selves’ at will” (2003: 155), it becomes considerably less difficult to understand the ”added reality”, be it in the participants’ pleasure or the enhancement of the outside world.

The image of the dog, as well as of the narrator on his knees, is a powerful depiction of a submissive’s wish for subordination. This also invokes the example of Espen and Julie from Chapter One, and presents us with an inversion of the roles. Whereas Julie does not see the possibility of “a dog on a leash, walking its owner” as viable, Depeche Mode presents us with a subtle trading of places: in “Master and Servant”, the masculine “I” is the one being treated like a dog. This troubles the distinction between “a dog on a leash” and the epistemological claim that the bottom is in charge in S/M play. It opens Julie’s statements to a reading where she, as the female submissive, does not see the connection between expecting the top to be in charge and patriarchal constructions of gender. Consequently, the band troubles the representation of S/M as a strategy that reiterates patriarchal dominance as long as the double gaze is employed to police any deviations from the heterosexual norm.

A strong hint of the imitative structures that drive the S&M role-play lies in the line “It’s a lot like life”. The parody of power relations in patriarchal society as formulated by Foucault – “an acting-out of power structures by a strategic game that is able to give sexual pleasure or bodily pleasure” (1997: 169) – is given further weight in this context by Anita Philips’s statement that sadomasochism is “… about being hurt in exactly the right way and at the right time, within a sophisticated, highly artificial scenario” (1998: 13). Part parody, part spectacle, it comes close to life while remaining an alternative – allegedly for the better.
“On top” in the line “With you on top and me underneath” can be seen as referring less to the sexual position than to the nature of the sadomasochistic play. The “top” is usually a dominant leader whose counterpart is the “bottom”, the most visibly masochistic of the two. As the bottom or “I” in “Master and Servant” is clearly a man, the course of the action indicates that the traditional roles of dominant male and submissive female have been reversed.

This could indicate a troubling of assumed gender roles. As Pat Califia states, Western society “strives to make masculinity in men and femininity in women appear natural and biologically determined” (1994: 171). She also highlights the fluidity in sadomasochistic play, which in turn can destabilise such a dichotomy: “The participants select particular roles that best express their sexual needs, how they feel about their particular partners [...] The most significant reward for being a top or bottom is sexual pleasure. If you don’t like being a top or a bottom, switch your keys” (op.cit. 169). Such a performative view of gender roles can also be seen to support Kath Albury’s observation that “BD/SM offers an opportunity for both men and women to move between positions of ‘top’ and ‘bottom’, and change their minds once they get there” (2002: 177). Given that the S/M practitioner Julie, as she is quoted in Chapter One, compares this type of switching with “a dog walking its owner”, the lyric line can be seen to carry with it a radical potential when formulated in a context of hegemonic popular culture.

The absence of equality is also what signifies the division of roles in such a game, as exemplified by the “top” who appears to be “in charge” and the “bottom” whose primary function is to obey the top, but whose role is frequently referred to as the one actually “in charge” of proceedings: “The kind of sex we usually call sado-masochism is voluntary, consensual and, therefore, directed by masochistic rather than sadistic interests” (Philips 1998: 13). Weinberg and Kamel also bring this to the fore: “S&M scenarios are willingly and cooperatively produced; more often than not it is the masochist’s fantasies that are acted out” (1995: 19, emphasis in original). Of course, this does not automatically entail a reversal of gender roles; nor does it ensure that heteronormative power structures are parodied or parodied in any performing out of sadomasochistic play. I would argue, nevertheless, that Depeche Mode provide us
with an opportunity to view such strategies as more flexible, less rigid, than what is often the case with representations of S/M in popular culture.

The repetition of the opening stanza, “It’s a lot like life”, can be understood as connoting the escapist element of sadomasochistic role-play, as well as pointing out the imitative structure and the satisfaction that comes with the theatrical staging of such an imitation of power relations. “Disposable fun”, on the other hand, can be interpreted as an admission of the temporality or “disposability” of S&M role-play – when the game is at an end, the masks come off and the props are put away. Then again, it could also be read as the opposite, the promise of longevity in the repeated role-play that would make the world of “straight” sex (and one-night stands?) look less gratifying.

The naming of “the game” is once again indicative of the theatrical dimension of such a practice, and also of the notion of erotic excitement as “constructed around power difference … [w]hen … the gender hierarchy is missing, other social stratifications (race, class) or specially constructed power differentials (as in sadomasochism) can sometimes be eroticized” (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 1993: 18f). "In bed or in life/ They’re both just the same” connotes a staging or performance of what Angela Carter has termed “the power relations outside of the bedroom” (Carter 1979: 9). On a different note, this suggests the alleged effect of such strategies on the outside world, an effect which nevertheless serves to reinforce already established structures: “We do not go to bed in simple pairs … we still drag there with us the cultural impedimenta of our social class, our parents’ lives, our bank balances, our sexual and emotional expectations, our whole biographies – all the bits and pieces of our unique existences” (ibid.). If we are to take this for granted, there is little wonder that the songwriter Martin Gore would see role-play in a sadomasochistic manner as a possibility to destabilise the conditions that "have limited our choice of partners before we have even got them into the bedroom” (ibid.).

Even though the narrator hints at preferring the “bottom” or submissive role in the first two verses, his agency is made visible in the "come on” of the final line: it might well seem to be the dominant person’s privilege to act out his/her wishes with the
submissive playing the part of bottom, but the ending of ”Master and Servant” once again suggests the bottom’s privilege of “calling the shots”.

Taken together, these inflections also indicate one other crucial point: The double gaze serves both to pathologise deviations from and normalise hegemonic assumptions of heterosexual behaviour. Consequently, the category of heterosexuality is made to seem both natural and transparent. I would contest this status on the grounds that heterosexuality, as the silent term, is made to seem far more permanent and concrete – unambiguous – than what is actually the case in any discussion of sadomasochism. As Alison Young states, ”heterosexuality is constituted as the average, the norm and the mean of contemporary society” (1993: 37). This would make any ”heterosexual” act, despite all anal fixation or orientation, seem totally natural. On the contrary, any act of heterosexual sadomasochism is in danger of coming across as pathological, and therefore as disrupting the order of things. Young suggests that heterosexuality is a complex phenomenon, ”constituted in a matrix formed by the intersection of negotiated situations, desires, fears and attitudes” (1993: 38). This can be seen as an attempt to denaturalise heterosexuality and destabilise the assumption that it is the most transparent of sexual categories. Given the mass appeal of ”Master and Servant”, I would propose that the reversal of expected gender roles in the narrative renders visible the putative pathology of female top and male bottom as a vital alternative to normative masculinity.

A theatre of voices: The music
So how does the music sound in an S/M context? In the case of ”Master and Servant” it sounds entirely synthesised, and there are no recognisable acoustic sounds (piano, drums) or conventional electronic instruments (electric guitar, bass). The synth bass is static and relentless, driving rather than suggestive; the root notes are frequently doubled, in a fashion clearly reminiscent of 1970s disco. Gahan’s voice remains within the ambitus of one octave (A2–A3) during the song’s first half (B2–B3 after the modulation), a deep register which can easily be said to connote (male) authority. This authority, however, appears to be disrupted in the lyrical narrative, as the singer evidently places himself in the bottom (submissive) position: ”It’s a lot like life/ This play between the sheets/ With you on top/ And me underneath”. While theorists like
Pat Califia point out the authority of the submissive part, and that in an S/M session, "the top’s pleasure is dependent on the bottom’s willingness to play" (1994: 168) – and, we might add, on the bottom’s urge to control – the effect of Gahan’s positioning himself as the possible "bottom" nevertheless troubles the audible authority of the voice. This raises important questions regarding gender and sexuality in an S/M context, and also about the implicit and explicit eroticism imparted by the music. To this end, Depeche Mode provide us with an opportunity to explore Middleton’s observation that "the entire history of modern popular music [...] has provided privileged territory for posing the gender question, and for answering it in particularly complex and often disruptive ways” (2006: 126) within the context of "Master and Servant”.

An a cappella intro sets the song in motion. Here, the band stages what can be called a “theatre of voices” in a call-and-response-like figure. Monophonic, processed voices, with an octave between them, sing "It's a lot" three times before completing the sentence the fourth time with "... like life”. The effect of this is one of excitement as well as ambivalence. On the one hand, these voices raise our expectations before the curtain is raised and the music takes the stage; on the other hand, the heavy phasing and "wet” processing of the voices contribute to the machine-like feel of the stylized vocal theatre. This contributes to a distinct disembodied feel: in Richard Middleton’s words, they create the illusion of "the voice of a fantasy world-body which saturates the sonic space, voc-animating (vocalimenting) an imagined object gaze” (2006: 133). This would be indicative not only of the musical mix, but also of the theatricality of the song's subject: As the listener lends an ear to the music, the voices return the "gaze" by revealing the theatrics – "It’s a lot like life”, but this is something other, exotic, different, a supplement both to singer David Gahan’s vocal performance and the performativity of sadomasochistic play.

This appears as the central statement of the lyrics, a statement which is expanded further as the song progresses: "It’s a lot like life/ This play between the sheets”, "It’s a lot like life/ And that’s what’s appealing”. The heavily processed voices in the intro,

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30 I use the term "wet”, following Hawkins’s theory, to characterise a signal on a recording which has undergone effect processing, as opposed to a "dry" (raw, untreated) signal (Hawkins 2002: 198). The fact that the voices are evidently sampled opens up several possibilities for further treatment of the sound, in this case enhancing the “wetness” through phasing.
and the lack of tonal harmony, recall Hawkins’s description of the vocal sound of the Pet Shop Boys, which "demonstrates the strong influence of Kraftwerk through the 'disembodied' voice and the mechanical, cool and detached manner of singing" (2002: 144). This observation also has validity in a discussion of Depeche Mode, not least in terms of production, but also in the plurality of voices in their music; as biographer Steve Malins suggests, "[t]he complementary mix of [Gahan’s and Martin Gore’s voices] is one of the underestimated pleasures of Depeche Mode’s records" (Malins 2006: 94). It should also be pointed out that the flexibility of Gahan’s voice has enabled them to continue the narrative of dominance/submission on songs like "Strangelove", which Gahan sings in a commanding voice, as well as cultivating a softer vocal sound like on "Pleasure, Little Treasure".

The theatre of voices is a significant trait of the song: It accompanies Gahan in the chorus, adding "It’s a lot like life" in a high register, and also reappear during a break to repeat their introductory performance, this time backed by a drum track. Gahan himself sings in a low, almost monotonous register, reminiscent of singers like Joy Division’s Ian Curtis; a subdued performance, with only the occasional octave leap to create unexpected pockets of tension (in a word like "domination" in the final verse, the voice falls an octave in pitch from the third to the fourth syllable, echoing the vocal movements of the intro). The intensity of the vocal performance is especially audible in the line "Except in one you’re fulfilled/ At the end of the day", where Gahan’s vocal delivery is reminiscent of a speaking voice – the line is sung in monotone, with a soft voice, as if sharing a secret with the listener. This also stands out because the music starts to build up immediately afterwards, beginning with a key change which intensifies the drive of the song.

The intro is sung within the key of B, a "blank" harmonic structure which does not indicate any strictly defined tonality. Interestingly, when the music starts after the vocal intro, the tonic drops to an A, where it remains until it once again returns to B without prior warning halfway through the song. This move recalls Susan McClary’s observation that "[t]onal structures are organized teleologically, with the illusion of unitary identity promised at the end of each piece" (1991: 155). This would indicate that the tonic is the be-all and end-all of the musical narrative, and that the outcome is always already known: "To the extent that 'Other' keys stand in the way of unitary
identity, they must finally be subdued for the sake of narrative closure” (op.cit. 156). Such closure is, in tonal music, inevitably achieved by a return to the tonic.

McClary’s observation is grounded in her theory that tonal music “is narratively conceived at least to the extent that the original key area – the tonic – also serves as the final goal” (op.cit. 155). In the case of ”Master and Servant”, I would argue that Depeche Mode destabilise the notion of ” the original key area” right from the start, that the narrative movement from B to A and back also opens up the narrative of the lyrics to the ”game with added reality”. As the intro is in B, the possibility is of a narrative in which the protagonist (or antagonist) realizes the potential in S/M concurrent with the tonal shift. If the tonic of A minor then is established by this point, the rise in intensity which follows the move back to B is congruent with moving into a less stable tonic – effectively the second on the scale after A, and therefore easily one of the ”feminine” modal degrees (even though the minor key of A also can connote a ”feminine” position), eschewing what McClary refers to as masculine cadential control (1991: 157). I would further argue that, rather than asserting any essence or inherent qualities in the music, this grounds my argument that the song engenders a blurring (rather than a queering) of the pitch, in line with Hawkins’s observation that ”the mobile trajectories of queering operate in destabilising further what is already an uncertain domain” (2002: 136).

This destabilising is also evident in the song’s harmonic structure, notably because of the lack of tonal resolution in both verse and chorus. In the verses, the blurring is effected by the absence of both perfect and plagal cadences; the narrative returns to the tonic via the triad of IV-III-I. In the chorus, all attempts at tonal resolution via the fifth step are interrupted by a drum break. The only occurrence of ” closure” is at the final downbeat – or what appears to be the final downbeat, but is swiftly followed by the song’s enigmatic coda, where the singer moans and whispers over a swing-like beat with a reversed snare/bass drum pattern.

The coda signifies a radical departure in both sound and structure. Gahan’s voice utters a series of rhythmic moans, while the drum machine plays a deconstructed swing pattern made up of only snare and bass drum (the snare drum is displaced to the first beat of each bar). A rising, seemingly arbitrary melody on an unidifferentiated
instrument connects the two. The rest of the instruments and sounds are stripped away. Does the coda indicate the moment of jouissance, the protagonist’s orgasmic climax? I am tempted to read it this way. This would also indicate a different approach to the climax than the one displayed by Blue Öyster Cult: in Depeche Mode’s modality of desire, the convoluted climax is less phallic (no guitar, displaced snare beat), and thereby, I argue, open for identification to both female and male listeners. This is not least because, as Freya Jarman-Ivens asserts in her discussion of the legibility of masculinity, that "those places where masculinity becomes most legible are precisely those places where it leaves normatively 'masculine' musical expression, when it ceases to be the music of self-assuredly normative 'masculine' bodies (2007: 7). The coda, I argue, also becomes a site for the trascendence of normative masculinity, a site where Gahan opens up his mode of address to all listeners.

The idea of identification also raises the important question of whom the singer is addressing. The narrative of "Master and Servant" takes place between the authorial "I", as performed by David Gahan, and his counterpart, "you"; the "we" arguably refers to the two of them ("with you on top and me underneath"). How, then, can we propose to say anything about the listener, the "you" he is addressing? One obvious reading, given the singer’s own biography, would be that "you" is a woman, a reading which raises the questions I am taking up in this chapter: how does "I" come across as a "masculine” self when he is underneath?

Gahan’s voice is commanding throughout the narrative, and the theatre of voices that accompanies him assumes the function of a choir which echoes his thoughts. This not only creates a call-and-response-like pattern, but also evokes the choir of the Greek tragedies. The oldest function of the choir was having a central role in the dramatic progress: in the tragedies of a writer like Aeschylus, the choir assumes the active function of ”entering into the dialogue and seeking to influence the course of action by reprimanding and guiding the two [main] actors” (Lothe et al. 1997: 131). This has a number of interesting connotations, one particular being Philip Brett’s list of musical euphemisms for homosexuality, which includes "Does he sing in the choir?" (Brett 1994: 23). The issue here, though, would be that the theatre of voices in "Master and Servant” could be both an inner voice and an external guide for the
song’s protagonists. In the latter capacity, the theatre would also be informing the listener that the goings-on in the narrative are "a lot like life", and thereby exposing the theatrical character of the narrative in particular and sadomasochistic play in particular.

Could this, then, be indicative of the mode of address? As the singer is bound to address the listener regardless of gender or sexuality, this would potentially pose problems for a male audience: As Hawkins states in his reference to Jean-Jacques Nattiez’ observations, in Western heterosexual male settings, men tend to treat each other "in general suspicion despite the spaces provided for male bonding" (2002: 162), but also that "[t]he degree of ambiguity with which this is directed should not be underestimated, as it is the play with oppositional signifiers that operates as a principal strategy of protest" (ibid.). This reinforces the notion of the double gaze, and the inevitable policing of deviations from heteronormative conditions. Given that Depeche Mode has had a large following of both sexes since their early years, however,\(^{31}\) this theory would not hold up. I would suggest, rather, that the combination of accessible music and their ability to weave in and out of the kind of theme they explore in "Master and Servant" in a subtle way which invites multiple and equivocal readings, would possibly make such themes less threatening, but it would also arguably make them more accessible when driven by chart-topping synth pop.\(^{32}\)

Music for the masses: Escaping the double gaze
In an economy of sadomasochistic play, the positions are open to both, if not to say all, parties, and the roles are reversible: "If you don’t like being a top or a bottom, switch your keys." This enhances my reading of "Master and Servant" as a musical

\(^{31}\) An observation worth mentioning here is made by Steve Malins, who, while he also recognises the early and sustained mass appeal of the band, writes that "Depeche Mode have always had a sizeable gay following, initially spawned by the early '80s popularity of the band’s first singles in American gay clubs. A few years later, [Martin] Gore’s taste in cross-dressing, leather bondage straps and lyrics about ritualistic, faux-spiritual S&M struck a chord with adolescent males experimenting with their sexuality" (2006: 122f).

\(^{32}\) Stan Hawkins suggests that in dance music, "gestural responses are predicated upon aspects of physiological arousal that are manifested performatively" (2008: 121). In the film Depeche Mode 101, which chronicles their concert at the Pasadena Rose Bowl on 18 June 1988, the band starts the concert with "Master and Servant". Here, Gahan, in a white stage outfit (singlet and jeans) reminiscent of Freddie Mercury’s look during Queen’s concerts in the mid-to-late 1980s, uses the lyric line "Come on" to include the audience in the atmosphere of the song, to great effect.
representation of sadomasochism. While the narrative concerns the play which is theatrical but "a lot like life", drawing on conventions of gender and sexuality but also desire and pleasure, the music – synthesisers, samples, processed voices – amplifies the theatrical aspect by confounding expectations of "real" instruments.

Seen through the double gaze of normalising and pathologising, the narrator’s position "underneath" can be read as an appropriation by the male narrator of a seemingly fixed sexual "script", namely a feminine one. Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger have discussed this term in their theorising of heterosexuality. While they identify the sexual script as the background for all our choices of which sexual acts to perform, they also place it firmly in the realm of power and its opposite, powerlessness: "Sadomasochistic themes surface repeatedly in descriptions of heterosexual women’s eroticism. Read any book describing women’s sexual fantasies, and you will find many devoted to sexual activities rooted in the eroticizing of powerlessness" (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 1993: 17). This would allow us not only to identify the urge to be the one underneath as feminine, but consequently also the one on top as masculine, within the economy – or rather, taxonomy – of heteronormative gender roles.

Depeche Mode trouble this binary by staging the subject who achieves jouissence in a nonmasculine position. This opens up the possibility of reading Gahan’s persona in "Master and Servant" as a masochistic subject, not least in relation to the theatricality of the song. Slavoj Zizek has suggested that, "[i]n sadism we encounter direct negation, violent destruction and tormenting, whereas in masochism negation assumes the form of disavowal – that is, of feigning, of an "as if" which suspends reality" (Zizek 1994: 91), and also considers it "inherently theatrical" (op.cit. 92). Drawing on the work of Gilles Deleuze, Zizek reads the economy of a masochistic relationship as both an inversion of the patriarchal relationship of dominance and submission, where the male victim authorises "the sovereign lady" "to humiliate him in any way she considers appropriate" (op.cit. 91), but he also recognises that the power and control do not unequivocally reside in the top’s hands: "It is the servant, therefore, who writes the screenplay – that is, who actually pulls the strings and dictates the activity of the woman [dominatrix]: he stages his own servitude" (op.cit. 92, emphasis in original). The binary of master and servant is thus opened to interpretation as to who the master
is: given that the song is about a master and not a mistress, Depeche Mode can possibly be said to blur the distinction between top and bottom in the heteronormative dichotomy even further.33

This opens the song to interpretation by the fans and other listeners, a wealth of readings which would certainly give us several clues as to the identification of the listener with the singer. On a different note, it would also run contrary to Lawrence Kramer’s somewhat bleak observation in After the Lovedeath:

In classic masochism, as described by Sacher-Masoch, only a masculine subject can receive masochistic pleasure from a woman. But by the logic of the phallus in Western culture, only a feminine subject can receive bliss in sheathing, rather than wielding, the phallus. (Kramer 1997: 150)

What Depeche Mode accomplish in "Master and Servant", then, is precisely the reversal of such a logic: The subject or authorial "I" is presented as the subject which receives satisfaction, bliss, in sheathing the phallus which the "you" is wielding, thus relinquishing phallic power. In the light of this, the song becomes an example of what Hawkins suggests: that the position traditionally coded as "feminine", which is otherwise marginalised, is opened to both women and men, as "the assumption of feminine and masculine positions cannot be reduced to the binary constructs of biological determinism” (2002: 198).34 This is also in line with Kramer’s observation that "the lack of boundaries between pleasures and positions collapses the polarity of masculine and feminine and along with it the polarity of heterosexual and homosexual” (1997: 151). Depeche Mode stage a game with added reality, and the game promises fulfilment; the soundtrack is most accessible.

33 Interestingly, the master/servant dichotomy was echoed by Prince a decade later, as a result of his feud with Warner Brothers: prior to parting ways with his longtime record company in 1995, he resorted "to changing his name and inscribing 'SLAVE' on his face" during concerts (Hawkins 2002: 189). Hawkins reads this as a master/slave analogy in a Hegelian sense, as "a motivic object of the historical process by which the character of the master is engated dialectically by the slave" (ibid.).

34 This also opens up the performance to include strategies of drag, as employed by Depeche Mode’s songwriter Martin Gore as early as in the mid-1980s. According to biographer Steve Malins, Gore took to wearing black leather body straps and a black miniskirt on stage during the band’s tour in promotion of the Black Celebration album (Malins 2006: 111). Gore, who sings the song "A Question of Lust" both on the record and in concert, would also frequently perform this song while wearing "a black, short-legged romper suit complete with studs, buckles, suspender belt and black stockings" (op.cit. 110). This invokes Judith Butler’s theories of drag: "[i]n imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency” (Butler 1990: 175, emphasis in original).
While the double gaze can easily be understood as a model for policing sexuality, namely deviations from a putative heterosexual norm, I would argue that Depeche Mode pass under this radar with "Master and Servant". This could, of course, be partly explained by Hawkins’s view of the development within the arena of popular music with regard to the exoticisation of differences, including those found within discourses of sexuality: "we know that in pop performances, androgyneity and difference have become fashionable in a media-driven cultural climate which thrives on the slightest variation in sexual orientation while still adhering to the male/female dichotomy of gender" (2002: 188). Perhaps, then, it is herein that the strength of Depeche Mode’s strategy lies: Adhering, or appealing, to the public at large enables them to make, to borrow one of their album titles, ”music for the masses” while retaining the subversive potential of sadomasochistic (re)configurations of gender.
Chapter Four

Identity and Violence: Sadomasochism, Aggression and the Aestheticisation of Pain in John Zorn’s Naked City

What is the role of musical representations in the construction of cultural phenomena? As I argue in this thesis, these representations are crucial to our experience of what makes up a given phenomenon. In a context of popular culture, the single depictions, fragments, and representations are what we relate to and piece together in order to construct a whole. This also applies to the phenomenon (or, rather, phenomena) of sadomasochism. The cultural context enables us to link visual elements – the theatrical effects, like handcuffs and whips – to sadomasochistic play, even though the whip belongs just as readily to horse racing, or the handcuffs to policemen’s handling of dangerous criminals. Then again, such an understanding also grounds our ability to read cruelty into S/M aesthetics, or to identify an element of violence in S/M play. The context plays a defining role in this, and popular culture is equally central to the dissemination of representations and the whole that we assemble from them. Within the frame of this thesis, I pay attention to popular music as a medium for such representations, and to how popular music in a broad sense can shape our understanding of these representations.

How, then, can popular music contribute to our perception of the aestheticisation of pain, and thereby serve to conceal the employment of violence, in sadomasochistic play? In the examples so far in this thesis, I have attempted to show how the various artists’ employment of S/M imagery, in the lyrical as well as musical matter, can present not only a more nuanced version of what S/M play can be about but also how these examples can generate alternatives to hegemonic masculinities for a predominantly heteronormative audience. One dilemma which becomes clear in these cases is that, as “lineages of styles and genres transport with them sets of assumptions” (Hawkins 2002: 2), the representation of S/M aesthetics in popular music might as well cause a reinforcing of existing patterns of gender and sexuality. In this chapter, therefore, I will take up the problem of aestheticising violence in sadomasochistic play. To this end, I will pay attention to an example that might shed
light on the possibility of violence that might escape the parading of paradoxes in consensual S/M.

"John Zorn’s S&M Circus"\textsuperscript{35}: Naked City and Aesthetics of Violence

“I have collected thousands of moments, and now I would like to make a story out of them,” states the director/narrator Claudia Heuermann in her 2002 documentary on John Zorn, \textit{A Bookshelf on Top of the Sky: 12 Stories about John Zorn}. The statement is poignant in that Zorn himself comes across in the film as an elusive person who proves to be impossible to “capture” other than as a series of “moments”. The fragmented nature of his musical output is possibly best displayed in the music of his band Naked City, a band which presents us with a good example of how the violence inherent in S/M can be conveyed through music as well as the imagery that comes with the packaging of the music. Last, but not least, the band’s musical aesthetics may not only be described as just such a series of “moments”; it can also provide us with important clues as to how we read a perceived totality out of such a fragmented whole in a context of popular music, and how that totality can prove to be illusory.

The American saxophone player and composer John Zorn led the now-defunct band Naked City from the late 1980s and well into the 1990s. Apart from Zorn, the band consisted of guitarist Bill Frisell, keyboardist Wayne Horvitz and drummer Joey Baron, all highly merited jazz musicians, and bassist Fred Frith, a composer/improviser of renown, whose previous bands include 1970s progressive rock band Henry Cow. Having described Naked City in a characteristically vague way as an attempt at fusing grindcore and free jazz, Zorn has also coined the description "S/M hardcore punk miniatures" for the band’s music.\textsuperscript{36} Zorn has also publicly stated that he has been involved in an S/M scene, an assertion that gives us a potentially different angle for looking at his work with Naked City. In addition, the band uses imagery on their record sleeves that depicts situations of sadomasochistic play and give direct

\textsuperscript{35} The title is taken from a song on The Lounge Lizards’ album, \textit{Queen of All Ears} (Strange & Beautiful, 1998).

\textsuperscript{36} John Zorn, liner notes for Masada: \textit{Sanhedrin} (Tzadik, 2005).
references to the subject in several of their song titles, thus allowing us to look closer at the musical representation of such an aesthetics.

Naked City first came to the attention of a wider record-buying public with their eponymous first album, released in the US in 1990 on the Nonesuch label, a division of the Warner/Elektra conglomerate. Containing 26 songs and with a total running time of 55 minutes, the album features a mix of Zorn’s “S/M miniatures” and cover tunes by such artists as Ornette Coleman (“Lonely Woman”) and Henry Mancini (“A Shot in the Dark”), plus a selection of covers of film music originals by Ennio Morricone (“The Sicilian Clan”), John Barry (“The James Bond Theme”) and Jerry Goldsmith (“Chinatown”). While these songs are indicative of what Susan McClary refers to as Zorn’s debt to African American and pop culture (McClary 2000: 147), they can also be taken as signifiers which make the album more accessible to a broader audience, taking the place of some of the more subversive – not to say offensive – elements of the aesthetics of Naked City.

In 1991, the year after the release of Naked City, Earache Records – a British label specialising in grindcore and thrash metal – released Torture Garden, a 42-song mini album with a running time of barely 23 minutes. This LP (which was released as a 12” to be played on a turntable at 45 rpm), while not being identical to its predecessor, has several overlaps with Naked City and can, to a certain extent, be interpreted as a more condensed version of that album. Released to coincide with the band’s European tour that year, the album is also a possibly more direct expression of the band’s aesthetic goals, with not only the title, but also the imagery on the record cover referring directly to places for sadomasochistic activity. If we also consider the fact that the cover versions are absent on the Earache release and that only a handful of the songs exceed one minute in duration, we can interpret the album as capturing the term ”S/M hardcore punk miniatures” very precisely.

37 The Torture Garden is an S/M club in London, in a large space over four floors, which also includes shops ”selling fetish shoes, piercing jewelry, and clothing items made of leather” (Steele 1996: 3f). In both cases, that of the club and the band, the name is probably taken from Octave Mirbeau’s 1899 novel Le Jardin des Supplices, which has been translated into English as The Torture Garden. The novel is recognised as one of the decadent novels of the late nineteenth century fin-de-siècle culture, a culture in which, according to Bram Dijkstra, ”misogyny, the wonders of science, and the theory of evolution had joined to form a holy trinity of saintly masculinity against the regressive entity called woman” (1986: 182).
The aggression and energy of grindcore permeates the selection of songs on both albums. The common ground is established in a range of songs whose titles connote aggression and violence as well as the exceptionally high tempo of the "miniatures" in question ("Speedball", "Blood Duster", "Hammerhead", "Igneous Ejaculation"). After that, the idiosyncrasies of each album take over. Whereas the selection of songs on *Naked City* also takes in the heritage of American film and popular music through the cover versions mentioned above, and thus allows the album a potentially larger following than *Torture Garden*, the latter contains songs which further emphasize the aggressive aspect ("The Ways of Pain", "Whiplash", "The Blade"), and also explicitly make a play on putative S/M imagery ("Torture Garden", "Osaka Bondage", "S&M Sniper"). Zorn also enhances the atmosphere of aggression with titles like "Perfume of a Critic's Burning Flesh", "Thrash Jazz Assassin", and "Jazz Snob Eat Shit", which signify his radical approach to jazz and employ a suitably sadistic humour in the process – a point I will return to later in this chapter.

The eight songs from *Naked City* that make up the "middle section" of the album’s contents (tracks 10 through 17 of a total of 26) can be read as a suite of free jazz/grindcore amalgams or "miniatures" (figure 1). The songs range in playing time from 11 to 43 seconds, and the total playing time is less than three and a half minutes. In each of these miniatures, the bands seems to pack as much as possible into the compressed amount of time. The songs are strung together without breaks, thus making up a whole. This is my primary reason for reading them as an entity, one which adequately represents Naked City’s repertoire of "hardcore S/M miniatures".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Igneous Ejaculation</td>
<td>0:23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blood Duster</td>
<td>0:17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hammerhead</td>
<td>0:11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demon Sanctuary</td>
<td>0:41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Obeah Man</td>
<td>0:20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ujaku</td>
<td>0:30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fuck The Facts</td>
<td>0:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speedball</td>
<td>0:43</td>
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</tbody>
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*Figure 1. The "middle section" of songs from Naked City, with running times*
The most obvious common traits for these songs are the jump-cut method, which the band uses to move freely between seemingly arbitrary styles; the extremely short duration of each section within the songs; and the interaction between singer Yamatsuka Eye and Zorn. On "Igneous Ejaculation", the voice is foregrounded, delivering a short, sharp howl (0:06). This is in keeping with the grindcore aesthetic: over a backing of guitar/bass/drums, the singer uses his voice more like an instrument than a carrier of lyrical meaning. The aesthetics of such a "vocality" (or, more precisely, the voice as instrument) are further enhanced in "Blood Duster": A mere two seconds after a short free jazz workout, where Frisell interjects short Country & Western licks, the grind dissolves into a heavy metal riff, rising in pitch, as Yamatsuka warbles on top in tandem with the saxophone, which imitates his frenetic vocal delivery. On "Hammerhead", Yamatsuka’s voice is double-tracked, emanating growls, while the saxophone wails above him on a sustained high fifth.

Halfway through this middle section, the band has established a mode of listening: one has an idea of what to expect, and when. Or so it seems. In "Demon Sanctuary", the third part (0:10), following a catchy guitar riff and a burst of grindcore/free jazz, not only signifies a radical break but also creates an atmosphere of expectation. The bass and drums recede into the background, playing a muted ostinato, while Zorn plays small, plaintive saxophone figures almost reminiscent of Jan Garbarek, for an unexpectedly long period of time (seven seconds). This is broken up once again by Yamatsuka’s voice, in the following part (0:17) where he babbles rather than screams while the band (piano, bass, drums) plays three bars of cool jazz reminiscent of Stan Getz’s 1950s records or Miles Davis’s Quintet. Multiple layers of intertextuality are produced, as the band not only confounds the listener’s expectations but also utilises perceived familiar genres.

The connection between voice and saxophone (or "not-voice") is expanded to include the guitar in "Ujaku". As Frisell improvises freely in a high register over a dirge-like riff in the rhythm section (0:13), Yamatsuka babbles incoherently; they are subsequently joined by Zorn (0:18), who creates a connection between voice and guitar by operating within the same register, but who also seems to imitate the two and thus attempt to transgress the limits of his own instrument. In contrat, the saxophone is absent in "Fuck the Facts". Here, the sound is changed radically as Frith
utilises a fuzz pedal on the opening riff: this removes the bottom punch from the bass while adding a certain mid-tone menace, thus bringing it closer to the guitar in sound (0:03). The guitar/bass interaction is underpinned by a frenetic drum pattern; the overall effect is not unlike the sound and playing on early Napalm Death records like Scum. Yamatsuka’s voice is similarly distorted and placed at the back of the soundbox (0:07), so that the song sounds compacted and potentially inaccessible to untrained ears.

A remedy is provided in "Speedball": for the first ten seconds, the song consists of long, sustained organ tones, before the bass and drums take over, playing what resembles a sped-up bossa nova beat and creating a mounting tension. The song appears both as a presentation of the soloists and as a vocal work-out: At 0:15 the band (minus saxophone) enters, improvising freely, with Yamatsuka wailing in the foreground. After a swift hiatus in the band’s wall of sound, they re-enter with the saxophone on top (0:20), playing in the same register as the voice. Then follows a chase-like part where first guitar (0:24) and then voice (0:30) deliver solo-like bursts of improvised noise over a grindcore backing. Yamatsuka then uses his voice to theatrical effect by babbling rapidly in his high register (0:30), middle register (0:32) and high register again (0:36); the band then plays a cross between grindcore and free jazz until the final downbeat. The juxtaposition of a wide variety of popular genres thus encompasses both comedy and the final “band call” to round off the section.

One distinct trait in both the saxophone and the voice, I would argue, is the transgression of individual limits. While Yamatsuka alternately babbles, screams and growls, without uttering a single discernible word, Zorn pushes his saxophone beyond free jazz territory to the point where it emulates the sound of both voice and guitar. The sound is piercing, and the effect is tactile: "Boosting the volume can force zonal crossover, as when very loud performance makes us ‘feel’ a pitch rather than hearing it in the normal way; our skin resonates with it, as with a rhythm.” (Middleton 2000b: 107) This opens for an interpretation of the music as transgressive, a crossover into the S/M territory pictured on the cover through the sound of the record.

The juxtaposition of different popular genres in Naked City’s music is also pointed out by Susan McClary. Taking up the subject of a postmodern condition in music,
McClary cites Frederic Jameson, who "refers to the dizzying mixtures of recycled codes in the art of our time as pastiche or blank parody (‘parody that has lost its sense of humor’)" (2000: 139f). When she turns to John Zorn as an example of a postmodern composer/musician, she argues that his music, rather than just "a highly ruptured, eclectic surface" of arbitrary signifiers, "nonetheless traces a perceptible background trajectory" and fits the description of "playing with signs" while maintaining a coherent narrative (op.cit. 145). McClary also cites Jean Baudrillard, who "labels the products of our age 'simulacra' – copies that lack originals" (op.cit.140). This would indicate a practice of simulation to make the product understandable in a larger context. In her survey of Zorn’s earlier record Spillane (1987), she observes that Zorn “… draws on jazz of various sorts, blues, and country, all of which he (a saxophonist of exceptional prowess) and his ensemble of collaborators simulate with uncanny precision” (147).

While the observation of Spillane is also pertinent for Zorn’s actual film music, as recorded on albums like Filmworks IV, the amalgam of styles on Naked City and Torture Garden fits the description of "simulation" perhaps even better. Given that the music of Naked City is rooted in an aesthetics of grindcore, but also performed by a group of musicians mainly associated with jazz, I would argue that Naked City could be said to "simulate grindcore" in their music. In this regard, the codes and conventions of both grindcore and free jazz – as well as a range of other styles – are employed to create a coherent musical whole, which also functions as a musical background for other signifiers.

The songs in question provide us with a point of entry into the musical dimension of Naked City. Zorn, who is internationally recognized as a virtuoso saxophonist "of exceptional prowess” (ibid.), leads a band of white male avant-garde/jazz musicians through high-energy exercises in grindcore/free jazz fusion which at first listen appear as cunning studio collages of various composed parts. The experience of Naked City in concert belies this impression: As Susan McClary states, “Their collective
virtuosity is far more evident in concert, for the juxtapositions that sound on recordings like mere splicings are actually performed” (ibid.).

The band is joined by Japanese vocalist Yamatsuka Eye for several songs on both albums. Yamatsuka, whose work with bands like The Boredoms has bordered on grindcore as well as avant-garde noise, adds to the mix with high-pitched vocals delivered at such a pace that in most cases, the words are entirely garbled – a staple of early grindcore bands such as Napalm Death. Scott Carlson, a member of Napalm Death’s contemporaries Genocide and Repulsion, has explained the vocal style of grindcore as the product of an urge to “really thrash out”, influenced by both 1980s hardcore punk bands like Black Flag and thrash metal bands such as Slayer: “[The songs] were written to be played about the speed of a Slayer song, and they ended up so fast that the lyrics are just garbled … those songs were written to be played at a much slower speed […]” (Mudrian 2004: 56f). This became a vital part of the vocal aesthetics, as pointed out by another contemporary, John Tardy from the band Obituary: “It just seemed like, at times, if I couldn’t come up with words to go along with the song, I’d just kinda make something up and just fill in something that wasn’t maybe a word, but it sounded good and fit in the song, so I’d pretty much go with it” (op.cit. 144). In Naked City’s case, the pitch of the vocals adds to the energy in the band’s delivery and also works in tandem with Zorn’s saxophone, adding a range of high frequencies which can be read as an extra element of menace – or, in this case, violence – in Naked City’s music.

The element of violence appears as crucial in the case of Naked City. It is also precisely the point where the discourse of violence and aggression touches on relevant topics within gender studies. The connotations of S/M in Naked City’s aesthetic presentation and the underlying aggression in the band’s recordings provide us with a good starting point for a closer scrutiny of musical representations of violence in sadomasochism. I will argue that not only the visual, but also primarily the musical representation of sadomasochism can be considered a crucial factor in the aestheticisation and ”normalisation” of sadomasochistic imagery in popular culture.

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38 In addition to McClary’s description and the evidence which can be gleaned from available live recordings, my own experience of seeing Naked City live in concert in July 1991 – and hearing a bootleg recording of this concert in recent years – confirms this fact.
Sadism has been variously described, in the early stages of research on the subject, by Havelock Ellis as "[t]he relation of love to pain [which] is one of the most difficult problems, and yet one of the most fundamental, in the whole range of sexual psychology" (quoted in Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 1), by Richard von Krafft-Ebing as "an aberrant and atavistic manifestation of the 'innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound or even destroy others in order thereby to create sexual pleasure in one's self'" (quoted in McClintock 2004: 237f) and by Sigmund Freud as "an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent and exaggerated and has been brought to the foreground by displacement" (quoted in ibid., 238). As research on S/M has moved from early clinical, predominantly psychoanalytic perspectives to an emphasis on psychosocial aspects of S/M (Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 6), the element of pathology has been ruled out, but a cursory, fitting definition can still be "sexual pleasure by inflicting pain". In this context, the music of Naked City appears to raise the question of whether music can inflict physical pain – and be interpreted as having sadistic potential. In the case of Zorn’s band, the musical gestures certainly connote violence and aggression; if we add to this the obvious S/M aesthetics of the cover art and song titles, the notion of “sadistic music” (SM) becomes a relevant topic.

The fusion of styles that makes up the fundament for Naked City’s musical exercises mirrors the almost theatrical parading of sadomasochistic themes in the band’s artwork and song titles. During the 1980s Zorn prepared the ground for Naked City with projects such as the Spy Vs. Spy album, where the band (two saxophones, double bass, two drummers) play hardcore punk versions of Ornette Coleman compositions. This combination of styles is realized on Naked City and Torture Garden as a constant overlapping of musical genres, creating the effect of a silent movie/cartoon soundtrack at high speed or absurd/improvised theatre.

The S/M imagery that permeates Naked City’s aesthetics is also part of a larger structure of identity politics. Both Hisama (2000b: 1289) and McClary (2000: 149) point to the fact that the cover of Torture Garden features Asian women undergoing sexual torture, and McClary quotes Zorn as stating that his connection to the subject matter is a personal one: "[The graphic images] have been used for their transgressive
quality, illustrative of those areas of human experience hidden in the gaps between pain and pleasure, life and death, horror and ecstasy … When I lived in Japan, I got involved in the S&M torture scene. I lived those images.” (ibid.) Here, Zorn constructs a narrative of lived experience around the use of clearly sadomasochistic images on the band’s record covers.  

This represents a dilemma, but also an important point in the deconstruction of Zorn’s use of S/M aesthetics within the framework of Naked City. According to McClary, Zorn has been the object of criticism for his use of such images of women, but he does not deny the violence of both his visual and musical imagery (ibid.). It is fully possible to read the images (and, by implication, the musical output) as indicative of a misogynist stance in relation to the element of aggression in S/M. It is also, no less, possible to see Zorn’s identity politics and employment of S/M mythology as a radical deployment of Otherness, with Naked City as a most interesting example.

This allows us to return to the aspect of violence in sadomasochistic play. Can S/M really, as Kleinplatz and Moser (2006) indicate, be said to be unproblematic even when used in the aestheticisation of violence? Questions of sexual violence, not least against women, inevitably surface, along with the question of how this is treated in mainstream media, and to which extent the depiction of sadomasochism contributes to this. These are issues that need to be addressed, both in the light of my examples in this chapter and in a consideration of the critique levelled against Zorn for his use of sadomasochistic imagery in particular and his depictions of women in general. Let us then take a closer look at some of the most pertinent criticism in the intersecting fields of feminist and gender studies.

In feminist studies, researchers have pointed out the potentially misogynistic strands in sadomasochism, both as a commodity mediated by media and fashion and as a sexual preference. Naomi Wolf, in her deconstruction of what she calls “the beauty myth”, asserts that the sexual urge is shaped by society (1991: 132) and that the myth

39 In an entirely different corner of his oeuvre, we find an album Zorn published in 1997 in his Filmworks series – a 20-album series of soundtracks for real or imaginary films – simply titled Filmworks IV: S & M and More. This album purports to contain music for five films, all of which appear to have the common thematic thread of sadomasochism. In the sleevenotes, it is stated that “Zorn’s relation to the S/M scene has been infamous”. Zorn himself nevertheless comes across as detached from any personal involvement, but rather as “just a musician”, in his liner notes to the various tracks. The construction seems to differ from one project to the next.
works in a patriarchal society to suppress women’s sexuality, so that the external cue of "beauty sadomasochism" reshape[s] female sexuality into a more manageable form than it would take if truly released" (ibid.) through the world of fashion, and that the images projected teach women "that no matter how assertive she may be in the world, her private submission to control is what makes her desirable” (133). A core point in Wolf’s critique of harmful fashion practices is that the fear which is instilled in both sexes of the female "getting out of control” became a convenient driving force for utilising sadomasochistic imagery in 1980s fashion and media: “The upsurge in violent sexual imagery took its energy from male anger and female guilt at women’s access to power.” (137) This is visible not least in "the double standard for men’s and women’s nakedness in mainstream culture that bolsters power inequities”: "To live in a subculture in which women are routinely naked where men aren’t is to learn inequality in little ways all day long” (139).

The question of inequality grounded in sexual difference has also been taken up by Sheila Jeffreys in her book on harmful fashion and beauty practices. Jeffreys, in line with what she terms the 1970s feminist critique of makeup and other beauty practices (2005: 1), writes of how the pressure from pornography has generated "new fashion norms for women … such as breast implants, genital waxing, surgical alteration of labia, the trappings of sadomasochism in the form of black leather and vinyl” (4). She argues that S/M, in the shape of "the sadomasochistic romance of male dominance, where sex is constructed from male dominance and female subordination” (24), has caused a visibly misogynistic trend in late twentieth-century fashion “through the incorporation of pornographic and sadomasochist imagery” (87). More importantly, she singles out S/M as a dead end for female sexuality, since it its evidently always already male-favouring: "Within pornography the genre of sadomasochism has become more and more important […] In SM pornography and prostitution women are beaten, tied up, fistifucked, burnt, cut, by the male customers. But women perform the role of dominatrix to men too, because that is a way that men can gain the excitement of submission in an environment that they can control.” (91)

While Wolf certainly is right in her assertion that sexual urges are shaped by society, she does not take into consideration the fact that popular music presents us with an arena for destabilising the gender-ness that is part and parcel of such urges. When she
asserts "a subculture in which women are routinely naked where men aren’t”, the
objectification of men in popular culture in the 1980s and 1990s, not least through
popular music (Hawkins 2002: 17), goes unmentioned. Likewise, when Jeffreys
characterises "the sadomasochistic romance” as an arena of male dominance no
matter whether the male is top or bottom, she effectively precludes the possibility of
destabilising gender roles for either women or men. This runs counter to the
observations of a writer/practitioner like Pat Califia, who has stated that ”the dynamic
between a top and a bottom is quite different from the dynamic between men and
women, whites and blacks, or upper- and working-class people” and that in S/M play
"roles are acquired and used in very different ways” (1994: 169).

Why, then, would a feminist critique of S/M imagery be relevant for Naked City’s
depiction of sadomasochistic acts? I propose two important reasons for this. On the
one hand, this point of view as also been expressed by one of Zorn’s staunchest
academic critics, Ellie Hisama, who has criticised Zorn’s use of Asian female voices
in his music (2000a) as well as on record covers (2000b). Through a reading of Zorn’s
1980s works ”Forbidden Fruit” and New Traditions in East Asian Bar Bands, Hisama
points to the fact that Zorn ”habitually performs works that are predicated upon his
troubling gender stereotypes about Asian women” (2000a: 335); by depicting the
Asian female as ”sexy but not sleazy”, Zorn ”perceives [the woman’s] world as
distinct from and opposite to his own. He eagerly wants to explore her world, and
invariably ends up exoticizing it.” (337) Hisama makes an explicit link to the mythic
depictions of Asian female identity in Western (notably the US) popular culture:
"[E]nveloped in a mythic sexual aura (the geisha girl, the Singapore girl, the Thai
prostitute who eagerly awaits the arrival of the US military), Asian female identity
has long been linked with prostitution and naughty sex” (341f). In her reading, this
link is reinforced by the music industry: ”Through its ability to reach more and more
of the globe by means of increasingly more elaborate forms of mechanical
reproduction, the popular music industry can instantly represent other worlds as its
practitioners see fit.” (342) While this would be a fitting description of Zorn’s own
strategy for depicting sadomasochistic imagery through Naked City’s music,
Hisama’s observations also highlight the sets of assumptions which tend to follow
the patterns of consumption and production of popular music.
In a more recent article, Hisama has criticised Naked City in particular for the combination of S/M imagery and Zorn’s penchant for Asian women. She points out that the cover of the *Torture Garden* compact disc includes film stills that depict “Japanese women engaged in various sadomasochistic acts”, some with “their mouths wide open in pain” (2000b: 1289). While her description of Zorn’s musical method as “writing in sound blocks and juxtaposition of disparate styles” is marginally more favourable than in her previous article, she also makes the especially relevant point that the music is “punctuated by screams of a male vocalist” (ibid.); indicators not only of pain, but also acts of violence (McClary 2000: 146), the screams “establish the one-sided nature of pleasure and control in this scenario” (Hisama 2000b: 1289). This should not go unnoticed, as it may also tell us about the violence which, on the other hand, can be carried within hegemonic assumptions of femininity and feminine behaviour, including the putative playfulness which S/M in its “popular” version carries with it. This, in turn, would justify a feminist critique of sadomasochism in a popular music perspective.

The question that inevitably needs to be asked in such a discussion is whether John Zorn’s employment of S/M imagery is to be taken at face value. Any similarities between Naked City’s depiction of sadomasochistic acts and John Zorn’s views on women notwithstanding, the dilemma that surfaces in a debate of sadomasochistic play in a musical context, as we have seen in previous chapters, is the one concerning humour and, by implication, parody. In her reference to Jameson’s concept of “blank parody”, McClary opens up for a discussion of the parody that is also characteristic of S/M play *qua* theatre. McClintock’s description of S/M as “high theatre” that “plays the world backwards” and displays sadomasochistic activity as “a theatre of scene and surface” (2004: 237) is significant here, as a listener armed with this clue will also be able to hear Naked City’s music and see Zorn’s construction of his own persona – someone who has “lived those images” – as a clever employment of the theatrics of S/M. Zorn himself makes a relevant point in *A Bookshelf on Top of the Sky*, in discussing the function of the songs of Naked City in other musical contexts: “People make mistakes in thinking … that they listen to *Torture Garden* and figure that’s who I am. […] In a sense I’m all those things, and in a sense I’m none of those things. Those are just a product of my imagination.” This can be read in the same way as
Madonna’s disclaimer from Sex, which I mentioned in Chapter 3: The possibility of an ironic reading is always present, and should not be overlooked.

Zorn’s use of irony, which arguably comes across in the imagery itself as well as in the music (as in song titles such as the aforementioned "Jazz Snob Eat Shit” and "Perfume of a Critic’s Burning Flesh”), therefore becomes trans-ideological. This would mean that the employment of ironic potential inevitably will be understood in different ways by various consumers: "What might be considered subversive and transgressive to some might be offensive and insulting to others” (Hawkins 2002: 20). Hawkins also emphasises that while "irony might work for some as a powerful political tool, it holds for others a destructive function” (ibid.). A crucial aspect of this is "the idea that irony is only determinable by the interrelations of listeners/fans in the context of the artist’s performance” (op.cit. 19).

The point I wish to make here is that a reading of Zorn’s use of sadomasochistic imagery in Naked City’s music and visual presentation as purely ironic would not do justice to the musical expression, nor to the project of identity construction through the music of Naked City as a whole. Although reading Zorn’s performance of an "S/M hardcore punk” aesthetics on Torture Garden as a piece of musical irony would certainly leave any fan’s admiration for his work intact, the presence of violence in both music and image poses problems for this interpretation. Nor would it justify a dismissal of feminist critique in general or Hisama’s critique of Zorn’s depiction of femininity in particular. We nevertheless need to take into consideration the trans-ideological function of such imagery when it is employed in a popular music context.

The double gaze: Normalising violence?

The discourse of musical representations of sadomasochism inevitably entails the problem of aestheticisation and "normalisation” of sadomasochistic imagery through popular culture. This process can be perceived as a door that swings both ways: on the one hand, it inflects popular culture – the arena for consumption of popular music, on record or in concert performance – with an aesthetics of violence and the visual imagery to underline such an aesthetics, to the extent that "mainstream movies,
television shows, commercials, and magazines refer to it commonly without having to explain it to their audiences” (Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 2). On the other hand, the mechanisms of popular culture and cultural consumption may well shape the various practices of S/M, so that we see the division of practices into what, I argue, comes across as a dichotomy of ”normal” and ”pathological” sadomasochistic practice, with the former being perceived, through a “normalising gaze”, as acceptable to the mainstream.

What becomes more obvious if we take a closer look at the discourses of S/M is that the emphasis on consent can veil the fact that the scripts which are played out often bear more than a passing resemblance to violent acts. Arguably, a core feature of S/M is the depiction of violence as titillating. If we see past the theatrical aspect of S/M, we find that the strategy of parody is of great relevance. Anne McClintock observes that ”[a]s theatre, S/M borrows its décor, props and costumery (bonds, chains, ropes, blindfolds) and its scenes (bedrooms, kitchens, dungeons, convents, prisons, empire) from the everyday cultures of power” (McCintock 2004: 237). While the exercise of power is open to the parading of ”violence as metaphor”, it is just as open to the reiteration of existing power structures if the performers are not aware of the aggression that all too often guides and reinforces such structures.

Despite Kleinplatz and Moser’s assertion that SM ”does not entail violence” and is “not nonconsensual” (2006: 3), the example of violent acts in their own narrative is startling. Describing an early visit to an SM party as an ”observer”, one of the authors recalls how the fascination with the subject was born. It is worth quoting in full here:

At the beginning of the party, a man began what seemed like an especially savage beating of a woman. I watched uncomfortably, not knowing why the other, seemingly nice guests were not coming to her aid. Obviously, this severe beating could not be pleasurable and this must be violating all the limits and party rules I had studied beforehand. While deliberating about what to tell the police when asked why I sat by and did nothing as this man savagely beat this woman to death, I decided I had to act. Just as I stood up to intercede, the woman had a magnificent orgasm and I sank back into my chair to ponder my miscalculation. At the end of the evening, the woman asked her partner, ”Can we stop on the way home for a drink, before we do this again?” It was amazing that she could still walk, but unbelievable that she was eager for a repeat performance. (Kleinplatz and Moser 2006: 3)
McClintock suggests that consensual SM "plays the world backwards"; she describes the economy of S/M as "the economy of conversion: slave to master, adult to baby, pain to pleasure, man to woman and back again", and that "to argue that in consensual S/M the master has the power, and the slave has not, is to read theatre for reality; it is to play the world forwards" (McClintock 2004: 237). If we also take for granted that the theatrics of S/M enables the players to actually convert, and thereby subvert, traditional power structures, the above story stands out as a striking example of the opposite: Rather than challenging any norms or hegemonic structures, it comes across as proof that S/M players might just as well display these norms and structures as acceptable in the name of pleasure. To quote McClintock again, "[…] with its exaggerated emphasis on costume and scene S/M performs social power as scripted, and hence as permanently subject to change. […] In S/M, paradox is paraded, not resolved." (ibid.)

If we consider the double gaze, the twin methods of accepting via normalisation and understanding via pathologising, it seems that this duality is significant of all popular perceptions of S/M. If we add Margot D. Weiss’s suggestion that sadomasochistic practice is perceived as "simultaneously exciting and other, and conventional and everyday" (Weiss 2006: 110), the above example also presents us with a dilemma concerning the gendering of desire. If Jeffreys is right in her assertion that "fashion is celebrated as a free spirit, something that enables everyone, and particularly women, to exercise choice and creativity, to express their identities, transgress boundaries (Jeffreys 2005: 87, emphasis added), then the commercial image of S/M is more likely to be bound up by the masculine/feminine binary than anything else. The coding of S/M as accessible may also contribute to its status as "conventional and everyday", and hence subject to normalisation: "[Commercial S/M images] do not challenge normative sexuality and relationships; rather they flirt with exoticism and excitement while reinforcing the borders between normal and not normal sexuality” (Weiss 2006: 116).

We might thus begin to see how the normalisation of S/M not only conceals its subversive potential, but also veils a patriarchal structure that keeps the illusion of subversion confined within a non-transgressive gender binary. In Judith Butler’s words, "[t]he binary regulation of sexuality suppresses the subversive multiplicity of a
sexuality that disrupts heterosexual, reproductive, and medicojuridical hegemonies” (Butler 1990: 26). If S/M is to retain its status as ”exciting and other” while also becoming accessible through normalisation, this otherness will inevitably be located outside of the dimension of S/M that can be tolerated within a heteronormative framework. This may in turn reinforce the impression that “normalised” S/M is but a variant where the division of gender roles is maintained, not transgressed, and where the subversive potential of S/M remains unresolved.

How, then, can John Zorn’s music avoid the double gaze and present to us something other than that, something fundamentally Other? In the case of Naked City, this is achieved partly through the jump-cut montage of musical expressions familiar to us, partly through the depiction in cover image, song titles and identity politics of violent sexual acts, thus unveiling the violent aspect of S/M that is frequently played down in gender studies.

The various controversies surrounding Zorn and Naked City can also allow us to distinguish between the layers of intertextuality that inform Zorn’s work. Drawing on connections to literature, cinema, and a variety of musical fields, Naked City becomes a focal point for a vast diversity of cultural expressions. This opens the possibility of reading the band’s music as one of intertextuality, a concept that “illuminates the dialogues that transpire between authors and texts and between one genre and the next” and “by which it becomes possible for a text to become a text through networks that define it as a text” (Richardson and Hawkins 2007: 17). To put it in a less convoluted way, the music of Naked City becomes open to interpretation and takes on a broader meaning when we read it as a product of parallel discourses on gender and sexuality. This also sheds light on the process by which “the pop text becomes mobilised only through its contact with other texts” (Hawkins 2002: 23), as any single reading of the project from the point of view of each of these disciplines would be insufficient if we are to see through the controversies.
Chapter Five
Concludory thoughts

[T]he interpretation of any single text is based on an understanding of the juxtaposition of a range of discourses. Above all, we need to continually remind ourselves that pop music is also about entertainment; it is about fun, fantasy, play and self-irony. Any musical interpretation cannot avoid the consideration of these politics of jouissance that shape the text. (Hawkins 2002: 28)

As I have argued during the pages of this thesis, questions of identity and sexuality abound in the field of popular music. Furthermore, as I suggested in Chapter One, the equation of identity and music generates the need to analyse songs on several levels. While an intertextual approach to music may render visible the power music exerts over its listeners in multiple ways, the employment of gender studies in popular music analysis is critical for disclosing the multitude of markers of identity that may be detected within the musical field.

"Right, said Fred":
A discourse on music and power

Why the attention to taking up the issue of S/M alongside gender and sexuality, then? As my readings have shown, there are important reasons for this. To quote Suzanne G. Cusick, "I do not presume to speculate about the relationship between musicality and sexuality for everyone, since there are some for whom music is simply irrelevant" (1994: 81, emphasis added). As a fitting remark for concluding, I propose a reading of Cusick’s statement that suggests that while music may well be irrelevant, an emphasis on sexuality, on the contrary, never is. As an arena for deconstructing notions of gender and sexuality, and the (re)construction and playing out of alternatives to such notions, music takes on a relevance on a par with sexuality here.

Cusick writes of a lesbian relationship with music, in an essay that takes up some important aspects of bringing sexuality into music studies. When she asks us to "suppose for a moment that sexuality isn’t linked to reproduction […] then suppose
that sexuality isn’t necessarily linked to genital pleasure [...]”, and completes her question: "what, then, IS IT?" (op.cit. 70), she asks a question that also pertains to S/M as viewed through the double gaze of heteronormativity. Likewise, when she writes about ”being” a “lesbian” as ”a way of organizing the force field of power, pleasure, and intimacy that refuses the simple binary opposition male and female” (op.cit. 73), she touches on relevant debates on gender and sexuality which would also include any discussion of masculinity in popular music.

When she embellishes the analogy of music and sex, however, Cusick also brings into the discussion a notion of dominance and submission. As Fred Everett Maus has pointed out in his reading of Cusick’s essay, her choice which she cherishes, “to listen or not, to attend or not, to let the music ’do it’ to me [...] … or not” (op.cit. 76), indicates the idea of a basic relationship where the the music has power over the listener: ”If Cusick values a particular sense that power is continuously offered and accepted, rather than deployed in an overwhelming way, she still seems to position the listener as either submitting or opting out” (Maus 2004: 38). In a most entertaining and interesting reading of musical analysis as a medium for thoughts on the ”dominance” of music and the adherent ”submission” of the listener, Maus deconstructs writings by musicologists Allen Forte and Edward T. Cone as similarly tricky when it comes to the putative power of music – power to dominate, that is.

How, then, does the music dominate the listener? In his reading of Cone’s and others’ description of Don Giovanni’s duet with Zerlina in Mozart’s opera Don Giovanni, Maus pinpoints a common essentialisation in which critics read the active, powerful persona as resembling the masculine Don Giovanni, and the feminine Zerlina as the more passive listener (op.cit. 33). While the seduction of Zerlina is certainly the main point for Don Giovanni in this duet, any reading of Zerlina as passive or submissive would take on an unintended dimension in Zerlina’s later plea for her fiancé Masetto to beat her for her carelessness (Batti, batti, bel Masetto). Maus tackles this elegantly by going further into the music/listener analogy, pointing out that to any female listener, the imaginative double experience of hearing music – that is, being dominated by it and identifying with the power – will also take on ”a third aspect, a listener’s awareness that the whole configuration is, to some extent, fictional and consensual, a chosen style of imaginative submission rather than a literal subjection to
force. And the whole complex configuration seems to be itself an object of desire” (op.cit. 35). The act of listening to music thus takes on all the theatricality of sadomasochistic play as soon as we ascribe to music any kind of power over the listener.

What is the significance of this? Given that Cusick and others assign to music a prominent power of definition over the listener, it would be easy to deduce that any musical representation of sadomasochistic imagery inevitably leads to a power structure where the listener becomes the submissive part. In this respect, the concert footage of the band and their fans in *Depeche Mode 101* takes on significance. During the performance of “Master and Servant”, the camera frequently pans across the audience, where several thousand young people sing along to the chorus. As Maus suggests of the composer/listener relationship from reading Cone’s book *The Composer’s Voice*, “[t]he powerful agency of the compositional persona finds its complement in the submission of the listener, simultaneous identification with the persona complicates that submission” (op.cit. 37). This would most likely not apply directly to any relation between composer (Martin Gore, wearing leather and studs) and audience in Depeche Mode’s case. Rather, the film may be read as an expression of the band’s and the audience’s flexibility.

**In the S/M zone: (Un)doing sadomasochism**

This brings up the problematics of interpretation within any context of sadomasochism – what we might call an S/M zone. Hegemonic assumptions of gender will carry with them similar assumptions of S/M, and the double gaze can be just as efficacious in a discussion of sadomasochistic acts: the result of a reading based on assumptions will inevitably entail that we either normalise (idealise) or pathologise (repudiate) what we see. Consequently, the function of music will be to present representations of S/M as fluid, a product of discourse, and strategies of S/M as open to interpretation.

Any discourse on S/M as I have discussed it in this thesis will also entail a discourse on gender. This also emphasises the argument that gender is something we “do”
rather than an immanent and immutable quality. In her call for a distinction between "doing" and "undoing" gender, Francine M. Deutsch observes that "the doing gender approach implies that if gender is constructed, then it can be deconstructed" (Deutsch 2007: 108). While representations of sadomasochism as they are conveyed through the screen of popular culture can, on the one hand, contribute to an undoing of gender and the deconstruction of normative gender roles, they may just as well contribute to the upholding of gender hierarchy if they are constructed only through the double gaze – that is, either normalised (non-threatening) or pathologised. Deutsch also makes the pertinent observation that "Doing” can emphasise that ”gender is created continually in ubiquitous ongoing social interactions” and that, although the phrase "doing gender” encompasses "both conformity and resistance”, the term can also signify "the accomplishment of gender difference rather than the dismantling of difference” (op.cit. 122). It would follow from this that for representations of sadomasochism to have subversive potential, they need to suggest the undoing rather than the doing and upholding, or the maintaining of an appearance of naturalness, of hegemonic gender roles.

Hegemonic assumptions of sadomasochism in a heteronormative society are always contingent upon the policing of non-heterosexual activities. What I have found in the course of this thesis is that the examples I have analysed have the potential to subvert such assumptions and make representations of S/M legible to a broader public, by creating narratives that are open to interpretation and identification while the music makes them accessible to a range of listeners. This is not always the case, however, as I have shown in my reading of John Zorn’s Naked City. Here, the musical aesthetics certainly cut the band off from mass appeal, but the cross-referential approach, incorporating grindcore and elements of cool jazz, can nevertheless be said to mirror the theatrical approach that signifies S/M play. Also, while Zorn makes explicit use of imagery that connotes "sadomasochism”, the other artists do not, and thus are able to escape the policing of the double gaze and take their music into the charts and present it to the masses.

I would further argue the point that S/M as displayed in popular music texts provides its audience with alternatives to heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality. Following on from Michel Foucault’s suggestion that S/M is ”the real creation of new
possibilities of pleasure, which people had no idea about previously (1997: 165) and, Nikki Sullivan’s description of S/M play as ”a game in which the participants create their ’selves’ at will” (2003: 155), I would likewise argue that S/M activity may be more likely dependent on one’s choice rather than an expression of one’s essence or a direct result of childhood trauma or otherwise. Then again, popular music might also provide alternative ways of pleasure for those who are thus inclined. To this end, the variations of representation in popular music, three of which I have analysed in this thesis, embody a range of variations which encompasses most, if not all, of these.

My research into the construction of masculinity and the politics of representations of sadomasochism in popular music might easily be rendered pointless in a feminist perspective. This thesis, however, attempts to provide a broader perspective on the need for undoing gender as well as the possibility for offering up actual alternatives in musical research, notably popular music analysis.

"Where to now?: Suggestions for further readings

I have offered readings of a selection of songs by artists who have otherwise not been objects of scrutiny in popular music studies. The music of Blue Öyster Cult and Depeche Mode has, from what I have gleaned, been all but overlooked in academia. John Zorn’s projects have been discussed by Susan McClary (2000) and Ellie Hisama (1993, 2000), but I have endeavoured to offer a reading that takes up the music of Naked City in depth and with a slightly different perspective.

Of the other possible themes to emerge in a discourse on representations of sadomasochism in popular music, I have briefly touched on two topics that might also be objects of closer scrutiny following this thesis. One is the corporeality of music in relation to dance, another is the master/slave analogy that Stan Hawkins relates to Hegel, and that pertains to all of my examples here. Both could be developed in in-depth studies, as could the distinction between sadism and masochism, a dichotomy which is not self-evident as what is frequently suggested: As Gilles Deleuze has argued, the perceived dynamic between the sadist and the masochist – "the pleasure-
pain complex” is "regarded as a sort of neutral substance common to both sadism and masochism" (1991: 45f). This would imply a fixing of roles and pleasures, and consequently, an assertion of an inner essence or fixed identity, but that is not necessarily the case: "To assume that there is an underlying common "substance" which explains in advance all evolutions and transformations is surely to proceed by abstraction […] We should avoid falling into 'evolutionism’ by aligning in a single chain results which are approximately continuous but which imply irreducible and heterogeneous formations” (op.cit. 46). A reading of these differences in a context of popular music would certainly be rewarding.

This also applies both to further explorations of the artists I have chosen for my thesis and others who have explored the same field. Among the various other artists I have considered along the way, but which were only shortlisted for this thesis, are artists as different as Grace Jones (one of whose hits was "Slave to the Rhythm"), Einstürzende Neubauten, the British band Miranda Sex Garden (particularly their 1994 album Fairytales of Slavery), Enrique Iglesias (notably his video to the single "Don’t turn off the lights”), and left-field artists like Tom Lehrer ("The Masochism Tango”) and Frank Zappa ("Bobby Brown"). Among the artists suggested to me by others are Janet Jackson (The Velvet Rope), Britney Spears (e.g. "Baby One More Time", "I’m a Slave 4 U”), Deutsch-Amerikanische Freundschaft, and Judas Priest, as well as mainstream artists like Madonna and Prince. While I have chosen to concentrate on less accessible bands and artists than most of those mentioned here, my hope is that the theories I have presented in this thesis can be employed in analyses of some of these artists as well.
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