

‘Little Girl Blue’? The Mediation of the Posthumous Careers of Female Singers

Alice Masterson

PhD

Department of Music

University of York

May 2022

Abstract

This thesis explores how female singers who faced a degree of condemnation in public discourse during their career have found 'redemption' through death and asks what ideological functions the posthumous narratives woven around them serve.

Frequently, mediated retrospectives reframe the musician as a victim of their own success, of the people around them, or of fame and the dangers that come with it. These framings often remove agency by suggesting that the singers were not in control of their actions and in doing so recast them as inherently vulnerable, regardless of their public persona during their lifetime. The thesis argues that the meanings constructed around these posthumous careers serve a redemptive impulse in cases where a female artist dies through misadventure. It draws primarily on newspaper articles to explore the mediation of the careers and posthumous reputations of five high-profile female singers who had well-known struggles with substance abuse and died of either related complications or overdose: Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin, Karen Carpenter, Amy Winehouse, and Whitney Houston. Running throughout the narratives created around these artists, and vital to the redemptive impulse, is the media ascription of authenticity, both in terms of the artists' music and public personae and their personal lives. In short, commentators seem particularly concerned with finding the 'true' self of the artist, and these constructions rationalise self-destructive actions, frequently working to present the singers as lacking in autonomy. I argue that the redemptive impulse works to control 'transgressive' femininity; a 'deviant' woman is perceived to pose less of a threat if she is not seen to have complete agency over her actions.

Table of Contents

Abstract	3
List of figures.....	7
Acknowledgements	8
Author's Declaration	9
1. Introduction.....	10
1.1 Research questions and aims	18
1.2 Contribution to knowledge	21
1.3 Scope	22
1.4 Terms.....	23
1.5 Methodological approach	25
1.6 Thesis outline	26
1.7 Significance	28
2. Literature Review	30
2.1 Introduction	30
2.2 Women and addiction	31
2.2.1 Comparative considerations.....	32
2.2.2 Intersectional considerations	35
2.2.3 Individualised narratives.....	44
2.3 Celebrity death.....	47
2.3.1 Economic considerations.....	47
2.3.2 Mediation	50
2.3.3 Female posthumous fame: Mediation and morality.....	51
2.3.4 Female posthumous fame: Musical legacy	55
2.4 Authenticity	58
2.4.1 Authenticity and femininity	62
2.4.2 Authenticity and race	67
2.4.3 Working definition of authenticity	70
2.5 Conclusion.....	71
3. Methodology.....	74
3.1 Introduction	74
3.2 Selection of case studies	74
3.3 Collecting the documents	76
3.4 Coding the documents.....	78
3.5 Closer analysis.....	79
3.6 Issues of media bias and provenance of sources	86
3.7 Limitations	90
3.8 Ethical considerations.....	91
3.9 Conclusion.....	93
4. Vocal authenticity: The singing voice and the ascription of authenticity.....	96

4.1 Introduction	96
4.2 Grain	98
4.3 Degradation	104
4.4 Timbre	110
4.5 Musical content and authorship.....	121
4.6 Authenticity as vulnerability	134
4.7 Conclusion.....	139
5. Cultural authenticity: Narratives of transgression and redemption.....	143
5.1 Introduction	143
5.2 Crossing over	146
5.2.1 Definition of terms	146
5.2.2 Stylistic considerations	149
5.2.3 Personal considerations	151
5.2.4 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and the Svengali reading.....	152
5.2.5 The sacrificial reading	155
5.2.6 Summary	160
5.3 Cultural appropriation and transgression	160
5.3.1 Definition of terms	160
5.3.2 Stylistic and economic considerations	167
5.3.3 Alternative readings: Feminism and credit.....	171
5.3.4 Absence in the discourse	174
5.3.5 Summary	177
5.4 Malleability and ideological functions	178
5.5 Conclusion.....	184
6. Concealed authenticity: Suppression, disclosure, and filling the gaps	188
6.1 Introduction	188
6.2 Hidden vulnerability	191
6.3 Suppressed authenticity	201
6.4 Flexible authenticity	216
6.5 Conclusion.....	221
7. Conclusion	224
7.1 Summary.....	224
7.2 Findings.....	224
7.2.1 The gendered construction of posthumous narratives	224
7.2.2 The role of music.....	226
7.2.3 Temporal considerations	227
7.3 Contributions	231
7.4 Reflexivity	233
7.5 Further research	235
7.6 Rationale and significance.....	237
Appendix: Timelines.....	240
Billie Holiday.....	240

Janis Joplin.....	240
Karen Carpenter.....	240
Amy Winehouse.....	241
Whitney Houston.....	241
<i>References</i>	243
Bibliography	243
Audio.....	271
Videography	271
Discography	273
Archival source materials	275

List of figures

Figure 1: Encoding/Decoding model taken from Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', 4.

Figure 2: Jennie Ottinger, *Mouth to Mouth: Pieces from an Animation about Cultural Appropriation*, oil on canvas, Contemporary Jewish Museum, November 2015, https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312. (Redacted).

List of tables

Table 1: Research aims and questions.

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to extend immeasurable thanks to my supervisors Áine Sheil and Dave Beer for your support and encouragement throughout this project. Your expertise and advice have been invaluable, and your reassurance and calming influence have helped to make my PhD so enjoyable. Writing this thesis has been such a rewarding experience, and a great deal of that is down to your supervision.

I would like to express my gratitude to my parents, Patsy and Gerry, for your generosity in every sense of the word, for raising me in a house filled with music, and for teaching me to take it seriously but wear it lightly. Thank you for always being on the other end of the phone and so patiently listening to me talk at about a hundred miles an hour about the minutiae of my project.

One of the best things about working across two departments has been the number of brilliant people I have been lucky enough to spend time with. Special thanks to Claire McGinn for being the best friend anyone could ever hope for, to Sarah Baumann for never failing to make me cry with laughter even at my most stressed, and to Dan Robins for pep talks and pints. To Charlotte, Liam, Mimi, Dan Johnson, Jack, Hannah, Noah, Gaia, Rich, Catherine, Jill, Carol, Christine, Beth, Ben Jacobsen, Amy, Abril, Cath, Jade, Emin, and Adam – your support means the world and this process would have been so much less fun without you.

My thanks also to the family of Sir Jack Lyons for generously funding this research.

This thesis is dedicated to the wonderful, late Ben Clark, whose unfailing love and support saw me through the first year of my PhD and the afterglow of which guided me the rest of the way.

Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Elements of the thesis (sections of the literature review concerning female posthumous fame and findings concerning Janis Joplin) were published in the journal article listed below:

Masterson, Alice. "'A woman left lonely': pariah femininity and the posthumous career of Janis Joplin'. *Feminist Media Studies*, ahead-of-print (2022): 1-17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2022.2110605>.

Elements of the thesis (findings concerning Billie Holiday) are currently in production:

Masterson, Alice. 'Lady Day on Screen: What can the divided reception of *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* (2021) tell us about the malleability of posthumous fame?' *IASPM Journal*.

Figure 2 on page 176 has been redacted. The figure shows an image of Jennie Ottinger's exhibition piece *Mouth to Mouth: Pieces from an Animation about Cultural Appropriation*, oil on canvas, Contemporary Jewish Museum, November 2015,
https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312.

A lyric from Sonic Youth's 'Tunic (Song for Karen)' on page 206 has been redacted.

1. Introduction

It is ... apparent, and important, that women do not enjoy the same mythologizing as their male counterparts, the gods, the kings, the shamans of rock.¹

It is hard to argue with Sheila Whiteley's statement here. But if we do not mythologize dead female musicians in the same way we do with dead male musicians, then how do we remember them? In particular, how do we approach female musicians who have died from the effects of addiction, a death often associated with men?

In this thesis, I explore how female musicians who faced a degree of condemnation for and speculation around their personal lives in public discourse while living have found public 'redemption' through death. I then ask what ideological functions the narratives woven around them serve. Dead musicians provide a narrative platform from which commentators can create and promote meaning. Once a musician has died, they can no longer complicate perceptions of themselves through the natural contradictions of human behaviour, and so they become a fixed entity onto which various meanings can be projected. In his work on the 'postself',² Owen Whooley discusses the ways in which posthumous reputations can be manipulated:

While individuals can attempt to affect their post-selves during their lifetimes, once dead, their post-selves are left to the care and manipulation of those still living The historical selves ... serve political ends often unintended by the individuals themselves [T]he act of controlling death and death ideology involves issues of power.³

¹ Sheila Whiteley, 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music', in *Framing Celebrity: New Directions in Celebrity Culture*, ed. Su Holmes and Sean Richmond (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 334.

² Edwin Shneidman, *Deaths of Man* (New York, NY: Quadrangle, 1973).

³ Owen Whooley, 'The Final Stage: The Process of Post-Self Construction and The Politics of Death', (conference paper, the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, GA, Aug 16, 2003).
http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/7/7/8/pages107789/p107789-1.php.

Accordingly, it appears that following death, the narratives formed around controversial female singers change direction. Frequently, mediated retrospectives reframe the musician as a victim of their own success, of the people around them, or of fame and the dangers that come with it. These framings tend to redeem the artist and often work toward removing agency by suggesting that the singers were not in full control of their actions and in doing so recast them as inherently vulnerable, regardless of their public persona during their lifetime. This thesis argues that the displacing of agency serves a redemptive impulse in cases where a female artist dies through misadventure. Following death, a public desire to forgive them for any behaviour deemed to be scandalous or immoral seems to emerge. Having faced criticism for their behaviour during their lifetimes, the life stories of such women are manipulated into trajectories that make sense of their fates whilst absolving them of perceived wrongdoing.

In order to examine changes in narrative and the redemptive impulse post-death, I have drawn on newspaper documents to explore the mediation of the careers and posthumous reputations of five high-profile female singers who had well-known struggles with substance abuse and died of either related complications or overdose: Billie Holiday (1915 – 1959), Janis Joplin (1943 – 1970), Karen Carpenter (1950 – 1983), Amy Winehouse (1983 – 2011), and Whitney Houston (1963 – 2012). These diverse case studies are all very well-known and have generated a substantial amount of press coverage, and so the large datasets that have emerged have allowed me to draw detailed and nuanced conclusions. It is important to state that this thesis is concerned with the popular music of the US and the UK, and thus posthumous fame in this case will be explored in the western world from a western point of view, specifically across the Anglosphere. The choice of two contemporary and three historical case studies has demonstrated the differences and similarities in this phenomenon across recent history. The historic case studies have allowed me to assess longitudinal changes in narrative, whilst the contemporary case studies have demonstrated important consistencies in these trends over time. Additionally, what connects these case studies are narratives of drug abuse, romantic misfortune, and singing voices perceived to be either beautiful or striking, themes which are all central to their posthumous reputations.

The vocal stylings of American jazz singer Billie Holiday cast a long shadow over

the music industry. Musicological examinations of Holiday's oeuvre have celebrated her innovative approach to phrasing, the strange and striking timbre of her voice, and the wide range of musical styles associated with her. Angela Davis particularly praises her ability to transform seemingly 'inane' songs into explorations of deeper sociological themes: 'Regardless of her conscious intent, her musical mediations on women's seemingly interminable love pains illuminated the ideological constructions of gender and the ways they insinuate themselves into women's emotional lives'.⁴ Then there is the ongoing legacy of 'Strange Fruit', Abel Meeropol's anti-lynching lament, which Farah Griffin describes as a 'powerful and enduring song of protest against racial violence – protest that has been cited by each succeeding generation of black singers to follow her'.⁵ However, her musical influence has often been overshadowed by her tumultuous personal life, long condensed into a series of overarching themes: born into poverty; plagued by racism, alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic abuse; culminating in an early death from liver cirrhosis at the age of 44. Narratives concerning her posthumous career have served to present her as an inherently sad figure without agency through interpretation of the distinctive sound of her voice as a window into her personal life (sections 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5) and by situating her as the archetypal 'tragic torch singer' (section 5.4).

Whiteley has described Janis Joplin as a 'catalyst' for women in rock, with a 'performance style [that] provides ... a particular trajectory into excess, raw emotion and ... a sense of power that was unique at the time'.⁶ Similarly, Alice Echols praises her 'refusal to abide by the rules of the game, [and] her insistence on taking up space ... [which] make her something other than a victim'.⁷ She is famed for her harsh vocals and intense performance style, as well as her reported hedonistic attitude and appetites for drugs, alcohol, and sex. Her death from a heroin overdose at the age of 27, amongst a spate of high-profile accidental drug deaths in the late 1960s and early

⁴ Angela Y. Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998), 163.

⁵ Farah Jasmine Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday: If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2001), 131.

⁶ Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

⁷ Alice Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1999), xxii.

1970s, led to moral panic and cultural backlash.⁸ I argue that in order to contextualise this and offer a preferred or reassuring reading in public discourse, Joplin is cast into the role of victim through the diminishing of her agency. This is achieved through the interpretation of her harsh singing voice as an expression of despair (sections 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6) and the unearthing of a more vulnerable persona in public discourse (section 6.2). She is also redeemed in posthumous public discourse from perceived wrongdoings involving cultural appropriation (section 5.3).

Karen Carpenter was an American singer and drummer, best known as the lead singer of the Carpenters, the duo she formed with her brother, Richard. Her music is largely associated with a smooth, easy-listening style and her technically accomplished contralto voice. Having struggled with body image issues and excessive dieting since early on in her career, she succumbed to heart failure brought on by complications from anorexia nervosa when she was 32. There is some debate concerning the role that abuse of over-the-counter and prescription drugs played in her death, but 'emetine cardiotoxicity' is stated on her autopsy. Carpenter is perhaps the outlier of the five case studies, the one who received the least public condemnation for her lifestyle. Her increasingly slender body provoked shock and speculation from audiences,⁹ but she was not vilified in quite the same way as the other four women. Yet whilst Carpenter was not framed as an immoral hedonist, her death came at a time when there was comparatively far less knowledge about the psychiatry of eating disorders and how to treat them ('[her] death in 1983 was the first time that anorexia entered the public consciousness in a major way').¹⁰ The ensuing moral panic meant that the same desire to rationalise her fate can be seen in mediated public discourse. Carpenter has been afforded little autonomy in her own story through the reframing of her rich contralto singing voice as evidence of inherent vulnerability and a substantial rereading of her songs in line with her life story (sections 4.4 and 4.5) and the positioning of her as a woman suppressed both creatively and personally by her family and record label (section 6.3).

⁸ Peggy Bowers and Stephanie Houston Grey, 'Karen: The Hagiographic Impulse in the Public Memory of a Pop Star', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 98.

⁹ Randy L. Schmidt, *Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2010), 137.

¹⁰ Paula Saukko, 'Rereading Media and Eating Disorders: Karen Carpenter, Princess Diana, and the Healthy Female Self', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23 (2006) 2: 156.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180600714539>.

Amy Winehouse was a high-profile British singer. She experienced some moderate success after the release of her debut album *Frank* in 2003, but it was 2006's *Back to Black* that brought her mainstream acclaim, with the album going on to receive five Grammy Awards in 2008. Winehouse was particularly admired for her distinctive contralto voice (often understood as clashing with her physical appearance) and perceived 'honesty' in her song-writing, though she intermittently faced criticism for performing a 'pastiche' of genres including soul and hip-hop, raising important questions about cultural appropriation and the line between homage and theft.¹¹ She experienced many of her personal problems in the public eye (such as drug addiction and alcoholism, a turbulent marriage, disordered eating, run-ins with the law), and became one of the prominent tabloid mainstays of the period, an object of ridicule who was once condemned by the United Nations.¹² Since Winehouse's death from alcohol poisoning at the age of 27,¹³ however, she has experienced a public redemption of sorts. The narrative trajectory that has emerged around her post-death is remarkably similar to the one constructed around Joplin. She is reconstructed as a defenceless, tragic figure through the reconfiguring of her voice as the expression of a troubled soul and her musical content as always autobiographical (sections 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6) and greater posthumous focus on her mistreatment by men, the press, and the perils of fame (section 6.2). She also receives a similar pardoning from accusations of cultural appropriation to Joplin (section 5.3).

Nicknamed 'The Voice' and having sold more than 200 million records worldwide, the fifth case study, Whitney Houston, is another influential figure. Her vocal prowess and diva-like appeal led to a large and devoted fanbase and she has received praise for paving the way for other Black women in mainstream music on account of her huge crossover success. Yet she also faced criticism of her musical idiom.¹⁴ As Linda Lister has put it in her examination of pop divas, '[w]hile

¹¹ Daphne A. Brooks, 'Amy Winehouse and the (Black) Art of Appropriation', *The Nation*, Sep 29, 2008, accessed Feb 18, 2021. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/amy-winehouse-and-black-art-appropriation/>.

¹² Antonio Maria Foster, 'Every line of cocaine means a little part of Africa dies', *Observer*, Mar 9, 2008.

¹³ Alexandra Topping, 'Amy Winehouse died of alcohol poisoning, second inquest confirms', *Guardian*, Jan 8, 2013, accessed Apr 19, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jan/08/amy-winehouse-alcohol-poisoning-inquest>.

¹⁴ The decision has been made to capitalise 'Black' throughout the thesis in line with the Associated Press' guidelines on the matter. Capitalisation conveys 'an essential and shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black' and is consistent with the common practice of capitalising other racial and ethnic identifiers, for example Asian American. The Associated Press does

acknowledging her talents, many critics immediately slighted her tuneful yet monochromatic ballads and fluffy dance tunes as pop soul lite ... with overblown vocalism'.¹⁵ Likewise, she was often accused of 'selling out' her gospel roots for her mainstream success. Embodying a wholesome public persona during her early career in the 1980s and early 1990s, Houston went on to endure several personal crises in the public spotlight, including addiction issues and alleged domestic abuse. Like Winehouse, she became an object of ridicule and disapproval up until her death, from which point a redemptive trajectory can be traced. In their journalistic account of the 'trainwreck' female celebrity phenomenon, Jude Doyle writes that once 'our idol had fallen bleeding into the ... water and died there, we were ready to love Whitney Houston again'. In Doyle's workings, death is 'the one form of permanent redemption for the woman who is mad, bad and dangerous to know'.¹⁶ In the documents analysed, Houston is afforded little autonomy through the construction of her initially glossy, powerful voice as a disguise for and its disintegration as an audible reflection of her personal travails (sections 4.2, 4.3, and 4.5), her perceived cultural inauthenticity is reframed both as an important step forward for Black women in the mainstream and as a central contributor to her unhappiness (section 5.2), and she is commonly interpreted as a victim of the people around her (section 6.3).

Taken together, the stories of these five women and press coverage of them demonstrate a desire to redeem them from any perceived wrongdoing and to extinguish public fears surrounding their various addiction issues and the role they played in their deaths. Based on the newspaper documents gathered for analysis in this thesis, I argue that this is most frequently achieved through the reconsideration and rationalisation of perceived 'unacceptable' behaviours and in some cases the removal of the figures' agency (examined in Chapters Four and Six). Running throughout the narratives created around these artists and vital to the redemptive impulse is the ascription of authenticity across both the artists' personal and professional lives. In short, commentators seem particularly concerned with finding

not currently suggest capitalising 'white' as it found less public support for this during a consultation period, and because of the association between capitalising 'white' and white supremacist beliefs. 'Explaining AP style on Black and white', *AP News*, Jul 20, 2020, accessed Apr 19, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/archive-race-and-ethnicity-9105661462>.

¹⁵ Linda Lister, 'Divafication: The deification of modern female pop stars', *Popular Music and Society* 25 (2001) 3-4: 2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760108591796>.

¹⁶ Jude Ellison Sady Doyle, *Trainwreck: The Women We Love to Hate, Mock and Fear... and Why* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2016), 94.

the 'true' self of the artist, and these constructions serve the redemptive impulse, frequently working to present the singers as lacking in autonomy. There are three overarching themes within these posthumous perceptions of authenticity. The first is vocal authenticity, in which the sonic qualities of the voice are used to make sense of the fates of these women (Chapter Four). The second concerns cultural authenticity, in which accusations of 'selling out' or cultural appropriation are reversed posthumously (Chapter Five). The final theme is that of suppressed authenticity, which concerns how much of the artist audiences feel they understand and how much the authentic or 'true' artistic desires of these artists were suppressed by third parties (Chapter Six). In the data included in Chapters Four and Five, public redemption is achieved through retrospective examinations of perceived musical (in)authenticity, and in Chapters Four and Six, it involves undermining the agency of the figures either musically or personally.

The redemptive impulse is not exclusive to newspaper coverage, and existing literature provides important grounding for this project. Much of this literature comes from film studies, particularly examinations of biopics and documentaries that deal with these singers. For example, in her review of the documentary film *Amy* (dir. Asif Kapadia, 2015), Hannah Andrews points out that 'although Kapadia's sympathy for Winehouse is clearly evident ... his eagerness to conform to the "victim" narrative ... and his identification of Winehouse's father and husband as largely responsible for her troubles, can be read as patriarchal and patronising'.¹⁷ It is also at odds with Winehouse's own discussions of her lifestyle, in which she often takes ownership of her decisions.¹⁸ Yet, in death, Winehouse loses her agency and becomes a victim, and has since received a substantial degree of public redemption. Despite consistently making headlines for her erratic behaviour and being vilified for it during her lifetime,¹⁹

¹⁷ Hannah Andrews, 'From unwilling celebrity to authored icon: Reading *Amy* (Kapadia, 2015)', *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2017) 2: 351-354. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2017.1311634>.

¹⁸ Craig McLean, 'Amy Winehouse interview', *List*, February 12, 2007, accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://www.list.co.uk/article/1352-amy-winehouse-interview/>.

Claire Hoffman, 'Up All Night with Amy Winehouse', *Rolling Stone*, Jul 10, 2008, accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/up-all-night-with-amy-winehouse-192275/>.

¹⁹ Editorial, *NME*, 'Amy Winehouse "a heroin and cocaine addict" claim', Aug 15, 2007, accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/amy-winehouse-444-1339882>.

Barbara Ellen, 'Amy was brilliant. Now she's just a bore', *Guardian*, Apr 27, 2008, accessed Nov 29, 2018. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/apr/27/1?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

Sadie Gray, 'Winehouse faces the music as she cancels rest of tour', *Independent*, Nov 28, 2007, accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/winehouse-faces-the-music-as-she-cancels-rest-of-tour-760742.html>.

she is now reframed as a talented musician exploited by the press and the people around her.²⁰ Whilst there may be validity to this reading, it demonstrates the change in narrative from public villain to beloved icon. Doyle's example of *NME Magazine's* changing attitude towards her is emblematic of this:

The outpouring of love and grief that these women receive, in the wake of their deaths, tends to wipe their records clean. Amy Winehouse's death caused much of the press to turn a complete 180 on her: *NME Magazine*, which had nominated her as one of its 'villains of the year' in 2008, promptly rounded up celebrity quotes on her greatness once she was dead and thus incapable of further villainy.²¹

The overarching themes of the newspaper documents collected for the thesis fulfil the redemptive impulse by presenting the artists as passive figures with little agency. I call this the 'little girl blue' reading. 'Little Girl Blue' is a song written by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, published in 1935. It has been recorded by both Joplin and Carpenter and used as a title for biographies and documentaries about their lives.²² Each of the women in this thesis have been presented as behaving in an immoral or self-destructive way during their lifetimes, and the posthumous reframing of behaviours and common removal of their autonomy 'redeems' them in the public eye. I suggest, drawing on Mimi Schippers, that such readings can be said to rationalise the enactment of 'pariah femininity' (see section 1.4).²³ This thesis does not aim to measure any degree of blame or make any moral judgements about these figures, nor does it set out to measure any degree of 'truth' in the 'little girl blue' reading. What is important about this narrative is what it reveals about the functions of female posthumous fame. Once the dead female artist can no longer act, commentators are able to shape her overall image into broad, simplified themes which reflect dominant

²⁰ Kathy Iandoli, 'We all destroyed Amy Winehouse', *Pitchfork*, Jun 17, 2015, accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/801-we-all-destroyed-amy-winehouse/>.

²¹ Doyle, *Trainwreck*, 95.

²² Schmidt, *Little Girl Blue*.

'Janis: Little Girl Blue', directed by Amy J. Berg, *American Masters*, PBS, May 3, 2016, television broadcast.

²³ Mimi Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony', *Theory and Society* 36 (2007) 1: 95. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4501776>.

moral norms. Any degree of perceived misbehaviour can be rationalised through a retrospective rationalisation or removal of agency – a ‘deviant’ woman poses less of a threat if she is not perceived to have been in control of her actions.

1.1 Research questions and aims

Several themes have emerged from the source material, many of which warrant further study. Within the scope of this project, I have opted to focus on the elements of the source material that deal with the ascription of authenticity. There is so far no extended study into factors specific to female posthumous fame for singers, or how perceived authenticity works in the mediation of their posthumous careers. The aim underpinning this research is to challenge the assumptions made in the documents collected and thus encourage nuance in the stories of these singers – to recognise them as talented, multi-faceted women and not reduce them to the ‘little girl blue’ stereotype. These specific case studies also offer insight into attitudes towards female performers more generally, the kind of assumptions made about their lives and music, and the broader ideological functions that these assumptions can be said to serve. There are three overarching research questions guiding this work, each of which are addressed across each of the analysis chapters.

Research aims	Research questions
Explore how narratives around high-profile female musicians who struggle with substance abuse change following death and whether the hypothesis, that a redemptive arc emerges, is accurate.	How are narratives formed around well-known female musicians and addicts and how do these narratives change following the artist’s death?
Examine the ways in which the performer’s artistic output affects the formation and perception of the narratives created.	What role does the artist’s music play in the formation and perception of these narratives?
Discover if these narratives have changed or altered in a significant way since the mid-twentieth century.	How have these narratives changed from the first case study to the present day?

Table 1: Research aims and questions

How are narratives formed around well-known female musicians and addicts and how do these narratives change following the artist's death?

This thesis takes a longitudinal approach to studying these musicians, taking significant points from each of their lives and examining the public discourse surrounding them. To understand a musician's posthumous career, it is important to understand their public successes and failures and what they meant to commentators whilst living. Harry Shapiro, in his book about the history of drug use in the music business, has pointed out that female addicts are often considered to be more 'deviant' than their male counterparts as they challenge 'the status quo by not fulfilling [roles] as ... dutiful wi[ves] and mother[s]'.²⁴ However, it is important to state that this is not a comparative study – the focus here is on female singers. Relevant comparative considerations are explored in section 2.2, which demonstrates how female addicts in the public eye do seem to face a greater degree of condemnation. With these comparative factors in mind, I made the decision to focus the analysis solely on female posthumous fame specifically due to the comparative lack of literature on the subject and because it ensures sufficient detail surrounding the case studies within the confines of this project. As illustrated above, each of the five case studies were subject to much speculation and varying degrees of vilification whilst living. Having examined the perceptions of the artists during their lifetime, the later points on the timelines have been used to explore how this perception alters after the point of death and at significant points afterwards that have generated a substantial amount of discourse around the musician. An overall narrative arc has been identified that indicates how their reputations have altered, and the formation and implications of these changes have been explored through closer analysis of the sources studied. Ultimately, each narrative arc follows a redemptive trajectory, with varying methods of ascribing authenticity vital to this framing.

What role does the artist's music play in the formation and perception of these narratives?

The thesis combines sociological and musicological methods. It has made use of newspaper archives and subsequent critical discourse analysis to direct the research to the most prominent musical concerns, which make up Chapters Four and Five. This

²⁴ Harry Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music* (New York, NY: Quartet Books, 1988), 84.

method has also allowed for an exploration of how the artists' personal lives are interpreted and explained in Chapter Six. In this way, the project takes a mixed media approach by exploring the ways in which reputation and music interact. In their edited collection on the topic of posthumous fame for musicians, Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun point out that a musician's death has 'the capacity ... to infuse new meanings into their recorded outputs'.²⁵ For example, Eric Rothenbuhler has noted how songs that complement the 'devil at the crossroads' legend have become central to blues singer Robert Johnson's legacy but 'lighter material is ignored'.²⁶ By interrogating the meanings ascribed to these artists' musical outputs in the context of their life stories, this thesis aims to uncover how the links forged between the musical and the extra-musical work in these specific cases, and what they reveal about the mediation of these artists' posthumous careers.

How have these narratives changed from the first case study to the present day?

The temporal scope of this project will also help to demonstrate two time-related concerns. The first is if attitudes towards the telling of and meaning-making around these stories have shifted in any significant way, and how. The other concerns if and how narrative framings in public discourse alter over the course of the artist's posthumous career. For example, Billie Holiday has been dead since 1959 and changes in the narrative trajectory formed around her may indicate future shifts for the other case studies. Temporal considerations also continue to demonstrate the malleability of the meanings forged around a musician's posthumous career, providing further evidence that they come to be infused with social meaning. It is demonstrated in existing research that the stories of dead celebrities come to mean different things to different demographics, as per Joli Jensen, who points out that '[p]osthumous fame allows celebrity figures to slip loose from the moorings of biography and geography, so they can better serve the current purposes of those who need them'.²⁷ It is thus logical to suggest that such figures can also 'slip loose from the moorings' of historical

²⁵ Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun, 'The Great Gig in the Sky', in *Death and the Rock Star*, ed. Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun (Abingdon, Routledge: 2015), 2.

²⁶ Eric W. Rothenbuhler, 'The Strange Career of Robert Johnson's Records', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 213.

²⁷ Joli Jensen, 'Posthumous Patsy Clines: Constructions of Identity in Hillbilly Heaven', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 139.

context. This extended research project that covers five case studies over more than half a century has yielded an additional indication of the social functions of posthumous fame, contributing to our collective knowledge on the subject.

1.2 Contribution to knowledge

As it stands, the issue of posthumous fame for popular female singers has only been examined through one-off case studies in book chapters and articles. Whilst these works have yielded interesting and important findings, they do not address trends across female posthumous fame more broadly. For example, I opened with a quotation from Whiteley, who has identified that posthumous fame operates differently for female musicians. This identification is worth further examination, particularly in pursuit of an inclusive and well-rounded understanding of how posthumous fame works across different contexts. Using five varied case studies across an extended research project, this thesis demonstrates how narratives are formed around female drug-addicted singers after death, the importance of perceived musical and personal authenticities to this, and how this compares across time periods. The benefit of an extended study into this topic is a more rounded understanding of the construction of posthumous fame and the functions of the meanings forged around it, as well as a contribution to an understanding of how social factors impact the reception of female singers.

The findings of this thesis concern the ideological functions of the posthumous ascription of authenticity to female singers who have died from unnatural causes. The ways in which authenticity is ascribed are indicative of a redemptive impulse; posthumously 'redeeming' the artists from their perceived transgressions often involves the removal of agency and the attendant idea that the case studies were not in control of their actions, or else it rationalises their behaviour. This research identifies how discourse around these women has become trapped in various narrative tropes and how various facets of their music have become bound up in these trajectories. It thus contributes to a deeper understanding of female posthumous fame and the social functions served by the stories of dead celebrities. The main findings of the thesis can be divided into three. The first finding is the redemptive impulse that surrounds the mediation of the posthumous careers of these women. There is some disapproval in public discourse during their lifetimes, but a desire to redeem tends to

emerge post-death. This is commonly achieved through the retrospective diminishing of their agency or the reframing of their decisions in a more sympathetic light, with the ascription of three different types of authenticity vital in these constructions. The second finding concerns the role of the artists' music, which becomes a significant narrative device. On the surface, sad songs are interpreted as always autobiographical whilst upbeat songs become ironic. Unpacking the sources further, there are common readings concerning the connecting of vocal timbre to the singer's psyche (Chapter Four) and a lack of control over their music (section 6.3), which further work to undermine a singer's agency. The final finding concerns the temporal scope of the documents collected. There is a remarkable consistency in theme across the timelines, but a slight change in framing has surfaced in recent years. For example, the critical reaction to Lee Daniels' biopic *The United States vs. Billie Holiday* (2021) and the tenth anniversary of Winehouse's death in the summer of 2021 prompted some more nuance in journalistic discourse around these women. Some sources questioned the film's patriarchal themes whilst retrospectives of press treatment of Winehouse call for better mental health care in the music industry and challenge the victim image that has persisted since her death (see section 7.2.3).

In sum, the thesis adds to existing knowledge in this area by contributing an extended study into how posthumous fame works specifically for female singers who die through unnatural causes, identifying and examining the important role of authenticity in the construction of posthumous fame, and exploring the impact that time has on the shaping of these singers' legacies.

1.3 Scope

This thesis draws on newspaper documents that contain sustained engagement with the case studies to extrapolate the trends in reporting. It is situated within a western, Anglophone context, drawing on publications from the 'Global North': the UK, Ireland, the US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.²⁸ Thus, although each of the women studied in the thesis reached global audiences, the viewpoints emerging in the data are

²⁸ The terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' are contested but use of the 'Global North' here provides geographical context for the documents collected. A recent exploration of current usage of the term and its ongoing relevance can be found in Nicholas Lees, 'The Brandt Line after forty years: The more North-South relations change, the more they stay the same?' *Review of International Studies* 47 (2021) 1: 85-106. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021052000039X>.

grounded within this specific geographical context. A significant timespan is covered, with documents collected from 1939 up until 2021. However, the majority of the documents examined in detail are from the 1970s onwards, with earlier sources mostly providing context for changes after the artist's deaths. There were many interesting and significant themes emerging from the data collected, such as public perceptions of drug abuse and alcoholism in women, motherhood, sexuality, and public reaction to the changing physical appearances of female singers, amongst others. Whilst recognising the importance of these topics and the potential for further research, this thesis limits its scope to the posthumous ascription of authenticity and its potential functions.

1.4 Terms

'Authenticity' is a notoriously nebulous and multi-faceted term, and I set out the specific context in which it is used in this thesis in section 2.4. In short, however, I concern myself with *perceived* authenticity; that is, despite the problematic nature of determining if anything is ever truly authentic, audiences often believe when they are presented with an artist's work that they are experiencing a true representation of the artist themselves. In Sarah Rubidge's estimations, 'authenticity is not a property *of*, but something we ascribe *to* a performance'.²⁹ In posthumous coverage concerning my case studies, the degree to which commentators feel they can 'know' the artist is crucial, and 'authentic' selves are forged through the information available. This is achieved in different ways according to factors specific to the musician. However, in each case, the desire to uncover the artist's 'true' self is indicative of the desire to rationalise their fate. Unpacking the methods drawn upon to construct the 'authentic' selves of the artists, I argue that the resulting implications are consistent with the impulse to rationalise their 'unfeminine' behaviours.

In examining how posthumous fame works specifically for women, it is worth setting out potential reasons why it may differ from male posthumous fame. Although not a comparative study, the thesis demonstrates that the artists examined have been allowed little agency within their own stories, which contrasts with much of the

²⁹ Sarah Rubidge, 'Does authenticity matter? The case for and against authenticity in the performing arts', in *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader*, ed. Patrick Campbell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 219. Original emphasis.

findings of existing literature around dead male musicians, who are more often framed as autonomous (see section 2.2). It is thus logical to assume that ideas about womanhood play into these constructions. Indeed, speculation about ‘acceptable femininity’ appears in related literature from Emma Bell, who examines public redemption for former tabloid ‘bad girls’ in later life (see section 2.2.3),³⁰ and Pauwke Berkers and Merel Eeckelaer, who compare broadsheet coverage of Winehouse and Pete Doherty, the Libertines frontman who has experienced legal and addiction issues similar to those of Winehouse (see section 2.2.1). Bell’s definition of ‘acceptable femininity’ is somewhat vague, based more on what it is not than what it is, though she does cite ‘heterosexual maternalism’ as acceptable.³¹ By contrast, Berkers and Eeckelaer draw on Schippers’ concept of hegemonic and pariah femininities to formulate their arguments.³² In brief, hegemonic femininity is that which is complementary to hegemonic masculinity, whereas pariah femininity involves women enacting features associated with hegemonic masculinity (this is explored further in section 2.2.1). The women in this thesis can be said to have executed pariah femininity through self-destructive actions, and both the redemptive impulse and the posthumous removal of agency can be said to rationalise this deviation from the dominant gender order. This thesis demonstrates how redemption and removal of agency are achieved in the documents through the ascription of authenticity. It suggests that this method of rationalisation can be understood through Schippers’ theory of pariah femininity.

Additionally, I have sought to align this thesis within an intersectional feminist approach (see section 2.2.2), heeding Kimberlé Crenshaw’s observations that factors such as race, class, and sexuality are critical in shaping women’s experiences.³³ To this end, whilst the unifying thread in this thesis is womanhood, issues of race (section

³⁰ Emma Bell, ‘The Insanity Plea: Female Celebrities, Reality Media and the Psychopathology of British Pop-Feminism’, in *In the Limelight and under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, ed. Su Holmes and Diane Negra (New York, NY: Continuum, 2011).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 220.

³² Pauwke Berkers and Merel Eeckelaer, ‘Rock and roll or rock and fall? Gendered framing of the rock and roll lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British broadsheets’, *Journal of Gender Studies* 23 (2014) 1: 6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.754347>.

Schippers, ‘Recovering the Feminine Other’, 95.

Mimi Schippers, *Rockin’ out of the Box: Gender Maneuvring in Hard Rock* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).

³³ Kimberlé Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color’, *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991) 6: 1241-1299. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039>.

2.2.2, 2.4.2, all of Chapter Five, section 7.2.2, 7.5), class (section 2.2.2), and sexuality (section 5.2.5) and their impact on posthumous coverage of the case studies are explored. Section 2.2.2 also discusses how ideas of pariah femininity cannot be separated from issues of race and class. The importance of an intersectional approach to feminist research is clear from a variety of literature which points to a white, middle-class bias in mainstream feminism (see section 2.2.2). This illustrates the need to avoid an approach that does not take into account the intersection between womanhood and other inequalities. To avoid this, the literature review unpacks the institutional biases operating more broadly around the race and class of each of the cases, and such concerns are incorporated into the analysis of the data. The ideas explored in the thesis have to do with womanhood, but womanhood is not a homogeneous experience.

1.5 Methodological approach

A more detailed examination of methodological concerns appears in Chapter Three, but to summarise, in pursuit of the research questions, I first devised a timeline of significant events for each of the case studies (see Appendix). The rationale behind this was to identify the specific points that would have produced a great deal of media coverage and be able to collect contemporary accounts of them. I then collected up to 50 newspaper articles from the year of the event. The criteria for the inclusion of a document within a dataset were that it had to be in the English language, and that it was part of a mainstream publication with a broader scope beyond music coverage. This was to uncover the broad narrative arcs being published to wide, general readerships. Whilst the political leanings of the publication seem to bear some influence on how the stories are reported, the wider implications and interpretations are frequently similar. Once I had collected the documents, I coded them according to theme and sentiment (positive, negative, neutral) to identify the most significant trends in reporting. During this process, I realised that a great many of the documents had to do with perceptions of authenticity. I identified three dominant forms of perceived authenticity and assigned the documents collected to them accordingly. These documents were then closely examined to extrapolate the meanings presented in them. As this is an interdisciplinary project, I have also explored the ways in which the artist's music is used as a narrative device in the data. What I have discovered is

that the musical features of the artists' work are manipulated into narratives that work alongside the trajectories of their lives. In the stories told about these women, the personal and the musical are inextricably linked.

1.6 Thesis outline

The first two chapters consist of a literature review and methodology. The following three analysis chapters are structured according to the main ways in which authenticity is ascribed to the case studies: vocal authenticity, cultural authenticity, and suppressed authenticity. Each address the three research questions, and in each, a redemptive impulse is identified that reframes perceptions of the artist.

Chapter Two, the literature review, divides into three overarching themes that bear most relevance to the framework from which I explore my research questions. It draws on key literature around women and addiction in the public eye, which allows for a discussion of important intersectional feminist considerations. Existing literature on women and addiction highlights how female drug users have frequently been viewed as more 'deviant' than their male counterparts, and how there is a thin line between framings of vilification and victimhood around female addicts in public discourse. Following this, the literature surrounding posthumous fame is examined, demonstrating how the stories of deceased celebrities can come to embody moral and social norms, and how such meanings are particularly ideologically loaded for female stars. Finally, the review approaches literature surrounding ideas of musical authenticity, a term that, despite its vague and problematic nature, 'seems to retain much of its purchase within the popular music culture'.³⁴ Exploration of these three main themes has provided a solid framework from which to carry out an extended study into how the posthumous careers of the five case studies are constructed and mediated by providing important context around how female addicts in the public eye are perceived and the functions of posthumous fame, as well as allowing for an understanding of the varying constructions and ascriptions of authenticity.

Chapter Three sets out the thesis' methodological approach. As well as a detailed description of how the work was carried out, it considers the benefits and limitations of case study research and critical discourse analysis, the navigation of

³⁴ Richard Middleton, *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 205.

media bias when using newspaper archives, and ethical concerns. As mentioned, the predominantly social science-based method illuminated some of the most important musical factors, which are analysed in Chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Four demonstrates the importance of vocal timbre in these posthumous mediations. In these formulations, the sound of the singing voice is interpreted as containing the essence of each singer. Ultimately, it is taken as evidence of innate sadness or vulnerability, which in turn reduces agency and serves the redemptive impulse.

Chapter Five deals with ideas about cultural (in)authenticity. Accusations of 'selling out' (Houston) or cultural appropriation (Joplin and Winehouse) are posthumously forgiven and framed in ways that position their behaviours into a more sympathetic light, consistent with the overall redemptive impulse.

Chapter Six moves away somewhat from the musicological themes of the previous two analysis chapters, focusing instead on how a 'concealed' authenticity is projected onto the case studies. Drawing on Deleuze's concept of the 'out-of-field' in cinema and its decisive importance, it explores how the gaps in our knowledge about the artists are filled in public discourse.³⁵ These constructions involve the introduction of villains into the narrative, most commonly the artist's family, romantic interests, producers and record labels, or a combination thereof. Without such influences, these narratives tend to suggest, the artist's career may have looked very different, and they may have avoided their fates. Such readings thus involve the mediation of a preferred persona, an interpretation of the artist that is closer to what commentators might have wanted for them or wanted them to be, and sometimes imagined futures. These gaps in public knowledge are filled in in ways that work to remove the artists' agency by presenting them as inherently helpless and susceptible to manipulation from others.

Chapter Seven brings together the conclusions drawn from the research and considers the contributions made to existing understandings of posthumous fame.

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 [1986]), 19.

1.7 Significance

The undermining of these figures' agency is, to use Andrews' terms, 'patriarchal and patronising'.³⁶ Much of the narrative tropes that surround them in public discourse are reductive, eliminating the inevitable complexities and contradictions in their stories in favour of framings that seek to make sense of their demises and extinguish any associated societal concerns. Such tropes furthermore frequently overshadow the musical legacies of the case studies, thereby espousing a misogynistic attitude towards their lives and work in which their personal lives (and attendant scandals) become more significant than their professional achievements in the public eye. Each of the five case studies experienced notable professional successes during their lifetimes and are widely beloved figures. The central framing of the circumstances of their deaths and contributing factors serves an attitude wherein female singers with addiction issues are publicly valued on the basis of extra-musical rather than musical components.

This research seeks to query these framings by extrapolating the common trends in coverage and demonstrating how musical factors are manipulated into narratives that work to rationalise the artists' demises and how certain elements of the artists' personal lives are centrally framed for the same purpose. It challenges the assumptions made and suggests that posthumous coverage of the lives of female singers who die from unnatural causes should recognise the nuances and complexities of their stories. With a greater understanding of the rationale behind these assumptions, it is easier to challenge and overcome them.

³⁶ Andrews, 'From unwilling celebrity to authored icon', 353.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review is divided into three main themes that bear most relevance to the pursuit of the research questions: women and addiction, female posthumous fame, and authenticity. It opens with an examination of existing work on women and addiction, exploring structural and institutional biases and the individual narratives that are formed around separate cases. Generally, there is more literature concerning public reception of celebrity addiction and deviant behaviour in general, rather than that which deals solely with musicians, and both will be included to obtain a broader range of research and discover what the consistencies and differences reveal. There is a wide body of literature concerning female substance abuse across varied disciplines. For the purposes of this review, the focus is mostly on issues of celebrity addiction and the intersectional factors functioning around public perception of female addicts.

Literature on musician death appears to have mostly included specific case studies in separate pieces of work until the publication of Steve Jones and Joli Jensen's edited collection *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame* in 2005. Thus, whilst there is useful material released prior to this, *Afterlife as Afterimage* was the 'first [collection] to deal in depth with the fact that death modifies the celebrity status of popular music artists and the reactions of their fans'.³⁷ The next collection of this kind came a decade later with Strong and Lebrun's *Death and the Rock Star* (2015), which includes further considerations around posthumous fame for musicians.³⁸ These two volumes provide several interdisciplinary sources on the topic of musicians' posthumous fame. There is comparatively little literature concerning deceased female musicians, though specific case studies appear in both edited collections. *Afterlife as Afterimage* contains three chapters on female musicians, which provide in-depth detail around how each posthumous identity is constructed. *Death and the Rock Star* contains two, one concerning social media use in public grief and the other a comparative study of 'musical motherhood in death'.³⁹

³⁷ Strong and Lebrun, 'The Great Gig in the Sky', 1.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Taylor Cole Miller, 'Social Sorrow: Tweeting the Mourning of Whitney Houston', in *Death and the Rock Star*, ed. Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun (Abingdon, Routledge: 2015).

Paula Hearsum, 'Three Faces of Musical Motherhood in Death: Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston and Donna Summer', in *Death and the Rock Star* ed. Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015).

Early in the process of examining the source materials collected for analysis in this thesis, it became clear that ascription of authenticity was crucial in the mediation of the posthumous careers of the case studies. In the broadest terms, the pursuit of the ‘real person’ behind the music and headlines was an unavoidable theme. Strong, Lebrun, and Jensen have cited authenticity as an important factor in the mediation and reception around musician death, both in terms of the perception of life imitating art and in the creation of specific meanings around the artist based on available information.⁴⁰ This thesis examines how a notion of authenticity operates specifically in the careers of female singers who have died unnaturally and what its ascription reveals about the meanings created around their posthumous careers. Due to the ambiguous nature of the term, a thorough exploration of the specific understandings of authenticities that surround the case studies is essential. The literature around musical authenticity weaves a tangled web of meanings and contradictions which must be confronted to understand how the concept operates in these cases.

Combined, exploration of these three themes provides a grounding framework from which I explore the mediation of the posthumous careers of female singers and identify the gap in existing knowledge. In sum, this PhD constitutes an extended study of female posthumous fame for singers – something currently missing from the field – whilst also expanding upon how the redemptive impulse works in these cases and how perception of musical and personal authenticities serves it.

2.2 Women and addiction

Substance abuse has long been an issue in the music industry, as researched extensively by Shapiro.⁴¹ Tales of celebrity ‘deviance’, including issues of substance abuse, prompt extensive media coverage. Chris Rojek claims that ‘[c]elebrity [in the age of mass communications] became based ... on visual impact, incident and *frontierism* living on the edge of social mores, sexual conventions, psychological orthodoxy and economic prudence’.⁴² There is certainly evidence to suggest that the

⁴⁰ Strong and Lebrun, ‘The Great Gig in the Sky’, 5.

Joli Jensen, ‘On Fandom, Celebrity, and Mediation: Posthumous Possibilities’, in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), xx.

⁴¹ Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man*.

⁴² Chris Rojek, *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and Its Consequences* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 8. Original emphasis.

spectacle of living beyond usual social norms is a contributing factor to media fascination in the prominence of such stories in public discourse. Rojek suggests this comes in part from reluctant admiration: 'Outwardly, media coverage rewards the bad behaviour of celebrities [T]here is evident public approval for bloody-minded behaviour that dares to go where ordinary people fear to tread'.⁴³ Whilst Rojek does not provide specific examples here, there does seem to be some notion of public admiration for boundary pushing, however reluctant. Indeed, a certain mythology often emerges around the dead or addicted male musician, as can be seen in discourse surrounding figures as diverse as Kurt Cobain,⁴⁴ Elvis Presley,⁴⁵ Tupac Shakur,⁴⁶ and Ian Curtis.⁴⁷ This is not to say that an admiration for these performers is misguided, but I argue that this type of idolisation is reserved for a certain type of celebrity. When Rojek discusses public approval for deviant celebrity behaviour, the notion of social hierarchy is missing, when in fact it is crucial in examining the line between admiration and vilification. This thesis does not involve analysis comparing male and female posthumous careers, but comparative considerations provide important context, and so will be explored now. Indeed, literature that deals specifically with female addiction suggests that Rojek's notion of 'evident public approval' is less apparent for women in the public eye.

2.2.1 Comparative considerations

The following considerations work within a binary idea of gender, dealing with stereotypes surrounding masculinity and femininity as these are the dominant ideas

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁴⁴ Steve Jones, 'Better Off Dead, or, Making it the Hard Way', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 4-16. Sharon R. Mazzarella, "'The voice of a generation'? Media coverage of the suicide of Kurt Cobain', *Popular Music and Society* 19 (1995) 2: 49-68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007769508591591>.

⁴⁵ Van M. Cagle, 'Flaunting It: Style, Identity, and the Social Construction of Elvis Fandom', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 31-60.

Greil Marcus, *Dead Elvis: A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

⁴⁶ Alicia Spencer-Hall, 'Post-mortem Projections: Medieval Mystical Resurrection and the Return of Tupac Shakur', *Opticon* 1826 13 (2012): 56-71. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/opt.af>.

George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis, 'Collectively Remembering Tupac: The Narrative Mediation of Current Events, Cultural Histories, and Social Identities', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005), 143-170.

⁴⁷ Jennifer Otter Bickerdike, *Fandom, Image and Authenticity: Joy Devotion and the Second Lives of Kurt Cobain and Ian Curtis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 36-37.

emerging from the literature and the source materials collected for analysis. For now, ideas concerning public perception of addiction outside the gender binary lie beyond the scope of the project. Existing literature suggests that discourse surrounding celebrity/musician drug and alcohol abuse runs along gendered lines. Berkers and Eeckelaer, for example, have carried out a content analysis of British broadsheet coverage of Pete Doherty and Amy Winehouse between 2004 and 2009. The authors coded the articles according to five 'rock and roll' and five 'rock and fall' frames. Their results show that, overall, Doherty was framed as someone 'living on the edge' whereas Winehouse was viewed as a victim.⁴⁸ They put this partly down to the historic construction of rock as masculine and partly because it reflects dominant gender norms, drawing on Schippers' work to frame this. Schippers expands on R. W. Connell's influential research into 'emphasised femininity' – that which is 'defined around compliance ... and is oriented to accommodating the interests and desires of men'⁴⁹ – by suggesting that 'any empirical exploration of masculinity and femininity and their role in gender hegemony must focus on relationality'.⁵⁰ Particularly important here is the relationship between hegemonic masculinities and femininities. Early formulations of the concept of hegemonic masculinity saw it as a 'pattern of practice ... that allowed men's dominance over women to continue', whilst other masculinities were 'required ... to position themselves in relation to it'. Connell's 2005 'rethinking' of the concept allows for multiple hegemonic masculinities across different contexts, but hegemony overall refers to 'ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion'.⁵¹ Whilst Connell posits that there are no hegemonic femininities, Schippers points out that 'hegemonic features ... are those that serve the interests and ascendancy of ruling classes' and so femininity can be hegemonic.⁵² In Schippers' formulations, the relationship between masculinity and femininity is crucial to the preservation of gender hegemony. Hegemonic femininity, then, entails 'characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complementary relationship to hegemonic masculinity'. Importantly, she suggests that there is 'an ascendancy of

⁴⁸ Berkers and Eeckelaer, 'Rock and roll or rock and fall?' 13.

⁴⁹ R. W. Connell, *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987), 184.

⁵⁰ Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other', 100.

⁵¹ R. W. Connell and James Messerschmidt, 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept', *Gender and Society* 19 (2005) 6: 832. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27640853>.

⁵² Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other', 90.

hegemonic femininity over other femininities to serve the interests of the gender order and male domination'.⁵³

From here, she makes her case that there is frequently 'swift and severe social sanction for women who take on or enact hegemonic masculinity' and suggests we call this pariah femininity. Pariah femininity poses a threat to hegemonic gender relations by refusing to carry out complementary practices that enable male domination over subordinate gender identities. Schippers suggests that features that entail women enacting a pariah femininity include 'having sexual desire for other women, being promiscuous ... or sexually inaccessible, and being aggressive'.⁵⁴ Pertinently to this thesis, Schippers herself has written a book about ideas of gender in rock culture and claims that the typical 'rock and roll lifestyle' fits with features of hegemonic masculinity.⁵⁵ The case studies in the thesis can thus be said to have performed pariah femininity. As mentioned in section 1.4, this thesis also draws on Schippers in its explorations of issues pertaining to femininity, with pariah femininity providing a particularly useful lens through which to understand perceptions of female addicts as 'deviant'. Berkers and Eeckelaer conclude from the sources they gathered that 'female enactment of masculine behavior is not sanctioned in British broadsheets'.⁵⁶

Although Berkers and Eeckelaer's article is limited to two representative case studies, their work points to an existing double standard in media coverage of high-profile male and female addicts, and their finding that Winehouse is presented mostly as a victim provides important context for this research. The thesis builds on Berkers and Eeckelaer's work by not only exploring additional case studies, but by examining how death impacts coverage in the first instance and how this changes over time, taking a longitudinal approach. As this project has a greater scope and an exclusive focus on female artists, it is able to draw on a wider range of publications and move beyond the UK into the broader Anglosphere. Intersectional considerations around female drug abuse and alcoholism will now be explored, considerations missing from Berkers and Eeckelaers' work, which does not acknowledge how Winehouse's whiteness, Jewish upbringing, or class may have impacted how she is presented in the news media. Literature around female drug use suggests that the line between media

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁵⁵ Schippers, *Rockin' out of the Box*, 29.

⁵⁶ Berkers and Eeckelaer, 'Rock and roll or rock and fall?' 13.

victimisation and vilification is a thin one, and often depends on a range of social factors.

2.2.2 Intersectional considerations

Stephen Kandall's work on the history of women and drug addiction in the US provides important contextual information. A professor of paediatrics, Kandall was an expert witness at the 1989 trial of Jennifer Johnson, a Black woman accused of 'delivery of a controlled substance to a minor' due to drug use during pregnancy. Dismayed that the country had reached 'the sorry point where the case of a disadvantaged minority woman ... became a battle zone', Kandall set out to examine the history of female drug use in the US to seek 'important lessons'.⁵⁷ He notes that whilst there have been dramatic changes across all levels of society in the past century and a half, there are considerable consistencies around issues of addiction in that

drugs with the potential for abuse are available in a wide variety, drug use and drug addiction occur at all levels of society, and the illegal status of many drugs ... frustrates attempts to determine the actual number of drug addicts.⁵⁸

His work highlights important intersectional factors. Despite similar rates of drug use by women across racial and socioeconomic demographics, economically disadvantaged women and those from ethnic minorities face higher rates of punishment. Stereotypes around drug-addicted women tend to be formed disproportionately on the basis of perceptions about those from disadvantaged or minority backgrounds: 'The perpetuation of the myth that drug users are "them" and not "us," that the "female drug problem" refers only to "black crack mothers" ... has done little to encourage clear thinking False stereotypes promote social marginalization'.⁵⁹ Most importantly for the thesis, they receive more negative media coverage in terms of both amount and content. As Kandall puts it, referring to the crack crisis of the 1980s and 1990s,

⁵⁷ Stephen R. Kandall and Jennifer Petrillo, *Substance and Shadow: Women and Addiction in the United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), ix.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 285.

Simplistic or scientifically inaccurate news stories portray hopeless ‘junkie babies’ and ‘crack kids’ and their drug-addicted mothers This approach sells newspapers but it does little to clarify public understanding of the tangled roots of addiction.⁶⁰

Whilst the case studies in this thesis (with perhaps the exception of Holiday and Houston, who both went through phases of financial hardship, which, though perhaps anecdotal, also points to a compounded disadvantage based on race) have had the comparable advantage of wealth once they became famous, it is possible to infer how coverage of them feeds into coverage of female addicts in general and vice versa. What is clear from Kandall’s work and the source materials collected for analysis is that these considerations cannot be separated from their racial and socioeconomic contexts. Kandall’s research also demonstrates that there is significant vilification of drug-addicted women in public discourses as well as use of the victimhood frame. Both framings are common in coverage of female addicts, and I argue that both constitute a means of control. Vilification arguably presents the addict as ‘monstrous’, as having transgressed the boundaries of what might be considered ‘acceptable’ femininity and thus comprising what Susan Hopkins calls a ‘forbidding otherness’.⁶¹ Hopkins applies Barbara Creed’s classic work on the ‘monstrous feminine’ in horror films to the ‘trainwreck biopic’.⁶² Examining *Whitney* (dir. Kevin Macdonald, 2018), Hopkins explains that Houston is presented through this lens before ultimately being redeemed in death, and so the documentary falls into the ‘patriarchal trope of woman as saint or sinner, angel or demon’.⁶³ Indeed, in many posthumous sources there is a reframing of the case studies as victims. Once the addict has died, she can no longer act in real time, and so commentators are free to present a framing based on victimhood. This can certainly be seen in recent ‘trainwreck biopics’. Hopkins illustrates how the narrative framing of *Whitney* ‘undermin[es her] agency’, whilst Bronwyn Polaschek reads *Amy* as ‘obscur[ing] the rebellious agency that was central to [Winehouse’s] self-presentation’ in its depiction of Winehouse as deeply vulnerable, a sharp contrast to her living

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁶¹ Susan Hopkins, ‘Trainwreck femininity and *Whitney*: monstrous feminine redux’, *Celebrity Studies* 11 (2020) 1: 154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2020.1704477>.

⁶² Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁶³ Hopkins, ‘Trainwreck femininity’, 155.

persona of 'excessive performativity' and 'active rebellion against ... social expectations'.⁶⁴ This same tendency is identified in the source materials collected, and the thesis adds to these observations by examining how the impulse to remove agency and thus 'redeem' the artist is fulfilled in news media, the role of authenticity in this, and by uncovering the same inclination in coverage of three other artists, thereby identifying a prominent trend.

Yet it is clear from Kandall's work that social identity plays a significant role in determining the balance between victimisation and vilification. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Five, Winehouse and Joplin appear to have been redeemed more easily from accusations of cultural inauthenticity than Houston (see section 5.5). Thus, this thesis is aligned with an intersectional feminist framework.⁶⁵ Mainstream feminism has often focused disproportionately on the experiences of white, middle-class, and otherwise privileged women and I hope to avoid this tendency, especially as a white, middle-class, and otherwise privileged woman. bell hooks highlights how Black women have been oppressed by white men, white women, and Black men throughout history. Most pertinent to this theoretical framework is that the relationship between white and Black feminists is historically fraught. In terms of second-wave feminism, hooks illustrates how the movement inadequately addressed issues of race and describes 'white women who were unwilling to face the reality of racism and racial difference Wrongly they saw us as deflecting focus away from gender'.⁶⁶ This lack in second-wave feminism led to the publication of *This Bridge Called My Back* in 1981, a collection of writings by women of colour. Audre Lorde's open letter to Mary Daly is emblematic of the movement's shortcomings. In response to Daly's book *Gyn/Ecology*, Lorde writes that it excludes the experiences of women of colour and that 'to imply that all women suffer the same oppression ... is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy'.⁶⁷

Patricia Hill Collins' work provides vital context concerning the wider purposes

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

Bronwyn Polaschek, 'The dissonant personas of a female celebrity: Amy and the public self of Amy Winehouse', *Celebrity Studies* 9 (2018) 1: 17-21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2017.1321490>.

⁶⁵ Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', 1241.

⁶⁶ bell hooks, *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*, second edition (New York: Routledge, 2014), 57.

⁶⁷ Audre Lorde, 'An Open Letter to Mary Daly', in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York, NY: Kitchen Table, 1983), 95. Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978).

of media representations of Black women into the twenty-first century. As she says, '[b]ecause the authority to define societal values is a major instrument of power, elite groups ... manipulate ideas about Black womanhood'.⁶⁸ Those proffering the dominant stereotypes include 'schools, the news media, and government agencies' as well as popular cultural works. Collins discusses first the 'mammy' image and the ways in which it has become 'the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women's behaviour', that is, a limiting ideal.⁶⁹ On the other hand, there are the mediated representations of poverty, hardship, and working mothers spending too much time away from the home which have culminated in the negative 'matriarch' trope. This trope serves a particular political purpose, because, as Collins has it, '[u]sing images of bad Black mothers to explain Black economic disadvantage links gender ideology to explanations for extreme distributions of wealth that characterize American capitalism'.⁷⁰ Collins also points to the 'lady' stereotype, 'the hardworking Black woman professional who works twice as hard as anyone else Because they so routinely compete with men ... they become less feminine'.⁷¹ Finally, Collins discusses a stereotype of hypersexuality, another limiting presentation that serves ideological purposes. She explains that, in constructing a woman 'whose sexual appetites are at best inappropriate and, at worst, insatiable, it becomes a short step to imagining her as a "freak"'.⁷²

It can be seen, then, how a series of limiting idea(l)s compound prejudices in perceptions of Black female addicts; their perceived 'deviance' as female addicts intersects with the reductive stereotypes that continue to surround Black women in the news media and popular culture. In Collins' most recent work, published in 2019, she draws on recent events to observe that 'social inequality seems as durable as ever' and that intersectionality needs to become fully crystallised as a 'critical social theory' to avoid becoming a framework that 'implicitly upholds the status quo'.⁷³ She traces the many approaches that such a move might involve, but importantly here in terms of feminist theory, she writes that it 'remains limited by its genealogy of whiteness and

⁶⁸ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, second edition (New York, NY: Routledge, 2000 [1990]), 69.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁷³ Patricia Hill Collins, *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 1-2.

its class politics' and that 'without sustained critical vigilance, intersectionality could become yet another empty racial signifier that masks how contemporary feminism has yet to move beyond prior racial exclusions'.⁷⁴ Acknowledgement of the factors in each of the case studies that go beyond the umbrella of femininity is essential to an understanding of the structures at play in the construction of their posthumous careers, and considerations of race, class, and sexuality also appear in the analysis chapters. Explicit references to class in the source materials are rare, but implicit biases can be identified. My definition of class here is not based on wealth, as the high-profile successes of these women mean they are unlikely to be classed economically in the same way as non-famous individuals. The classed considerations around them seem to be grounded more in conclusions based on background and upbringing. As Lynette Finch has noted, the origins of an idea of a 'working class' in the nineteenth century were based on studies which 'all organised the observed people though reference to morality and not to political or economic order'. Crucially, '[t]he importance of the use of moral categories, within a feminist viewpoint, is that this process placed women at the centre of the discursive construction'.⁷⁵ Class and ideas of pariah femininity are thus always linked.

Indeed, issues of class intersect with gender to affect perception of 'deviant' celebrity behaviour. Lieve Gies uses the example of the British royal family to highlight its importance; for example, the Duke of Edinburgh has demonstrated 'similar insensitivity and tactlessness' to Jade Goody without anywhere near the amount of condemnation, anecdotally illustrating the difference that class makes to celebrity forgiveness.⁷⁶ Diane Negra and Su Holmes state in their study of celebrity gossip that

much of the venom directed at women we 'love to hate' is often sourced in old-fashioned class politics When we see ... Winehouse staggering and bleeding in the street in the early hours ... we are often invited to understand [her] to be reverting to (class) type.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 105-108.

⁷⁵ Lynette Finch, *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993), 10-11.

⁷⁶ Lieve Gies, 'Stars Behaving Badly', *Feminist Media Studies* 11 (2011) 3: 357. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2010.535319>.

⁷⁷ Diane Negra and Su Holmes, 'Introduction', *Genders* 48 (2008): paras 4-5, accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive/1998-2013/2008/12/01/introduction-special-issue-going-cheap-female-celebrity-reality-tabloid-and-scandal>.

It is important to note here that Holmes and Negra do not remark upon Winehouse's Jewishness. Jon Stratton points out that Winehouse's Jewish background was a core part of her public persona, and she has been 'subject to ... exclusionary practices ... and stereotyping', demonstrating how she has been at various points idealised, sexualised, and demonised through stereotypes concerning Jewish women.⁷⁸ He describes many instances of such prejudice, yet in much of the source material collected for analysis in this thesis, Winehouse is placed within a white, working-class category, particularly in the sources that deal with accusations of cultural appropriation (see section 5.3.6). The attitude described by Holmes and Negra has its roots in class-based constructions of femininity. Beverley Skeggs explains how from the eighteenth century onwards, femininity became associated with the upper classes, a sign of leisure that was coded in conduct and appearance. Working-class women often had to be involved in forms of manual labour and, whilst this may have made them physically stronger than their middle- and upper-class counterparts, it made the attainment of contemporary feminine traits difficult. Appearances of femininity became encoded with economic and cultural capitals, and the middle and upper classes interpreted perceived lack of femininity as a sign of sexual voracity and excess – the 'other' to the middle-class female ideal.⁷⁹ This can be linked specifically to issues of substance abuse and other perceived 'disorderly' behaviours using a 2005 article by Skeggs in which she explores public reactions to hen parties, whose loud, hard-drinking attendees seemingly 'embody all the moral obsessions historically associated with the working class now contained in one body'.⁸⁰ Finch additionally notes that perceptions of drunkenness were an important part of judging the morality of working class individuals in late nineteenth century surveys.⁸¹ Ideas of femininity are here closely linked with 'respectability', a notion that 'would not be of concern ... if the working classes (Black and White) had not consistently been classified as dangerous, polluting, threatening, revolutionary, pathological and without respect'.⁸² Thus, when figures such as Winehouse are seen to be contravening codes of white femininity (examined below)

⁷⁸ Jon Stratton, *Jews, Race and Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 2009), 176.

⁷⁹ Beverley Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable* (London: Sage, 1997), 99.

⁸⁰ Beverley Skeggs, 'The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation', *Sociology* 9 (2005) 5: 965. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505058381>.

⁸¹ Finch, *The Classing Gaze*, 12.

⁸² Skeggs, *Formations of Class and Gender*, 1.

by engaging in substance abuse, media and public disapproval inevitably contains elements of classism in that these are not actions consistent with the elusive ascription of 'respectability'.

Class considerations interact with ideas about race. As Skeggs has said, 'the White working-class female body is often represented as out of control, in excess'.⁸³ This transgresses the codes associated with white femininity; Shelley Cobb refers to Kirby Moss' work on white working classes, in which he observes and challenges the presumption that whiteness is 'neutral [or] even invisible'.⁸⁴ The 'excessive' white working-class woman compromises this invisibility. Cobb writes that newspaper and gossip blog discourse around three white American 'bad celebrity mothers' portrays them as "'white-trash" women who do not display the cultural tastes appropriate to the privileges of whiteness and wealth'.⁸⁵ Veiled condemnation for this can be seen in discourses from across the UK and US; in the same journal edition, Negra and Holmes note that in coverage of white, working-class female celebrities in tabloids, there is 'a sense of dismay that these women are flouting the behavioral codes of whiteness'.⁸⁶ The 'excessive' white, working-class, female body, as Cobb puts it, 'disrupts ... the normativity of [whiteness'] privilege'.⁸⁷ Extending this notion of 'excess' to the 'deviance' associated with female addiction, it is possible to see how notions of class skew perception, and this can be drawn into the enactment of a pariah femininity. Condemnations of Winehouse from during her lifetime can be thus understood as condemnation for being 'out of control, in excess'.

Due to the association of the 'white trash' (US) or 'chav' (UK) characterisation with tabloid culture, it may be seen as applying mostly to the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Yet celebrity gossip has always surrounded well-known figures, and similar themes might be found in earlier sources pertaining to the other two white case studies in the thesis. In 1963, Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*, an exposé of the dissatisfaction felt by housewives in the US, what she called 'the

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁸⁴ Kirby Moss, *The Color of Class: Poor Whites and the Paradox of Privilege* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 113.

⁸⁵ Shelley Cobb, 'Mother of the Year: Kathy Hilton, Dina Lohan, Lynne Spears, and Bad Celebrity Motherhood', *Genders* 48 (2008): para 6, accessed Feb18, 2022. <https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2008/11/01/mother-year-kathy-hilton-lynne-spears-dina-lohan-and-bad-celebrity-motherhood>.

⁸⁶ Negra and Holmes, 'Introduction', para 5.

⁸⁷ Cobb, 'Mother of the Year', para 18.

problem with no name'. Inspired by the translated version of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1953), this seminal text – sometimes credited with sparking the beginning of second-wave feminism in the US⁸⁸ – provides an account of expectations for (white, middle-class) women during the post-war period, namely that they 'could desire no greater destiny than to glory in their own femininity' by marrying, having children, and staying at home.⁸⁹ Crucially, this message was communicated predominantly by men through magazines, advertising, decisions about education, and the 'uncritical acceptance of Freudian doctrine in America'.⁹⁰ The point of Friedan's work is that this had made a great number of American women desperately unhappy, but it also provides an account of the dominant images communicated to (some) women about their role and place in society. As a feminist text, Friedan's work is incomplete. bell hooks has written that she 'ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women' and made 'the plight of white women like herself synonymous with a condition affecting all American women'.⁹¹ Yet significant and important criticisms about the white- and middle-class-centric nature of Friedan's work usefully demonstrate in this context prevailing ideas about white femininity. The living and early posthumous careers of the white and middle-class Joplin and Carpenter can be understood via the lens of this construction of idealised femininity as laid out by Friedan.⁹² As childless women with successful careers, they were already not conforming to the housewife ideal described by Friedan. Additionally, as with Winehouse, their self-destructive behaviours can be understood as going against these common expectations of white femininity.

Poverty and poor economic conditions disproportionately affect people from ethnic minorities, and inequalities become further compounded.⁹³ Shapiro examines

⁸⁸ Daniel Horowitz, 'Rethinking Betty Friedan and the Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America', *American Quarterly* 48 (1996) 1: 18.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30041520>.

⁸⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2010 [1963]), 5.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁹¹ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, third edition (New York, NY: 2015 [1984]), 2.

⁹² Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 23.

⁹³ Omar Khan, 'The Colour of Money: How racial inequalities obstruct a fair and resilient economy', *Runnymede Report*, April 2020, accessed February 7, 2021.
<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/2020%20reports/The%20Colour%20of%20OMoney%20Report.pdf>.

Ray Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter, 'Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: an Intergenerational Perspective', *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135 (2019) 2: 711-783. <https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjz042>.

circumstances around Billie Holiday and Anita O'Day's drug abuse: whilst he claims both were already perceived to be deviant due to their occupation as jazz singers, he points out that the 'crucial difference ... was that Holiday was black'.⁹⁴ The Federal Bureau of Narcotics sent her their first threat after a performance of the anti-lynching lament 'Strange Fruit' in 1939. She was arrested, and eventually charged, for heroin possession and use in 1947, and as Griffin has pointed out, 'Philadelphia police were notorious for harassing African Americans, and the narcotics agents who hounded [her] were well known in Philadelphia's black communities'.⁹⁵ The racial difference in treatment of Black and white female addicts is embodied in the Head of FBN Harry Anslinger's treatment of Holiday and Judy Garland, as illustrated by the journalist Johann Hari; with Garland he 'had a friendly chat, in which he advised her to take longer vacations between pictures, and he wrote to her studio, assuring them she didn't have a drug problem at all', whereas Holiday became his 'Public Enemy #1'. According to Hari, this is because Anslinger had hoped to the fight the war on drugs by playing into (white, middle-class) fears about drug addiction in minority communities, and 'knew that to secure his bureau's future, he needed a high-profile victory, over intoxication and over black people, and so he turned ... to Billie Holiday'.⁹⁶

The raced nature of drug legislations in the US is still clear in policies of mass incarceration, which have led to the US's position as the country with the highest number of incarcerated citizens (from around 200,000 prisoners in 1972 to around 2.2 million in 2017).⁹⁷ This policy disproportionately affects people from ethnic minority backgrounds. For Michelle Alexander, the way that the war on drugs inordinately disadvantages and vilifies people of colour makes it a more subtle, insidious continuation of discrimination from the past.⁹⁸ These policies and subsequent media coverage feed into an overall public perception and subsequent stereotype of those involved in the drug trade at any level. Thus, in the examination of the cases of Holiday and Houston, these institutional biases must be taken into consideration in

⁹⁴ Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man*, 84.

⁹⁵ Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, 41.

⁹⁶ Johann Hari, 'The Hunting of Billie Holiday', *POLITICO*, Jan 17, 2015, accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/drug-war-the-hunting-of-billie-holiday-114298?o=1>.

⁹⁷ 'Mass Incarceration', *Equal Justice Initiative*, n.d., accessed Jan 14, 2022. <https://eji.org/mass-incarceration>.

⁹⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, revised edition (New York: The New Press, 2012), 11.

examination of their drug use and its effect on their posthumous reputations. The UK does not operate mass incarceration on the same level as the US, but racial biases concerning drug abuse can be seen in ‘stop and search’ statistics – Home Office data for the year 2019/20 showed that Black people were around nine times more likely to be stopped than those from white backgrounds.⁹⁹ The intersection of Blackness and class in the data can be seen around the ways in which Holiday’s impoverished upbringing is incorporated into the perception of her as the archetypal ‘tragic torch singer’ (see sections 4.3, 4.4, 5.4, and 6.4) and the ways in which Houston became an object of ridicule at the height of her drug addictions – as Doyle points out, she was ‘a black addict using a drug associated with poor black addicts’ and ‘was turned by reality TV and hostile media coverage into a woman that *The O’Reilly Factor* called “just another crackhead”, a loud, scary, down-market stereotype’.¹⁰⁰ I suggest that the enactment of pariah femininity and the subsequent rationalisation of these women’s actions following their deaths should be understood within these broader issues of discrimination.

2.2.3 Individualised narratives

It is within this wider context that the thesis examines individual narratives constructed around famous female addicts. Atte Oksanen has carried out research into female musicians’ drug experience using their autobiographies. He cites existing studies that point to differing perceptions of male and female addicts, such as Alexandra Bogren’s work on female alcoholism as ‘dual licentiousness’, to demonstrate how ‘[a]ddiction has more severe consequences to the professional career of the women’.¹⁰¹ However, some of Oksanen’s arguments are presumptuous. For example, he claims that ‘Joplin ... became trapped in the male world [Her] overdose death exemplifies how destructive the role of “being one of the boys” may turn’.¹⁰² The assumption that Joplin was ‘trapped in the male world’ is problematic as it ignores the

⁹⁹ ‘Stop and Search’, *GOV.uk*, Feb 22, 2021, accessed Jan 14, 2022. <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest>.

¹⁰⁰ Doyle, *Trainwreck*, 93, 205.

¹⁰¹ Atte Oksanen, ‘Female rock stars and addiction in autobiographies’, *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 30 (2013) 1-2: 136. <https://doi.org/10.2478/nsad-2013-0009>.
Alexandra Bogren, ‘Women’s intoxication as “dual licentiousness”: An exploration of gendered images of drinking and intoxication in Sweden’, *Addiction Research and Theory* 16 (2008) 1: 95-106. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16066350701668895>.

¹⁰² Oksanen, ‘Female rock stars and addiction’, 126.

fact that a female musician might engage in this sort of behaviour for a number of reasons, ignoring Joplin's agency as an adult woman. Additionally, his study takes its evidence from autobiographies, something which Joplin never produced. So, whilst it may be fair to take information from autobiographies in the cases he examines in more detail, I would argue that his claim puts words into Joplin's mouth without supporting evidence, and further contributes to the trope of the female addict as victim.

In fact, female addiction is frequently associated with a kind of 'neediness' and Joplin is repeatedly framed in this way. Music journalists Simon Reynolds and Joy Press claim that her 'music may not have endured ... but her image sure has: dishevelled, wasted, wrecked, wracked with neediness',¹⁰³ and go on to claim that her 'self-destructive impulses ... [do] not have the same charismatic, Dionysian aura' of fellow counter-culture casualties Brian Jones or Jimi Hendrix. They suggest that this may be because 'the break she was making with acceptable feminine conduct was more drastic than anything her male counterparts attempted'.¹⁰⁴ Reynolds and Press do not provide evidence beyond album sales for this, though their description of an 'acceptable' idea of femininity ('emotional, vulnerable, caring, maternal') provides useful context concerning the mediation of Joplin's posthumous career, particularly the posthumous softening of her raucous lifestyle through the rendering of her as vulnerable. As with Berkers and Eeckelaers, their work points to a double standard in relation to male and female addicts, in this case, demonstrating how Joplin has been presented as an object of pity in contrast to her 'charismatic, Dionysian' male contemporaries.

Shapiro points to trends in psychiatry to illustrate how '[t]he dominant psychiatric model of female addiction (formulated largely by men) has stereotyped women heroin users as natural victims – passive, insecure, vulnerable, dependent creatures'.¹⁰⁵ Whilst Shapiro does not mention any psychiatrists in particular, this interpretation is supported by the source materials collected for the analysis chapters of this thesis. He cites two common narrative thrusts, the first being 'family backgrounds ... characterized as disturbed and chaotic', a theme centrally framed in the source materials for each of my case studies aside from Joplin. The second involves

¹⁰³ Simon Reynolds and Joy Press, *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock 'n' Roll* (London: Serpent's Tail: 1995), 271-272.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 272.

¹⁰⁵ Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man*, 83.

the addict being “‘taken on” by a man who also happens to be an addict, [who] will force her into addiction’,¹⁰⁶ a frame operating loosely around each of my case studies apart from Carpenter. The specific narrative trajectories that emerge in the source materials used in this thesis are examined in more detail in Chapter Six. What is important for the purposes of the literature review is the frequency with which the ‘victimhood’ frame emerges in posthumous reframing of drug-addicted female singers. Projecting this frame onto the female addict takes away her agency. Shapiro examines Joplin, framed as a woman trapped in a man’s world, eager to fit in, and Holiday, framed as a victim of the various managers and lovers who introduced her to and played a part in keeping her using heroin, and these readings are consistent with the source materials I have collected. Reynolds and Press place this interpretation within the context of a stereotype of a ‘seemingly unbalanced woman whose intensity elicits, from (male) fans and critics, both envious awe and protective feelings’. For them, the ‘torch singer’ of the mid-twentieth century became the ‘ethereal, damaged girl singer’ of the 1990s. Drawing on critical reactions to the outputs of Björk, Alison Shaw, and Holiday, they illustrate how this reading can be seen through the lens of a heterosexual male fantasy of ‘a girl they can save or heal’.¹⁰⁷ I would additionally argue that this reading also works to remove agency and recast the singer as a victim, as someone who *needs* saving or healing.

Closely related to this frame is another persistent image: that the female addict is mentally ill beyond their addiction (despite addiction itself being a mental illness, these narratives tend to include a further diagnosis). Female addicts in the public eye who survive their drug habits have sometimes retrospectively claimed that their addiction was related to mental ill health, and this can become a route to public redemption. Bell has examined this phenomenon, focusing especially on its ubiquity in 1990s/2000s British tabloids. At this time, a type of ‘pop-feminism’ emerged that was associated with ‘assertiveness, provocation, and success’ but also the enactment of a ‘boisterous, immoderate, and scandalizing’ femininity, not dissimilar to Skeggs’ observations about ‘excess’.¹⁰⁸ Taking a series of high-profile British ‘ladettes’ as case studies, Bell examines how more recent autobiographical products ‘pathologize their

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁷ Reynolds and Press, *The Sex Revolts*, 270-271.

¹⁰⁸ Bell, ‘The Insanity Plea’, 199 – 200.

pop-feminism as both a cause and escape from mental health problems'.¹⁰⁹ In Bell's formulations, this rescinding of previously 'excessive' behaviour is indicative of an attempt to move back towards 'culturally "acceptable" forms of femininity'.¹¹⁰ This reading is convincing but difficult to evidence definitively, especially as Bell's construction of 'acceptable' femininity is somewhat vague, based mostly on a general aura of idealised 'heterosexual maternalism'. Yet these women might be said to have enacted 'unacceptable' or pariah femininity and there are certainly ideas about agency operating here – Bell's title 'insanity plea' implying diminished responsibility for previous perceived misdeeds. As she illustrates, this is a common road to public redemption for these types of celebrities. Her observations about agency and redemption have provided an important grounding basis for this thesis, which expands upon Bell's work by introducing the concept of how authenticity operates in these contexts and how musical content can be used as a narrative device in such redemptive trajectories.

This thesis builds on these important existing studies into addiction and female celebrity by looking at the long-term effects of addiction on a female singer's posthumous career, particularly when the singer's death is related to their addictions. It argues that, despite the sense of demonisation found in some of the secondary sources examined in this review, a sense of redemption emerges in the long-term following death. In the newspaper articles collected for analysis, this is often achieved through a removal of agency which ultimately casts the singer as a victim or a sympathetic reframing of perceived misdeeds.

2.3 Celebrity death

2.3.1 Economic considerations

Jones has pointed out how the mediation of dead musicians is a collaborative effort between record labels, publicists, journalists, and fans.¹¹¹ As in life, the combination of carefully marketed personae and public discourse amounts to a general consensus on what the musician represents. This becomes more potent following death, once the individual can no longer physically act themselves. Without the complexities and

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹¹¹ Jones, 'Better Off Dead', 5.

contradictions of their own behaviour, the dead celebrity becomes a series of signs and significations, usually similar to but simplified from their living persona, as illustrated by Strong and Lebrun.¹¹² Unavoidably, on one side of this practice are those who stand to gain financially from the deceased's popularity. The sheer amount of posthumous material released is indicative of the economic potential of celebrity death. Musicians in particular offer myriad ways of producing new products due to the material they leave behind in recordings. In their study of factors contributing to the longevity of visual artists' posthumous careers, Lang and Lang make the practical point that '[s]urvival in the collective memory is closely tied to the survival of tangible objects that recall the deceased'.¹¹³ Therefore, the works left behind by musicians provide tangible media with which fans can interact and through which profit can be made.

The act of being recorded means being immortalised due to the recording's ability to outlive the person being recorded. In his study on tribute discs, B. Lee Cooper has described how '[b]oth the dead and the living dwell in a strange sound recording eternity' and how frequently '[m]usic as memory becomes music as materialism'.¹¹⁴ It is perhaps reductive to posit this as a purely materialistic or economic factor, as whilst making economic gain from the work of the dead may be framed as cynical and problematic, ongoing fan engagement can be said to be more complex. A recording's ability to transcend the lifetime of the person being recorded has always been a significant factor in how it is perceived. As Strong and Lebrun have put it, 'a song always foretells an end, and always entails the metaphoric and symbolic death of a human voice',¹¹⁵ while in his cultural history of sound production, Jonathan Sterne explains that 'the invocations of the "voices of the dead" were everywhere in writings about sound recording in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'.¹¹⁶ By separating voice from body, recording technologies allow an artist's works to live on long after their death, and for audiences to continue to interact with a persona. Andy

¹¹² Strong and Lebrun, 'The Great Gig in the Sky', 6.

¹¹³ Gladys Engel Lang and Kurt Lang, 'Recognition and Renown: The Survival of Artistic Reputation', *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988) 1: 80. <https://doi.org/10.1086/228952>.

¹¹⁴ B. Lee Cooper, 'Tribute Discs, Career Development, and Death: Perfecting the Celebrity Product from Elvis Presley to Stevie Ray Vaughan', *Popular Music and Society* 28 (2005) 2: 233-244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760500045360>.

¹¹⁵ Strong and Lebrun, 'The Great Gig in the Sky', 4.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Production* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 289.

Bennett has pointed out that audiences primarily experience celebrity as a set of mediations, dead or alive.¹¹⁷ These mediations are frequently separate from the linear flow of time in any case, as the work of musicians can largely be consumed at will.

However, this does not mean that death does not change the ways in which audiences consume celebrity media. A significant part of engagement with celebrity is through a false sense of familiarity, a 'para-social relationship'.¹¹⁸ Constantly evolving social media technologies heighten this experience.¹¹⁹ Bennett discusses how

rock and pop artists ... have been experienced primarily as mediations [T]his ... has not prevented [audiences] from forming what they perceive as *personal* bonds with [artists] Thus ... a sense of loss is ... deeply felt when the artist ... dies.¹²⁰

Additionally, Tia DeNora's work has demonstrated how consumption of music can help in the formation of a meaningful self-identity¹²¹ and Andy McGuinness and Katie Overy have observed how it can foster feelings of social connectedness.¹²² Music consumption's role in the construction of memory and its autobiographical salience has been well-researched.¹²³ It is therefore not surprising that if a person sees a part of themselves in a certain song or album, they may feel a loss when the artist they associate it with has gone.

¹¹⁷ Andy Bennett, 'Mediation, Generational Memory, and the Dead Icon', in *Death and the Rock Star*, ed. Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun (Abingdon, Routledge: 2015), 62.

¹¹⁸ Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance', *Psychiatry* 19 (1956) 3: 215.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>.

¹¹⁹ Alice Marwick and danah boyd, 'To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter', *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 17 (2011) 2: 139.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856510394539>.

¹²⁰ Bennett, 'Mediation', 62. Original emphasis.

¹²¹ Tia DeNora, *Music and Everyday Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 63.

¹²² Andy McGuinness and Katie Overy, 'Music, consciousness and the brain: Music as shared experience of an embodied present', in *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. David Clarke and Eric Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 250.

¹²³ See for example Clay Routledge et al., 'The Past Makes the Present Meaningful: Nostalgia as an Existential Resource', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101 (September 2011) 3: 638-652.
<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/101/3/638/>.

Barrett et al., 'Music-Evoked Nostalgia: Affect, Memory, and Personality', *American Psychological Association* 10 (2010) 3: 390-403. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019006>.

2.3.2 Mediation

However, prior fame is not a prerequisite for a successful posthumous career.

Rothenbuhler examines the legacy of blues singer and guitarist Robert Johnson, whose story has become a prominent pop cultural myth. In brief, the legend goes that Johnson sold his soul to the devil in exchange for guitar virtuosity, but the devil always collects his dues, and Johnson died aged only 27, poisoned by a lover's husband. The only concrete facts in this are Johnson's age and that he died from some sort of poisoning. The lack of information about Johnson's life means that his persona has been almost entirely produced by others and this process demonstrates the importance of mediation in posthumous reputations. Rothenbuhler explains how the story serves several functions:

as a version of traditional, romantic ideas about the inexplicability of genius, about the common wellspring of all creative genius, about the powers and costs of dealing with the Devil, about artistic craft, about literary and audience reception, about the search for truth, about the music industry itself These stories ... can all function together because Johnson's life was so unknown, and ... irrelevant to the functioning of the stories.¹²⁴

The case of Johnson is emblematic of the social functions served by posthumous careers and how the narratives created around dead artists come to be imbued with social and moral norms. Particularly relevant to this thesis is the trend for redemption in the mediation of the celebrity dead. Margaret Schwartz's book *Dead Matter: The Meaning of Iconic Corpses* (2015) contains a chapter devoted to 'tabloid bodies' using the case studies of Princess Diana and Michael Jackson.¹²⁵ In it, she discusses how scandal and perceived shortcomings can be forgiven, explaining how focus on charity work in their eulogies alters previously dominant narratives:

affect and the image combine to make a selectively political portrait of a life whose economic value is maintained by the continued circulation of archival

¹²⁴ Rothenbuhler, 'The Strange Career of Robert Johnson's Records', 230.

¹²⁵ At the time of writing, historic child sex abuse allegedly perpetrated by Jackson is generating a significant amount of discourse following Dan Reed's documentary *Leaving Neverland* (2019). It remains to be seen how this will alter public interaction with Jackson's posthumous legacy long-term.

media Thus ... the site of tabloid fame and celebrity gossip becomes ... a space of redemption.¹²⁶

Schwartz's work illustrates the trend towards public 'redemption' in posthumous careers, a trend that has also emerged from my data gathering and analysis. The redemptive drive found in the source materials is formed through different narrative devices, and so this thesis expands on Schwartz's work by identifying how the redemptive impulse persists in the careers of female singers, especially ones who might also be described as 'tabloid bodies', that is, those who 'die early and scandalous deaths'.¹²⁷

As shown in the previous section, dead musicians have hugely profitable potential for several reasons. Practically, a wealth of old material that can be remarketed in a new form and previously unreleased material can be tapped into to provide seemingly endless opportunity for repackaging and rerelease. Yet what cannot be separated from these financial observations is the posthumous mediation of celebrity persona, or the way in which celebrities come to embody certain truths or norms; effectively, whatever audiences need them to.

2.3.3 Female posthumous fame: Mediation and morality

As mentioned, celebrities are typically moulded into a set of signs to create a general consensus about their public persona and in death, these signs often become simplified and tend to reflect the beliefs of the societies that form them. Ruth Penfold-Mounce elaborates on this in her typology of celebrity deaths, which she bases on a series of public reactions to such events ('timely, tragic, tragic-foolish, tragic-heroic').¹²⁸ For the studies in this thesis, tragic and tragic-foolish are most relevant. Tragic deaths 'become the embodiment of unhealthy lifestyles, vanity, poor judgement, careless or stupid behaviour, or ... "sinful" activities However, what is also core to these parables ... is the sense of underlying tragedy'.¹²⁹ These deaths can also help demographics to affirm their moral beliefs and in some cases even cause

¹²⁶ Margaret Schwartz, *Dead Matter: The Meaning of Iconic Corpses* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 86.

¹²⁷ Schwartz, *Dead Matter*, 83.

¹²⁸ Ruth Penfold-Mounce, *Death, the Dead and Popular Culture* (Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2018), 14.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

moral panic, as at the beginning of the 1970s.¹³⁰ This is even more pronounced in what Penfold-Mounce terms ‘tragic-foolish’ deaths, wherein a celebrity ‘embodies a collapsed morality which people can unite against’.¹³¹ It is important to state here that tragic-foolish deaths do not tend to apply so much to musicians, as music can provide a vehicle of redemption (see section 2.3.4). However, I argue that there are distinct gendered considerations in representations of ‘tragic’ and ‘tragic-foolish’ death.

This section opens with a consideration of existing studies of how the posthumous personae of female musicians have been constructed and what this reveals about posthumous fame for women. Audiences construct the posthumous identities of famous figures into what they need them to be. Jensen has explored fandom and bias in her work on country singer Patsy Cline, who found widespread fame following her death in a plane crash when she was 30. As Jensen examines, the trajectory of Cline’s life has become streamlined, broad themes have emerged, and she has come to mean different things to different audiences. For example, Jensen charts the retrospective construction of Cline as an LGBTQ icon, formed from perception of her as a strong woman who overcame an abusive marriage and an ironic appreciation of her music and image, which she describes as a ‘postmodern bricolage’: ‘The gay diva Patsy is a “knowing” Patsy, a way to play with the ways that Patsy is both real and constructed. Such a “postmodern” Patsy can still serve to inspire or orient the fan’.¹³² In this case, the appeal of Cline’s triumph over adversity seems to take an explicitly gendered angle in which she defied the expectations of the 1950s housewife to pursue a successful recording career. Jensen outlines how lack of specificity is crucial to the narrative:

The semiotic Patsy ... has been constructed in ways that suppress ... the specific[s] Instead, she offers a ‘promising bundle’ of signifiers that can be detached from their origins in actual life, while gaining significance from the hints of that life – abuse, misery, loneliness – and beliefs about triumph over it.¹³³

¹³⁰ Whiteley, ‘The Killing Fields of Popular Music’, 330.

¹³¹ Penfold-Mounce, *Death, the Dead and Popular Culture*, 17-18.

¹³² Jensen, ‘Posthumous Patsy Clines’, 131.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 132.

The ways in which Cline's life has been selectively mediated provide a compelling example of the ideological purposes of posthumous personae. As Jensen points out, '[p]osthumous fame allows celebrity figures to slip loose from the moorings of biography and geography, so they can better serve the current purposes of those who need them'.¹³⁴ It is logical, then, to suppose that dead female celebrities may come to symbolise certain themes about womanhood; tellingly, all of the chapters in the 'Mediating Meanings' section of *Afterlife as Afterimage* are on female musicians.

Also writing in *Afterlife as Afterimage*, Mary Beltrán examines the posthumous 'crossover' of the Tejano singer Selena, who was murdered when she was 23. Her chapter provides an insight into the specific kind of narratives that are constructed around deceased female performers. Initially most well-known by Latinx audiences, Selena found a large white American fanbase after her death. Beltrán describes how 'Selena is both mourned and constructed as an American icon in the tribute articles through a number of discursive thrusts'. In particular, the presentation of her as a hard-working, working-class, family-oriented woman who married young is crucial to her crossover appeal as '[t]hrough highlighting such details of Selena's life she was promoted as an unpretentious and clean-living American role model'.¹³⁵ This portrayal of her stands in contrast to the case studies in this thesis, but it further demonstrates the idea that female celebrity death can be a site of meaning-making. In death, Selena is reduced from a complex individual to an idealised signifier of hard work and talent.

Peggy Bowers and Stephanie Houston Grey's work on Karen Carpenter offers thought-provoking considerations about the kind of femininity she represented and the efforts made to preserve this following her death. As noted, the late 1960s and early 1970s had seen an abundance of drug-related deaths in the music industry, causing moral panic and cultural backlash. The Carpenters' easy-listening music and wholesome image offered a conservative, musical nostalgia for their intended audience during this period (see sections 4.4 and 6.3). Bowers and Houston Grey point out that whilst the band as a whole represented 'a more innocent America that so many sought to preserve during turbulent times', this image particularly relied on

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹³⁵ Mary C. Beltrán, 'Commemoration as Crossover: "Remembering" Selena', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 86-87.

‘Karen ... playing the role of star-struck female innocence’.¹³⁶ They draw on the iconography around Carpenter’s mausoleum, in which the virgin martyr St Agnes features prominently, to demonstrate how ‘[a]fter her death, the Carpenter family attempted to maintain Karen’s marketability by reinforcing images of Karen’s virginal sainthood’.¹³⁷ Claiming that her family’s only or main concern was ‘marketability’ is perhaps unfair – no evidence is given for this – but Bowers and Houston Grey provide a convincing reading of the connotations represented by the virgin martyr St Agnes, as well as perceived connections between martyrdom and starvation. They cite the Miracle Maidens of the medieval period who were said to subsist only on their faith, and illustrate how the combination of these images of purity and starvation culminates in the denial of many ‘pleasures of the flesh’; there are distinct moral meanings assigned to what they call the ‘hagiography’ of Carpenter.¹³⁸ It is also interesting to note that whilst Carpenter’s anorexia is well-known, her bulimia is not, which Bowers and Houston Grey put down to the ‘gluttonous and sneaky stereotypes’ associated with the illness, stereotypes that do not fit with the prevailing consensus about what Carpenter represents.¹³⁹ Yet like Cline, Carpenter’s music and image have been ascribed differing meanings by different demographics. Bowers and Houston Grey also illustrate how in Todd Haynes’ Barbie doll-starring ‘biopic’ (see section 6.3), ‘her life becomes a parable for modern femininity in a society where access to power is often denied to women’.¹⁴⁰ Carpenter’s posthumous position as an unlikely underground icon is explored further in the analysis chapters, but for the purposes of the literature review, the different claims different groups have made about Carpenter further demonstrate the malleability of posthumous careers and their associated meanings. In Bowers and Houston Grey’s words, ‘memory becomes a battleground where differing groups may carry ideological agendas to particular readings’.¹⁴¹ Both dominant readings they cite here are tied to Carpenter’s womanhood.

Each of these chapters show posthumous personae that are linked to ideas about the female experience and femininity: Cline as a defiant woman who overcame

¹³⁶ Bowers and Houston Grey, ‘Karen’, 98-99.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story, directed by Todd Haynes (Iced Tea Productions, 1987), film.

¹⁴¹ Bowers and Houston Grey, ‘Karen’, 117.

the strict gendered codes of the 1950s, Selena as an allegory for hard work and family values, and Carpenter as virtuous in some circles, or a cautionary tale about limiting gender roles in others. As Chapters Four and Five explore the impact of musical legacy on fulfilling the redemptive impulse, literature that reveals the redemptive capacity of musical legacy will now be explored.

2.3.4 Female posthumous fame: Musical legacy

Taylor Cole Miller examines how Whitney Houston's perceived 'deviant' lifestyle contrasted with her status as a national treasure. He claims that her 'public suffering ... enamoured her to her most loyal fans, making space for them to identify with her turmoil and connect to her community of followers',¹⁴² which he then compares with the 'less reverential' reactions to her death, which prompted fierce backlash from her admirers. This disjoint highlights the distinction between reverential fandom and wider societal reactions. Although Houston's death prompted widescale public grief, she did not escape public condemnation for her lifestyle. Penfold-Mounce cites Houston as a tragic celebrity death unanticipated but unsurprising and highlights the way in which these types of deaths 'become symbols of the potential toxicity of attaining and maintaining celebrity status but also a key catalyst for debate surrounding morality'.¹⁴³ Yet Houston's vocal prowess provides a redemptive dimension, situating her within the 'tragic' rather than the 'tragic-foolish' category.

The reactions to Amy Winehouse's demise led Paula Hearsum to identify a 'hierarchy of sympathy' in reaction to celebrity death, contrasting framing of the 'battles' of those who are terminally ill with those with addictions. She writes that, '[f]or Winehouse, the "battle" with drink, drugs, and/or personal problems ... [suggested] that her condition was in part self-induced', and she is thus lower down the hierarchy.¹⁴⁴ As with Houston, there was condemnation of the lifestyle factors that led to her demise, yet Hearsum also poses the ways in which Winehouse obtained a degree of redemption through her talent. These sources provide a snapshot of the complex reactions in the immediate aftermaths of the artists' deaths, but I argue that a

¹⁴² Miller, 'Social Sorrow', 87.

¹⁴³ Penfold-Mounce, *Death, the Dead and Popular Culture*, 16-17.

¹⁴⁴ Paula Hearsum, 'A musical matter of life and death: The morality of mortality and the coverage of Amy Winehouse's death in the UK press', *Mortality* 17 (2012) 2: 188.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2012.674305>.

more homogenised consensus on the figure in question emerges as time progresses. This thesis expands on these existing examinations of Houston and Winehouse's deaths by analysing how their posthumous careers beyond the immediate event of their deaths have been constructed and how the more troubling aspects of their lives are mediated, with a particular view to the redemptive dimension. As will be demonstrated in the analysis chapters, some of the more troubling aspects of both Houston's and Winehouse's lives are framed through a more sympathetic lens in which they become victims of societal pressures or those around them. Like this thesis, Hearsun draws on newspaper articles to construct her arguments. However, the article contains little consideration of the different types of publication and the ways in which they differ in their reporting. This thesis builds on Hearsun's work by examining the impact that the political leaning and provenance of the sources has on the way the narratives are framed (see 3.6, 6.4, and 7.2.3).

What is also relevant is how Hearsun, Miller, and Penfold-Mounce's pieces point to the redemptive potential that lies in musical legacy. Whilst the lines between celebrity and musician are arguably blurred in the cases examined in the thesis due to the extent of their fame, their musical outputs are undeniably central to their ongoing legacies. Each of their 'iconic' voices has been used to construct the sense of tragedy around their deaths, and recordings become a 'lasting redemptive gift'.¹⁴⁵

To further demonstrate music's redemptive potential, female celebrities who do not leave behind a catalogue of art perceived to be 'valuable' by audiences do not appear to be posthumously redeemed in the same way. This is illustrated in literature that deals with the TV presenter Paula Yates and model Anna Nicole Smith. Katrina Jaworski compares reactions to the deaths of Yates and her partner Michael Hutchence: he is 'a hard-working, struggling yet committed family man who had a lot to offer and who died far too young' whilst she becomes 'a drunk, hysterical drama queen who orchestrated her own misery'.¹⁴⁶ This is to some extent a gendered bias, which Jaworski examines in detail. However, it is worth noting the differences between Yates' and Hutchence's careers. As well as a reputation as a troubled and authentic soul being granted to him more easily by virtue of gender, Hutchence's musicianship

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 193.

¹⁴⁶ Katrina Jaworski, "'Elegantly Wasted': The celebrity deaths of Michael Hutchence and Paula Yates", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 22 (2008) 6: 781-782.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310802452446>.

would have contributed to an understanding of him as creative and serious, as opposed to Yates, who was likely understood as comparatively less creative or introspective as a TV presenter who had been a tabloid mainstay.

By the same token, in Penfold-Mounce's work, Smith is presented as 'an exemplar of tragic-foolish celebrity death'. The unnatural but ambiguous nature of her death provoked 'speculation and ultimately accusations of a variety of perceived personal failings and immorality'. She thus 'encapsulates the ideal scenario for a tragic-foolish celebrity death and forms a posthumous career as a parable about morality through her lifestyle and choices'.¹⁴⁷ As with Yates, there is arguably little artistic legacy through which Smith could have been granted redemption. Therefore, her demise becomes predominantly a moral lesson. Gies has also found in her examination of 'stars behaving badly' that tabloid celebrities who do not produce a substantial body of work outside of being famous are forgiven less easily for perceived transgression: 'we could surmise that media and public will be less forgiving of their wrongdoings: it is possible to disapprove of a gifted singer's drug-taking or violence yet still like her music'.¹⁴⁸ Whilst all the cases examined in this section so far have been subject to gendered constructions of posthumous identity, artistic legacy seems to be an important factor in the balance between vilification and redemption.

Much of the work surrounding female posthumous fame is of a high quality, but as can be seen, it constitutes a relatively small body of literature, especially in terms of musicians. This thesis adds to this existing scholarship by comparing five female artists, specifically singers, to trace trends across the mediation of their posthumous careers, and additionally by examining the prominent role that authenticity has played. Further, it suggests that three different types of authenticity operate in the posthumous legacies of these five women, an angle that has not yet been considered. What is common to each ascription of authenticity is the redemptive trajectories they take when applied to the artists' life stories. In the following section, the exact definitions of 'authenticity' the thesis employs are laid out.

¹⁴⁷ Penfold-Mounce, *Death, the Dead and Popular Culture*, 17-18.

¹⁴⁸ Gies, 'Stars Behaving Badly', 354.

2.4 Authenticity

The term 'authenticity' is notoriously amorphous. In fact, some scholars have questioned its usefulness, with Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh going so far as to describe it as 'consigned to the intellectual dust heap'.¹⁴⁹ The term has been challenged in the classical world, with Richard Taruskin noting that in these contexts it is 'neither description nor technique, but commercial propaganda, the stock-in-trade of press agents and promoters'.¹⁵⁰ The same can be said of notions of authenticity related to popular music, which boast considerable market appeal.¹⁵¹

Yet this research is aligned with Allan Moore's claim that a total dismissal of the concept is premature and that it continues to hold weight in music consumption. Moore suggests focusing on listeners' perceptions rather than trying to certify any music itself as authentic.¹⁵² Richard Middleton similarly points out that despite the complexities in definition, it 'seems to retain much of its purchase within the popular music culture'.¹⁵³ The idea that any music can be transmitted to its listener in an unmediated and entirely 'authentic' form is problematic, and ascriptions of authenticity have frequently been grounded in colonialist and masculinist logic, as examined in the following sections. However, authenticity is an unavoidable theme in the source materials collected, and it is precisely because of its problematic and nebulous nature that the thesis seeks to understand why it persists so prominently in these narrative trajectories. Ultimately, I subscribe to Rubidge's statement that 'authenticity is not a property *of*, but something we ascribe *to*, a performance'.¹⁵⁴ In other words, whilst authenticity is a dubious and arguably unhelpful term, audiences do perceive it and it matters to them, and therefore it is worth exploring how and why these perceptions arise.

In popular musicology, authenticity at its most basic can be said to come down to artists expressing something perceived as true of themselves and/or their

¹⁴⁹ Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh, 'Introduction: On Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music', in *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 30.

¹⁵⁰ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 90.

¹⁵¹ Allan Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', *Popular Music* 21 (2002) 2: 209.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143002002131>.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 221.

¹⁵³ Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*, 205.

¹⁵⁴ Rubidge, 'Does authenticity matter?' 219. Original emphasis.

backgrounds. It can be split into several different categories, but Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor's classifications of 'personal' and 'cultural' bear most relevance here. In the broadest possible terms, personal authenticity is that which 'reflects the person or people who are making [the music]' whilst cultural authenticity 'reflects a cultural tradition'.¹⁵⁵ Here it is divided into three more specific factors which correspond with the analysis chapters. Chapter Four and Chapter Six are based on perceived personal authenticities; the former deals with musical considerations (vocal authenticity) while the latter addresses the extra-musical and how an 'authentic' persona for each artist is constructed by commentators (suppressed authenticity). Chapter Five deals with perceived cultural authenticity. I suggest that the ways in which commentators ascribe authenticity to each of the five singers can be categorised according to these classifications. The desire to posthumously unearth the 'real' artist is present throughout this thesis through both interpretations of their music and the ways in which their biographies are told. I do not suggest that this interpretation of the artist is genuine or that it would even be possible to construct an accurate persona; as Griffin has said in her biography of Holiday, 'there is no getting back to the genuine, "real" or "authentic" woman'.¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, the trends across these various constructions reveal important information about how these narratives are forged.

The perception of vocal authenticity identified in the data collected concerns the idea that audiences project meaning based on their knowledge of each artist's personal lives onto their vocal timbre. In these readings, emotionally compelling performances come not only from musical skill, but from an inherent sadness or vulnerability identifiable in the singing voice, as examined in Chapter Four. My explorations in Chapter Five have to do with crossover and cultural appropriation and the ways in which these perceived transgressions are absolved posthumously. Musical ascriptions of authenticity in these cases are based on personal and cultural authenticities and their overlap. What is clear from the source materials collected is that the musical and the personal are closely intertwined in the reception of these posthumous careers.

In terms of the extra-musical, this work is aligned with a classification of

¹⁵⁵ Hugh Barker and Yuval Taylor, *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007), x.

¹⁵⁶ Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, xiii.

authenticity based on celebrity studies. This is especially important in Chapter Six, in which the research moves away somewhat from musical considerations. Here, I draw on Gilles Deleuze to address how the 'out-of-field' elements of the lives of the artists are constructed in public discourse and the purposes of these constructions.¹⁵⁷ Richard Dyer has identified a 'rhetoric of sincerity or authenticity, two qualities greatly prized in stars because they guarantee ... that the star really means what she or he says ... and really is what she or he appears to be'.¹⁵⁸ In Dyer's formulations, '[a] star image consists both of ... screen roles and obviously stage-managed public appearances, and also of images of the manufacture of that "image" and the real person who is the site or occasion of it'.¹⁵⁹ Dyer writes mainly about film stars, but Philip Auslander has suggested applying a similar framework to musicians, who, according to him, perform their identities as musicians as well as the music itself.¹⁶⁰ I suggest that the pursuit of the 'real person' rather than the 'musical persona' is the driving force in life-writing about each of these women. Drawing on Deleuze's writings on the importance of the 'out-of-field' and its framing in film theory, I demonstrate that the construction of a 'hidden authentic' persona for each of the artists lines up with an impulse to redeem each of them from their perceived transgressions and displace any perception of culpability onto other figures within their lives, especially ones who may also have been partially in the public eye. What each of these subthemes within authenticity have in common is that their ascription serves the redemptive impulse. Specificities around each of these three concepts is expanded upon in their respective chapters; for now, the general theoretical framework concerning authenticity and its varying definitions and complications will be set out.

The vague quality of authenticity and its ascription have social and political implications. After all, Moore suggests we ask who rather than what is authenticated.¹⁶¹ Examinations of authenticity have often been based on the distinction between pop and rock, wherein rock is perceived to be more 'real' in comparison with commercial popular music. Michael Pickering traces this attitude as a

¹⁵⁷ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 19.

¹⁵⁸ Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2013 [2004]), 10.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ Philip Auslander, 'Musical Personae'. *The Drama Review* 50 (2006) 1: 102.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4492661>.

¹⁶¹ Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', 210.

continuation of the way in which ‘folk song was pitted against music hall pieces’ in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁶² In other words, pop has been perceived as commercially-driven and inconsequential whereas rock is often viewed as a ‘purer’ folk art. As Lawrence Grossberg has claimed, rock in the mid-twentieth century was perceived to be authentic due to its apparent communication of real-life experiences, with these supposedly prioritised over commercial gain.¹⁶³

Notions of the pop/rock dichotomy can be said to have become outdated, with Grossberg arguing as early as 1992 that this formulation of authenticity was becoming increasingly irrelevant in the postmodern age.¹⁶⁴ I would argue that the pop/rock dichotomy is still important to some fans of certain genres, particularly as younger audiences make meaningful, personal connections with music from previous generations – what David Shumway calls ‘commodified nostalgia’¹⁶⁵ – and the appeal of music that would typically be classified as authentic may be largely the same. Indeed, Sarah Dougher has discovered evidence of the dichotomy operating in the music consumption of young girls as recently as six years ago.¹⁶⁶ However, this is not the specific ascription of authenticity working in coverage of the case studies. Recent research has located perceptions of authenticity in audiences and genres where it had not been previously explored in detail, and it is crucial in narrative trajectories formed around the women in this thesis.

Whilst the artists examined may not always meet the typical markers of popular music authenticity based on distinctions forged between pop and rock, audiences do seem to believe that something essential of each singer is expressed through their music. As Johan Fornäs has claimed, a ‘seemingly artificial text may also be an authentic expression of true life experiences in an artificial society’.¹⁶⁷ I would argue against Fornäs that no text is communicated to its recipient in an entirely unmediated form, but in the cases of the women in my thesis, commentators have

¹⁶² Michael Pickering, ‘The Dogma of Authenticity in the Experience of Popular Music’, in *The Art of Listening*, ed. Graham McGregor and R. S. White (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 207.

¹⁶³ Lawrence Grossberg, *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1992), 206.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 227.

¹⁶⁵ David R. Shumway, ‘Rock ‘n’ Roll Soundtracks and the Production of Nostalgia’, *Cinema Journal* 38 (1999) 2: 40. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225623>.

¹⁶⁶ Sarah Dougher, ‘When Loud Means Real: Tween Girls and the Voices of Rock Authenticity’, in *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music: Performance, Authority, Agency*, ed. Jacqueline Warwick and Allison Adrian (New York: Routledge, 2016), 191.

¹⁶⁷ Johan Fornäs, *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity* (London: Sage, 1995), 275.

(often retrospectively) perceived authenticity in their music and connected this with what they know of their personal lives, despite accusations of musical 'inauthenticity' (see 4.5, 5.2, and 5.3). In the following sections, the impact of gender and race on the construction of authenticity in the case studies' careers is examined and the review moves towards a working definition of the term.

2.4.1 Authenticity and femininity

Authenticity has been largely constructed as a masculine domain. Tellingly, Barker and Taylor make little reference to women in their book about the topic. In their analysis of the mechanisation of music, they point out that Donna Summer has not been widely perceived as authentic and claim that whilst '[w]omen have not always found it easy to project an "authentic" voice in the male-dominated music industry ... artists as varied as Nina Simone, Krist[i]n Hersh, Liz Phair, Lucinda Williams, and PJ Harvey have found ways of doing so'.¹⁶⁸ Whilst this claim is arguably accurate, they do not expand on it. Despite a detailed examination of the angry backlash to disco and the challenges posed to the very notion of musical authenticity by acts such as Kraftwerk, there is surprisingly little examination of gendered considerations. Indeed, the artists listed in this extract embody some of the typical markers of authenticity (as songwriters, instrumentalists, and singers of 'serious' or 'honest' songs), but this is not explored further. By not interrogating this point, Barker and Taylor miss an opportunity to expose the extra challenges female artists have had to overcome to be perceived as authentic, especially as each of the figures listed provide apt examples of these expectations.

One reason for the historic exclusion of women from formulations around authenticity concerns genre designations. As mentioned, rock has been perceived as an 'authentic' musical genre, and it has historically excluded women.¹⁶⁹ Norma Coates has illustrated that 'authentic' rock has come to be widely coded as masculine while 'artificial' pop is seen as a feminine domain.¹⁷⁰ Emma Mayhew points out that this is a process that has been more social than musical, with 'the practices and discourses that

¹⁶⁸ Barker and Taylor, *Faking It*, 260-261.

¹⁶⁹ Reynolds and Press, *The Sex Revolts*, 3.

¹⁷⁰ Norma Coates, '(R)evolution Now? Rock and the political potential of gender', in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Sheila Whiteley (Oxon: Routledge, 1997), 52.

make the music a meaningful social process' having the greater influence.¹⁷¹ Similarly, Sarah Thornton claims that 'authenticity is dependent on the extent to which records are assimilated and legitimated by a subculture' and that mainstream music is typically seen as feminine.¹⁷² As such, an initial barrier to authenticity for women can be identified. When women are the minority in genres widely coded as authentic, there emerges a need for them to prove themselves as worthy of the accolade.

There are further factors that have made it more difficult for women to be cited as having the elusive quality of authenticity. In her study of the music press in Britain in the 1990s, Helen Davies points out how women were often presented 'primarily as women, rather than as musicians' and 'treated as a homogeneous group'.¹⁷³ Arguably, outright sexism in music writing has diminished somewhat since Davies' article was published in 2001, and she does come quite close to homogenising the entire music press, but her observations about the ways in which the accolade of 'credibility' (synonymous with authenticity) has been denied to female artists are pertinent. One observation concerns authorship; Davies writes that due to the proliferation of male producer/female singer partnerships in pop history there has been a perception of such performers as 'replaceable and dispensable'. This assumption can be hard to overcome, especially as when a woman does insist on control of her career she risks being called 'difficult'.¹⁷⁴ On a related note, Davies claims that when women write music that might be considered 'intelligent and serious' they are often dismissed as 'pretentious' (she cites the critical backlash against Alanis Morissette as an example).¹⁷⁵ Whilst I would challenge Davies' implication that music by female artists is as routinely dismissed in such a way, her use of primary sources demonstrates how women have been excluded to some degree from discussion of credibility, and thus have found it harder to be described as 'authentic' artists in journalistic discourse.

Differing perceptions of authenticity's relationship with the voice present a

¹⁷¹ Emma Mayhew, 'Women in Popular Music and the Construction of "Authenticity"', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 4 (1999) 1: 67, accessed Oct 5, 2021. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1048578>.

¹⁷² Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity, 1995), 66, 99.

¹⁷³ Helen Davies, 'All Rock and Roll is Homosocial', *Popular Music* 20 (2001) 3: 302-303. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001519>. Original emphasis.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 306.

contradiction in discussion of female singers. On one hand, the *masculinist* construction of authenticity has been something more difficult for female singers in particular to achieve due to the association of the female body with nature, as well as the widely held assumption that singing is not difficult. Middleton has discussed how the embodied nature of the voice means that it is communicated to audiences 'through the screen of gender difference'.¹⁷⁶ The voice is thus already literally gendered; whilst scholars have debated the degrees of corporeality and immateriality in the voice, as Freya Jarman has illustrated, 'the body-voice relationship is a looped one, a matrix in which body and voice each produce the other'.¹⁷⁷ The relationship between body and voice is particularly loaded for female singers in terms of authenticity. One reason for this concerns the construction of singing as a largely feminine activity. Historically, men have been dominant in instrument-making, production, and professional playing and so, as Veronica Doubleday has pointed out, 'women have often been cast into the role of vocalists'.¹⁷⁸ Singing has become coded as a female domain both culturally and biologically. The idea of singing as something that is 'natural' to women means that their singing is sometimes not perceived as skilled and therefore not associated with creativity or intellect.

On the other hand, the conflation of the female body with nature, as outlined by Lucy Green, represents a sort of gendered authenticity as '[t]he bodily display of the singer ... becomes part of the delineated musical meaning and ... acts to affect the way listeners actually experience inherent musical meaning'.¹⁷⁹ There is subversive potential in this; Barbara Bradby draws on Donna Haraway to point out how the construction of feminine 'cyborgs' in dance music vocal sampling 'transgress the Enlightenment equation of women with nature'.¹⁸⁰ Yet whilst Bradby suggests that applying Haraway's theories in musicology may open up a 'feminist analysis that avoids falling back into the woman-as-nature equation',¹⁸¹ existing literature and the source

¹⁷⁶ Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*, 91.

¹⁷⁷ Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 8.

¹⁷⁸ Veronica Doubleday, 'Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17 (2008) 1: 17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17411910801972909>.

¹⁷⁹ Lucy Green, *Music, Gender, Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 50.

¹⁸⁰ Barbara Bradby, 'Sampling sexuality: Gender, technology and the body in dance music', *Popular Music* 12 (1993) 2: 157. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143000005535>.

Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1991).

¹⁸¹ Bradby, 'Sampling sexuality', 162.

materials I have gathered demonstrate that audiences continue to link female singing with the natural. For example, Bridget Coulter has interviewed girls between ten and 13 years old about their perceptions of musical authenticity and found that they particularly valued the idea of the 'natural' voice and demonstrated a distinct disdain for autotune, seemingly believing that 'authenticity belongs to the bodily realm'.¹⁸²

Thus, the association of the voice with the 'natural' poses a juxtaposition in terms of authenticity. The idea that the voice expresses something essential of the self implies an inherent honesty or sincerity. Indeed, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, the sonic qualities of the voice are vital to audience understanding of the case studies' posthumous careers. However, the idea of the inherent, natural voice is at odds with masculinist ideas of authenticity as this 'naturalness' means that singing is sometimes a skill which is devalued and perceived to be less difficult than other areas of music-making. The case studies constitute a mixture of trained and untrained voices, and there is perhaps an observation to be made concerning the value placed on the trained voice. Yet, as Michelle Duncan has said, the trained voice is still commonly perceived as inextricably linked to the body that produces it.¹⁸³ In the source materials I have collected, ideas about trained or untrained voices do not have an impact on the voice's association with the self and the body. This idea of 'naturalness' can create a barrier to authenticity that is based on masculinist ideas of creativity and intelligence.

For example, Mayhew illustrates the relationship of this to the pop/rock dichotomy, which contains 'values which position principally male dominated musical roles such as the individual composer/author, the instrumentalist, and the producer, as highly creative'.¹⁸⁴ She also describes the contradiction at the heart of singing being seen as 'natural' (thus, arguably, authentic) yet also unskilled:

The dominance of women in the role of the singer can be partly seen as an outcome of the essentialising discourses which conceive of the voice as ... natural [A singer's] position can be devalued when their talent is positioned below roles such as composer, instrumentalist and/or producer.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Bridget Coulter, "Singing from the Heart": Notions of Gendered Authenticity in Pop Music', in *The Routledge Companion to Popular Music and Gender*, ed. Stan Hawkins (London: Routledge, 2017), 276.

¹⁸³ Michelle Duncan, 'The operatic scandal of the singing body: Voice, presence, performativity', *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16 (2004) 3: 285. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586704001879>.

¹⁸⁴ Mayhew, 'Women in Popular Music and the Construction of "Authenticity"', 68.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

So, whilst the voice may be commonly regarded by audiences as the communication of the essence of the vocaliser, conversely, this ‘naturalness’ means that it is devalued and often not afforded the same credibility as producing, writing, or playing an instrument. However, in the source materials, the equation of the voice and essence means that a type of authenticity is ascribed to the artists, especially posthumously, due to public knowledge of the artists’ personal lives and desire to make sense of their deaths. This ascription of authenticity is regularly at odds with the kind outlined by scholars such as Pickering. Rather, I draw on Mayhew and her illustration of how female consumers have negotiated their own forms and markers of ‘authenticity’, using online fan-sites to display their ‘active resistance to ... the “authentic” criteria of rock’.¹⁸⁶ Coulter’s research likewise involves discussion of musicians who might not fit the typical markers of authenticity associated with the pop/rock dichotomy, such as Ariana Grande and Miley Cyrus – singers whose primary audiences are young women and girls. She found that the girls valued the concept ‘extraordinarily highly’ and had ‘constructed their own hierarchies of value within mainstream pop music [They] used distinctions of authenticity to construct micro-hierarchies within a style that is not usually understood as authentic’.¹⁸⁷ Elizabeth Eva Leach has similarly demonstrated how typical definitions of ‘authenticity’ from music critics might differ from those of different demographics. She points out that whilst 1990s pop phenomenon the Spice Girls might be missing the typical markers of authenticity, they appear to ‘speak *as* ... and *with* their audience’ of young women and girls.¹⁸⁸

Thus, whilst a typical understanding of authenticity may seem to exclude female artists and listeners to a degree, its subjective nature means that it often emerges in unexpected places. Ideas surrounding authenticity in its most basic form, that artists ‘speak the truth of their own situation ... and ... culture’, abound in the source materials used in this thesis.¹⁸⁹ I align my work with the theoretical considerations of Mayhew, Coulter, and Leach in that authenticity is constructed in genres ‘generally assumed to be inauthentic’¹⁹⁰ and that ‘female performers, usually

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁸⁷ Coulter, “Singing from the Heart”, 276-277.

¹⁸⁸ Elizabeth Eva Leach, ‘Vicars of “Wannabe”: Authenticity and the Spice Girls’, *Popular Music* 20 (2001) 1: 150. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001386>.

¹⁸⁹ Moore, ‘Authenticity as Authentication’, 209.

¹⁹⁰ Coulter, “Singing from the Heart”, 267.

working in pop genres as opposed to rock, are understood within alternative authentic criteria which break away from the values of traditional mainstream rock'.¹⁹¹ This is additionally in line with Rubidge's claim that authenticity is something ascribed rather than something inherent. Whilst the term itself is dubious, contradictory, and stands up poorly to scrutiny, it is clearly important to music consumers and so is worthy of study. Furthermore, in the specific construction of authenticity by audiences around the case studies, I argue that its construction serves specific ends in which their 'authentic' personae correspond with preferred meanings.

2.4.2 Authenticity and race

An exploration of authenticity in popular music also gives way to race-related considerations, and it is important to address these as expectations around femininity always intersect with ideas of race. Historically, ideas around race, nationality, and authenticity have been grounded in othering, fetishizing, and patronising ideas. Perhaps most pervasive is the idea of an 'inherent' authenticity in non-white musicians, not dissimilar to gender-related considerations in the previous section. Nathaniel Mackey draws on the experiences of jazz musician Ornette Coleman, who refers to the trend for Black instrumentalists in the twentieth century to perform without sheet music in front of white audiences in order to maintain the illusion of 'natural' ability rather than musical education, as 'they had a more saleable appeal if they pretended to not know what they were doing. The white audience felt safer'.¹⁹²

This problematic perception of authenticity can be seen throughout western popular music history. A paradigmatic example of this can be found in the careers of John and Alan Lomax, who travelled around the southern states of the US meeting with blues musicians in the early- to mid-twentieth century collecting and preserving folk songs. Whilst arguably a noble endeavour (Benjamin Filene concedes that their collections 'depict an America whose strength lies in the diversity of its people and

¹⁹¹ Mayhew, 'Women in Popular Music and the Construction of "Authenticity"', 77.

¹⁹² Ornette Coleman, 'Something to Think About', in *Free Spirits: Annals of the Insurgent Imagination*, ed. Paul Buhle, Jayne Cortez, Philip Lamantia, Nancy Joyce Peters, Franklin Rosemont, and Penelope Rosemont (San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1982), 117.
Nathaniel Mackey, *Paracritical Hinge: Essay, Talks, Notes, Interviews* (Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2018), 202.

traditions'),¹⁹³ several have questioned their intentions. Some scholars have suggested that rather than seek to unearth the truly 'authentic' sounds of the South, folk song collectors sought an image that lined up with their preconceptions of what authentic Americana might be. Similarly, Filene has explored in detail the ways in which the Lomaxes accentuated certain features and diluted others to fit with their ideas of how this 'authentic' music should sound.¹⁹⁴ Yet whilst the collections gathered by figures such as the Lomaxes have dubious claims to authenticity, they have nevertheless become influential and had a great impact on how American music history is perceived.¹⁹⁵

This constructed authenticity has become pervasive. Whilst audiences' desire for authenticity might not be consciously grounded in racist ideals, the search for cultural authenticity in popular music has led to a fetishization of the 'other'. Simon Frith has pointed out that the marketing of 'world music' in the 1980s and 1990s led to a situation whereby the term "'authentic" worked in retail terms as a redescription for the exotic'.¹⁹⁶ This observation is also pertinent to the marketing of Black musical cultures from the west, as per Paul Gilroy, who refers to its omnipresence in marketing: 'The discourse of authenticity has been a notable presence in the mass marketing of successive black folk-cultural forms to white audiences'.¹⁹⁷ Thus, the ascription of authenticity can often be said to be grounded in a logic based on exoticism, particularly problematic in its conflation of non-white musicians with the 'natural' rather than the intellectual. This is a particularly important point to bear in mind in examination of the perceived connection between vocal timbre and biography (Chapter Four).

The combination of perception of inherent ability rather than dedicated study and fetishization of otherhood perhaps culminates in a notion of 'unmediated expression'. Barker and Taylor have also discussed the Lomaxes and their problematic

¹⁹³ Benjamin Filene, "'Our Singing Country": John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past', *American Quarterly* 43 (1991) 4: 607. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2713083>.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 619-620.

¹⁹⁵ Jerrold Hirsch, 'Modernity, Nostalgia, and Southern Folklore Studies: The Case of John Lomax', *Journal of American Folklore* 105 (1992) 416: 183. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/541085>.

¹⁹⁶ Simon Frith, 'The Discourse of World Music', in *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, ed. Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press), 308.

¹⁹⁷ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso Books, 1993), 99.

assumptions about an inherent 'authenticity' in Black musical cultures. They focus particularly on their association with Lead Belly and the idea that 'whites saw in [him] ... the epitome of the "primitive" – the violent, primordial, black man who sings old, deep, unfathomable songs directly from his soul'.¹⁹⁸ Moore examines the blues rock movement of the 1960s and its relationship to the blues, particularly in terms of the pursuit of authentic musical expression:

For [Eric] Clapton ... the search for the musical soul of blues singers like Robert Johnson was propelled by a desire to appropriate the 'unmediated expression' which was thought to be the preserve of the country blues style, entailing an unquestioned assumption that African Americans in the southern USA were somehow more 'natural' beings than college-educated Londoners.¹⁹⁹

What can be seen throughout these extracts is the historic perception that Black musicians have 'natural ability' and necessarily express something true of themselves, a notion that arguably has its roots in the ideologies purported in the folk song collections of the early- to mid-twentieth century and perpetuated by the work of artists like Clapton. Thus, in situating my research within the theoretical framework around audience perception of authenticity, it would be remiss not to consider how raced perceptions work alongside gendered ones. As will be demonstrated in Chapter Four, audiences tend to hear the voice as expressing the essence of the singer, and so in Holiday and Houston's cases this assumption is compounded by raced considerations. Ideas concerning cultural authenticity are also prevalent in the discourse surrounding them and are inextricably linked to their positions as Black singers, through stereotypes based on the tragic torch singer trope around Holiday and accusations that Houston 'sold out' to pander to white audiences, which I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five. More specifically, there are assumptions that are pertinent to Black female singers in particular that need laying out here.

Black female singers face the challenges encountered by all female singers compounded by race. Emily Lordi refers to a tendency in music criticism to assume

¹⁹⁸ Barker and Taylor, *Faking It*, 10.

¹⁹⁹ Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', 215.

that ‘black women naturally sing what they feel’.²⁰⁰ This is partly grounded in the formulation of singing as natural and the perceived close association between women and nature, as described above. Also playing a role here is that ‘African Americans have historically been represented as “naturally” gifted singers and dancers’.²⁰¹ Ideas of cultural authenticity and musical genre are pertinent here. For example, Lordi draws on the work of Meta DuEwa Jones, who claims that it has been common in jazz for singers to be viewed as less talented or creative than instrumentalists, and points out that the effect of the perception of the (Black, female) voice as natural is that hard work and skill are often not credited and the artists are seen as passive ‘conduits’.²⁰² Closely related is Nina Sun Eidsheim’s claim in her exploration of perception of Holiday’s vocal timbre that upon identification of an iconic voice, ‘[t]he listener erases the vocalizer ... in the case of Billie Holiday, as reduced to selected elements of her biography ... the stereotypical tragic, sexualized, and wasted black female figure who lacks agency’.²⁰³ So, whilst an authenticity is inferred, this interpretation can be said to serve ideological ends.

Examinations of how authenticity works posthumously in this thesis then must include intersectional considerations. Even when there has been improvement in representation and nuance in the discourse, it takes time to redress the imbalance forged by these stereotypes and perceptions, and traces of raced ideas of cultural authenticity operate in the data.

2.4.3 Working definition of authenticity

Authenticity is a multi-faceted and imprecise concept and its ascription is full of contradictions. When I talk about authenticity, I talk exclusively about its perception – I do not aim to search for authenticity itself or to make any truth claims about the women examined in this research. The authenticity referred to in this thesis is not that which is based in the pop/rock dichotomy. After all, authenticity is ‘ascribe[d] to a

²⁰⁰ Emily J. Lordi, *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 8.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 8-9.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 9.

Meta DuEwa Jones, *The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 12.

²⁰³ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019), 167.

performance' rather than an inherent, tangible, or measurable quality,²⁰⁴ and I follow Mayhew and Coulter in their suggestions that audiences develop their own working definitions. This process can be seen throughout the discourse surrounding each of these five artists. When I refer to authenticity in terms of these specific discourses, I refer to the perception that the artist expresses something of themselves vocally (Chapter Four), conforms to or transgresses cultural boundaries and the implications of this (Chapter Five), or the ways in which fans and commentators construct and narrate their interpretations of an artist's private life and the purposes served by these narratives (Chapter Six). It has been demonstrated that authenticity is a malleable concept, and I suggest the way it is ascribed to an artist alters following their death. Additionally, whilst female artists have found it difficult to be awarded the accolade of authenticity based on masculinist ideals, the association of the female body with the natural means that they are often perceived to be necessarily expressing something essential of themselves through song. This is a limiting and reductive interpretation, but nonetheless common in the source materials collected for this research, and it is therefore important to explore how this interpretation is constructed and perpetuated.

2.5 Conclusion

The literature examined points to a gendered divide between perception of male and female addicts and illustrates how perceptions of female addicts are compounded by intersectional considerations. Additionally, some sources, such as work by Reynolds and Press, Berkers and Eeckelaer, and Bell, suggest that this perception of transgression in female addicts can be understood through Schippers' conception of pariah femininity. In the case of female posthumous fame, all existing literature points to the potential for their ongoing legacies to be shaped to reflect specific norms and meanings by fans and critics alike. Research by Schwartz and Hearsom indicates a redemptive impulse in these mediations, a reading that can also be found in the data collected for this thesis. Finally, existing literature about the elusive quality of authenticity and its various ascriptions indicates how important it is to audiences and how its ascription is commonly grounded in social factors.

²⁰⁴ Rubidge, 'Does authenticity matter?' 219. Original emphasis.

These three overarching themes culminate in an overview of an area that could yield valuable contributions and that would benefit from an extended study. It is not possible to formulate reliable answers to the research questions on the basis of existing literature, and the thesis works towards filling this gap. Ideas of redemption, authenticity, and victimhood appear in the literature, but so far a thorough examination of how these themes work together is missing from the field. The source materials gathered for analysis suggest that these factors do work together: agency is often removed, creating a notion of victimhood, which thus takes away responsibility from the singer for perceived unacceptable behaviour and ties into a redemptive reading. Ideas surrounding authenticity, personal and musical, become prominent narrative devices in such framings. The thesis identifies three distinct strands of authenticity, each of which is addressed in its own analysis chapter. An extended study of this kind also allows for temporal considerations of posthumous fame – as many of the sources examined focus on one case study, this thesis contributes knowledge concerning if and how female posthumous fame has changed significantly since the mid-twentieth century.

To conclude, the thesis builds on this existing body of work by considering how posthumous fame works specifically for female singers in the case of unnatural death, the important role of perceived authenticity in the mediations of their careers, how these constructions work to fulfil a redemptive impulse, and if there have been significant changes in the timespan analysed.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The method employed in this thesis can be summarised in three main phases: the selection of case studies, the collection of relevant journalistic media and an initial content analysis, and critical discourse analysis. This chapter includes a description of the methods drawn upon, an explanation concerning why they were judged to be most beneficial, and how they were altered and refined during the research process as obstacles were encountered and had to be overcome. It examines some of the key theorists associated with the methods – drawing especially on Stuart Hall, Teun van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, and Ruth Wodak – and the benefits and pitfalls of the approaches used, including decisions concerning which kinds of publications to analyse, use of Hall's 'Encoding/Decoding' model, and debates around the efficacy of critical discourse analysis. Finally, issues of media bias, methodological and content-based limitations, and ethical considerations are reviewed. This chapter will demonstrate the logic behind employing these methods and why they have been judged to be most beneficial in pursuit of the research questions.

3.2 Selection of case studies

I have judged multiple-case study research to be the most advantageous way to examine the dominant trends in coverage of female singers who have died through misadventure. Robert Yin describes case study-based methods as having an 'increasingly prominent place' in research as they allow 'investigators to focus on a "case" and retain a holistic and real-world perspective'.²⁰⁵ A case study-based approach has allowed me to examine the broad themes that have arisen from my research questions within a focused framework whilst providing a means through which to control the scale of the project. The construction of a musician's posthumous career is intrinsically linked to the specificities of the musician's life and music and so specific case studies appeared to be the most effective way of examining in sufficient detail the factors involved in such mediation. As laid out in Chapter Two, some aspects of an artist's career become central to their posthumous legacy and collecting several

²⁰⁵ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, fifth edition (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), xix-4.

source materials surrounding one artist over time provides the most effective way of deciphering which aspects persist most prominently and why. Since the aim of the thesis is to identify persistent trends across the posthumous careers of female artists, it was clear that multiple case studies would be required. Therefore, a set of criteria for selection had to be devised.

The first criterion I set out during case study selection was that the person studied must be a female musician from an Anglophone country who had died through misadventure from the second half of the twentieth century onwards. Case studies that met this requirement would provide the necessary temporal and geographical contexts to further probe Whiteley's claims about dead female musicians. Obviously, this generated a whole host of potential lines of inquiry which would have led to an unmanageable amount of data, so further refinement was required. Another criterion became that the musician must be well-known enough that coverage of them generates a substantial number of sources. I thus decided that a case study must have achieved a level of widespread fame, with record sales that would demonstrate this. From here, I changed the criterion from musicians to singers. This was done for both practical and theoretical reasons. Singers are often the most visible musicians in the pop idiom, and (generally speaking) tend to reach a level of fame greater than their instrumentalist counterparts. During my initial reading for this project, I also noticed that the famous or iconic voice was a common site of meaning-making, as can be seen in work by Lordi and Eidsheim,²⁰⁶ and this was a trend I wanted to scrutinise further. This interest in the singing voice and its ascribed meanings is explored in Chapter Four.

With these criteria in mind, the case studies included are Billie Holiday, Janis Joplin, Karen Carpenter, Amy Winehouse, and Whitney Houston. Combined, these figures have allowed me to examine issues of alcoholism (Holiday, Joplin, Winehouse, Houston), heroin use (Holiday, Joplin, Winehouse), crack use (Houston), abuse of over-the-counter and prescription medications as part of disordered eating (Carpenter), and their effect on posthumous reception. They are also all regarded as having voices that were either beautiful (Carpenter, Houston) or striking (Holiday, Joplin, Winehouse). Taken together, these studies have provided me with the means to answer the research questions, which I repeat here:

²⁰⁶ Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 9.
Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 167.

1. *How are narratives formed around well-known female musicians and addicts and how do these narratives change following the artist's death?*
2. *What role does the artist's music play in the formation and perception of these narratives?*
3. *How have these narratives changed from the first case study to the present day?*

I mentioned in Chapter One how these cases may appear somewhat disparate in nature, but there are advantages to this. Connecting these figures are their positions as female singers, high-profile struggles with various addictions, global fame, and early, unnatural deaths. The nature of each of their deaths has allowed me to further explore Jones' claims about tragedy and youth's impact on posthumous popularity whilst considering if and how ideas about womanhood affect this, as well as expanding on Whiteley's initial claim that female rock and roll casualties do not become icons in the same ways as their male peers. Additionally, a spread of source materials from across the second half of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries allows for analysis of important temporal considerations. In other words, the similarities between case studies have allowed me to explore trends in how posthumous careers are constructed around female singers who die unnaturally, yet their differences have exposed important consistencies across time, location, and genre.

3.3 Collecting the documents

One of the challenges of collecting information about such famous figures is finding a way to refine an overwhelming amount of data whilst ensuring there is enough material to yield dependable results. In order to set an initial boundary when entering the archives, I devised a set of timelines for each artist based on significant events from across their careers (see Appendix). This directed me to where there would be a substantial amount of coverage generated. I included both professional events (such as album releases and important live performances) as well as personal ones (such as marriages, divorces, arrests, and illnesses) as both music and personal issues have provoked considerable public interest in these artists.

Following this, the next step in the method was to collect press coverage from

each year on the timelines. The first software used was *Nexis*, which searches newspaper databases dating back to 1985. Due to the nature of my subject and method, the initial *Nexis* searches generated an enormous amount of data, often surpassing 3000 documents for each point on the timeline, the maximum number that the search engine allows. Initially, I had also intended to include documents from the magazine archive *Rock's Back Pages*, but this would have only added to an already unwieldy amount of data. I therefore made the decision to include solely newspaper documents.²⁰⁷ The logic behind this was that newspapers have a wider readership and demographic than specialist music magazines and would therefore produce a broader interpretation of what has been communicated to the broader public beyond fans and specialists. Searching only newspapers also provided an additional method through which to make the data manageable.

Due to issues of translation and interpretation of meaning, the searches have been limited to English-language publications only. Whilst it would have been possible to translate sources published in other languages, there was a risk that the implications of the text would not translate reliably. It is additionally worth noting that these artists come from either the US or the UK, so these are the areas where they likely have the most influence and impact on collective considerations around moral and social norms. They also primarily sang and performed in the English language, arguably connecting them to the broader Anglosphere as well as their countries of origin. The collection of sources published before 1985 required different archives: *American Historical Newspapers*, the UK *Daily Mirror*, the UK *Financial Times*, the British Library Newspapers, the *Guardian*, the *Irish Times*, and the Trove of the National Library of Australia. Search results from this variety of archives has generated a varied representation of English-language news, with several different types of pieces – news announcements, concert reviews, film reviews, obituaries, and op-ed pieces – providing a thorough overview of journalistic writing around these figures.

However, in many cases this still led to datasets that were not manageable within the timeframe of the project. One of the steps taken to counter this was to further refine the criteria for including a document in the dataset. Namely, the

²⁰⁷ There are a small number of sources that do not come from daily newspapers, such as the *Atlantic* (section 5.2.4), the *Village Voice* (4.4), the *New Yorker* (5.3.2), the *Nation* (5.2.4), *Q Magazine* (5.2.4) and *Billboard* (5.2.5). After consideration, these have been included as they provide further evidence of the discursive themes operating in the materials.

document must include opinion, providing some sort of judgement on the artist in question or their work, whether positive (largely sympathetic), negative (largely condemnatory), or mixed in its sentiments. For this reason, chart announcements, news announcements without comment, and passing references were excluded; frequency counts would not be conducive to answering the research questions. *Nexis'* option to filter by types of publication was beneficial here as I was able to search newspapers only using the advanced search options. Still faced with a vast amount of material following this step, I decided to set a cap on how many documents to include. This also helped to make sure that I was gathering a sufficiently equal amount of information for each case. So, a complete dataset became one with 50 documents collected for each point on the timeline – an amount of data that is broad enough to draw conclusions from but is appropriate to the project's scope.²⁰⁸

3.4 Coding the documents

All the gathered documents were stored in *NVivo*. To find the codes to be used for each set of documents, I first read through all of the sources to identify the key themes and planned out the associated codes using the 'maps' function, which allows the user to generate a mind-map-style data visualisation. In other words, I coded the documents manually and used *NVivo's* storage features to keep track of the coding. Manual coding of the documents allowed for a thorough investigation of what they contained and what the contents meant for my research questions even before a closer analysis. This was an important step in gaining a secure understanding of the data that would not have been possible had I used automated coding. The codes themselves were decided upon by listing the most common themes that emerged and adding them to the 'map'. The points on the map were then changed into 'nodes' and each article was assigned to its relevant nodes on a second read-through. Once the documents were assigned to the relevant code groups, the most prominent themes were exposed and less significant codes set aside. Naturally, some of the points on the timelines generated different amounts of data. For example, sources for Houston from 1985 generated a small map as there were only 31 documents that fit the criteria. A more complicated map emerged collecting documents from 1992, by which point

²⁰⁸ Due to smaller amounts of data for some points on the timeline, some of the earlier datasets are smaller as there were not 50 documents available to collect for these points.

Houston had become more famous and her personal life more closely scrutinised. However, even a smaller dataset from early on in the artists' careers provided the context for me to generate an overall arc of coverage throughout the points on the timelines. The main benefit of this initial content analysis was to highlight the documents that would be subject to a closer discourse analysis.

As the only researcher coding and interpreting the documents, there are inevitable questions concerning reliability of interpretation. To counter this, I have drawn on Aaron Ahuvia's method of turning the initial findings of a content analysis into an 'interpretive' content analysis, where the connotative meanings of the texts can be coded using 'justifiable' methods.²⁰⁹ In other words, my interpretations are not absolute but they can be justified within the context of the documents. Hall has warned of the pitfalls of suggesting coding to be absolute, and Linda Steiner suggests this can be resisted by 'offer[ing] up the evidence and context, including by quoting the materials on which interpretations are based, and to account for discourse modifying or even disproving the researchers' interpretations'.²¹⁰ Therefore, I have provided extracts from the most significant documents, allowing the opportunity for readers to engage with and assess the sources themselves.

3.5 Closer analysis

This initial content analysis highlighted the areas that needed further exploration. I have judged critical discourse analysis (hereafter CDA) of media coverage to be the most advantageous method of closer assessment as it will provide a tangible and clear overview of the dominant themes in the discourse. The use of 'dominant' here is based on Hall's work. Drawing on his 'Encoding/Decoding' (hereafter E/D) model, this thesis adheres to the view that news coverage and public opinion have a somewhat circular relationship – whilst readers may form their views based on the kind of publications they read, publications also have an interest in producing coverage that supports what their readers want to hear. The E/D model is visualised thus:

²⁰⁹ Aaron Ahuvia, 'Traditional, Interpretive, and Reception Based Content Analyses: Improving the Ability of Content Analysis to Address Issues of Pragmatic and Theoretical Concern', *Social Indicators Research* 54 (2001) 2: 149. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011087813505>.

²¹⁰ Linda Steiner, "'Wresting with the Angels': Stuart Hall's Theory and Method", *Howard Journal of Communications* 27 (2016) 2: 104. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2016.1148649>.

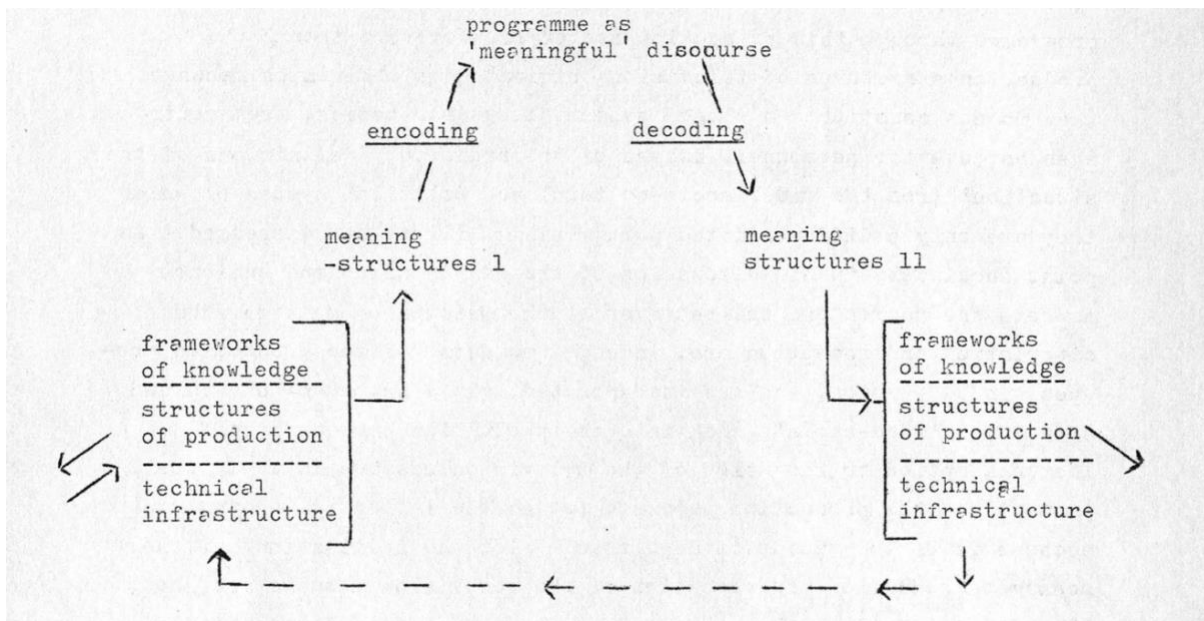


Figure 1: Encoding/Decoding model taken from Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', 4.

In Hall's theory, the above diagram is not necessarily symmetrical in practice, and miscommunications do occur. With this in mind, generally, the 'encoder' is able to project the 'pattern of "preferred meanings" ... [which] have the institutional/ political/ ideological order imprinted in them, and have themselves become institutionalized'.²¹¹ Allowing for dissent, it is these meanings that become dominant. Naturally, audiences are not homogeneous, and Hall posits four hypothetical positions – dominant-hegemonic, professional, negotiated, and oppositional – from which an individual might decode. A consumer who operates within the first position interprets the 'preferred meaning' fully: 'transparent communication' is achieved. The professional decoding process is closely related to the hegemonic, but includes professional broadcasters' own 'criteria and operations ... especially those of a technico-practical nature'. The somewhat contradictory negotiated position 'acknowledges the legitimacy of the hegemonic definitions ... while ... [operating] within "exceptions" to the rule'. Hall uses the Industrial Relations Bill of 1971 to illustrate this by taking the

²¹¹ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse', (conference paper, Council of Europe Colloquy on Training in the Critical Reading of Televisual Language, University of Leicester, September 1973), 13-14, accessed Feb 18, 2022.
<http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2962/1/Hall%2C%201973%2C%20Encoding%20and%20Decoding%20in%20the%20Television%20Discourse.pdf>.

hypothetical case of a worker who may recognise the ‘national-interest economic debate’ although this has little bearing on his ‘willingness to go on strike ... or to oppose the Industrial Relations Bill at the level of his shop-floor or union organization’. Finally, the oppositional code, whilst recognising the hegemonic meaning, ‘detotalizes the message ... in order to retotalize the message within some alternative framework of reference’.²¹² ‘Encoding/Decoding’ is helpful in its examination of the relationship between media and audience and it is useful in illustrating how dominant meanings are produced collaboratively between producers and consumers.

However, this is such a seminal text that there is a danger of ‘ritually [invoking]’ it without proper engagement, contention, or challenge.²¹³ One criticism of the model is that Hall uses ‘preferred meaning’ and ‘preferred reading’ interchangeably, when in fact, according to Poonam Pillai, the former ‘refers to the *dominant or preferred* codes ... inscribed by practices of encoding and media production located within the institution of broadcasting’ and the latter ‘occurs when such a correspondence is *achieved* through practices of decoding’.²¹⁴ In Pillai’s view, the limitations of the model can be at least partially overcome by employing Hall’s articulation theory (‘a way of theorizing the “contingent” but “non necessary” relation between ideologies, practices, subjects, and subject positions’),²¹⁵ which ‘enables us to think how an ideology empowers people, enabling them to begin to make some sense of their historical situation, without reducing those forms of intelligibility to their socio-economic or class location or class position’.²¹⁶ In other words, in using the E/D model, it is important to not essentialise the reader. For instance, Steiner points out how in an early use of the model by Charlotte Brundson and David Morley, ‘each [focus] group generated a distinct interpretation that neatly (and perhaps implausibly) followed the shared cultural and social positions of that group’s class position’.²¹⁷ In focusing on discursive analysis of media texts, this thesis is mainly concerned with the encoding

²¹² *Ibid.*, 16-18.

²¹³ Michael Gurevitch and Paddy Scanell, ‘Canonization achieved? Stuart Halls’ “encoding/decoding”’, in *Canonic Texts in Media Research – Are there any? Should there be? How about these?* ed. Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 232.

²¹⁴ Poonam Pillai, ‘Rereading Stuart Hall’s Encoding/Decoding Model’, *Communication Theory* 2 (1992) 3: 222. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1992.tb00040.x>. Original emphasis.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 225.

²¹⁶ Stuart Hall and Lawrence Grossberg, ‘On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall’, *Journal of Communication Enquiry* 10 (1986) 2: 53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000204>.

²¹⁷ Steiner, “Wrestling with the Angels”, 107.

level of the model and the construction of dominant meanings, but recognises that these dominant meanings are not universally accepted. They are, however, impactful in their reach, and so provide an effective means of analysing how gendered constructions of posthumous fame operate in such texts and the wider implications of this.

In analysing newspaper materials, it is possible to obtain an idea of how the media 'encode' dominant cultural meanings around posthumous careers. Hall points out that, allowing for the complexities of reception, '[a]ny society/culture tends ... to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a [contested] *dominant cultural order*'. My research area, in its dealings with addiction and death, encroaches on dark territory. Hall writes that '[n]ew, problematic, or troubling events ... must be assigned to their connotational domains before they can be said to make sense'.²¹⁸ It is possible to interpret the materials I have collected as efforts to make meaning out of 'troubling events'. Accordingly, the methods of meaning-making employed do seem to rationalise such events in relation to gendered codes, particularly in the removal of agency for the case studies. Therefore, an examination of the denotative and connotative meanings constructed in coverage of such events should reflect the 'dominant cultural order' in relation to them, whilst allowing for the intricacies and variances of decoding.

Of course, there is a question to be asked about the efficacy of applying a model first developed in the 1970s, particularly considering the rapid advancement of mass communications since. Henrik Bødker has recently updated Hall's model for a climate in which social media and digital consumption of information have become central to the circulation of content. Social media have now decentralised the 'dominant cultural order', which Bødker describes as currently 'folded into a new form of governance, or an additional dominant order, linked to the industrial structures of big, commercial social media companies'. Pertinently, power structures surrounding the news stories that get the most attention have shifted, as social media now act as 'organizing tools or prisms through which certain issues can be kept on the wider public agenda'. To this end, he suggests we see these two divergent strands as 'a

²¹⁸ Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', 13. Original emphasis.

folding or layering of two dominant orders'.²¹⁹ Certainly, the discourse surrounding events such as musician death has become increasingly influenced by the public sphere through social media platforms (Miller's work on Twitter posts following Houston's death provides a good example of this),²²⁰ and the lines between encoding and decoding have become increasingly blurred.

For the purposes of this project, the narratives created around the case studies can be seen as a product of both journalism and public discourse; as stated above, the 'dominant cultural order' is an ongoing communicative process in which encoded and decoded meanings continue to reflect and shape each other, even as the modes of circulation shift and change. However, within the scope of a PhD project, it is necessary to make decisions about where to focus the analysis in order to allow for sufficient depth within temporal and word count-based confines. Newspaper documents were judged to be the most beneficial sources for analysis for this project; social media plays a powerful role in dissemination, but it is still ultimately the news texts themselves that are discussed. As recently as 2018, Alexander Coppock, Emily Ekins, and David Kirby have found that op-ed pieces in the US have significant persuasion over those who read them, both 'mass public' and 'elite' readers.²²¹ Their findings are grounded in large-scale studies into reactions to a series of non-edited op-ed pieces, and whilst the impact of such pieces appears to be more robust for the 'mass public' sample, the articles had a notable influence on both groups. In the UK, Lauren McLaren, Hajo Boomgaarden, and Rens Vliegenthart draw on sixteen years of newspaper articles and public opinion polls to suggest that coverage of the effects of immigration that may impact the reader in the news media prompt 'a rise in public concern'.²²² Thus, it is logical to infer that newspapers maintain at least some of their hold on public opinion and provide an effective way of analysing discourse surrounding the five case studies.

²¹⁹ Henrik Bødker, 'Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and the circulation of journalism in the digital landscape', *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 33 (2016) 5: 416-420.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1227862>.

²²⁰ Miller, 'Social Sorrow'.

²²¹ Alexander Coppock, Emily Ekins, and David Kirby, 'The Long-lasting Effects of Newspaper Op-Eds on Public Opinion', *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 13 (2018): 82.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/100.00016112>.

²²² Lauren McLaren, Hajo Boomgaarden, and Rens Vliegenthart, 'News Coverage and Public Concern about Immigration in Britain', *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 30 (2018) 2: 188.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw033>.

The implications of the documents collected have been assessed through CDA, with a particular focus on narrative. I have drawn on this method to examine how the life trajectories of each of the case studies are narratively constructed. Having interpreted the connotative meanings within a text, they should be identified within the power structures they reflect. For this reason, I have determined CDA to be the most advantageous method. Leading critical discourse analyst van Dijk has suggested that CDA be understood in terms of dominance, defined as ‘the exercise of social power by elites, institutions or groups, that results in social inequality, including ... gender inequality’.²²³ As the thesis argues that the source materials collected constitute a removal of autonomy for the women in question, I draw on CDA to identify ‘what structures, strategies or other properties of text ... or communicative events play a role in these modes of reproduction’.²²⁴ Fairclough and Ruth Wodak also frame discourse as a ‘social practice’, one that can have ‘major ideological effects – that is, they can help produce and reproduce unequal power relations between ... social classes, women and men, and ethnic/cultural majorities and minorities through the ways in which they represent things and position people’.²²⁵ CDA sees language as intrinsically linked to its social context.

My interest in pursuing this discursive analysis is to discover how narratives are constructed around the case studies and their social, ideological implications. Fairclough has illustrated how media discourse involves decisions from commentators about how an event is framed. In the case of newspaper articles, for example, commentators can choose from a variety of different framings based on how they use language. Fairclough lays out a series of questions a researcher might ask themselves to decipher the ideological implications of a text: ‘(a) what are the social origins of this option? where and who does it come from? (b) what motivations are there for making this choice? (c) what is the effect of this choice ... upon the various interests of those involved?’²²⁶ I have examined the source materials through their linguistic and grammatical choices as well as their overall narrative framing, particularly focusing on which themes are placed most prominently in these narrative constructions; as

²²³ Teun A. van Dijk, ‘Principles of critical discourse analysis’. *Discourse and Society* 4 (1993) 2: 249-250. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 250.

²²⁵ Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, in *Discourse as Social Interaction*, ed. T. A. Van Dijk (London: Sage, 1997), 258.

²²⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), 15.

Fairclough has put it, '[i]n any representation, you have to decide what to include and ... exclude ... what to "foreground" and what to "background"'.²²⁷ CDA therefore includes an examination of a text's use of language and structure, how the story is thus framed, and its ideological ends. Specifically, I have judged narrative CDA to be most useful in answering the research questions due to the importance of ordering and making sense of particular events and the (re)construction of biographies more broadly in the source materials gathered. According to Fairclough, 'journalists don't only recount events, they also interpret and explain them, try to get people to see things and to act in certain ways'.²²⁸ In the documents examined, a series of narrative trends have been traced in how the stories of the women are told and how this may be reflective of the 'exercise of social power'.²²⁹

In a recent special issue of the *Critical Discourse Studies* journal, the linguist Martin Reisigl has criticised examinations of narrative in the humanities and social sciences which approach it from an overly broad perspective. He points out that there has been a tendency to 'confuse narration with other basic generic patterns such as argumentation and explanation'.²³⁰ I hope to avoid such confusion and have aimed to do so through focusing on the use of the language and framing through which the sources collected have told the stories of each of the women, in particular, how they use narrative framings to create 'preferred meanings'. Whilst Reisigl's points about overuse of the term 'narrative' hold weight, I have judged narrative CDA to be the most apt means through which to answer the research questions due to the biographical nature of much of the posthumous coverage collected. Indeed, Reisigl points out that narratives 'offer orientation by helping to order experienced events chronologically and to put them into a broader social and historical context',²³¹ and that is precisely what I argue is happening in the source materials – that they aim to narrativize and neaten complexities in line with preferred meanings. In the same journal edition, Bernhard Forchtner argues for the importance of narrative in CDA,

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

²²⁹ van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', 249.

²³⁰ Martin Reisigl, "'Narrative!' I can't hear that anymore. A linguistic critique of an overstretched umbrella term in cultural and social science studies, discussed with the example of the discourse on climate change', *Critical Discourse Studies* 18 (2021) 3: 369.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1822897>.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 376.

pointing out how 'arguments operate within and draw on storied contexts'.²³²

Forchtner draws particularly on the narrative genres romance, comedy, tragedy, and irony. Most pertinent here is tragedy, which he claims 'depicts a world of decline and failure, a depiction through which the audience is pointed to tensions between what is, what we are, what could be and what we should be'.²³³ In coverage of the tragic cases of each of the five singers, I have found evidence of such framings, particularly in the ways that their deaths are rationalised and contextualised in order to make sense of troubling events.

3.6 Issues of media bias and provenance of sources

The issue of power in discourse leads me to perhaps the most significant concern in a discourse analysis based on newspaper articles: that of media bias. In CDA, questions surrounding which voices get to speak are imperative. In van Dijk's formulations, 'power and dominance of groups are measured by their control over (access to) discourse'.²³⁴ Thus, it is often the elites in a society who define the 'dominant cultural order'. Hall warns against being too simplistic in positioning the relationship between media elites and their audiences but illustrates how media communications do '*reproduce the definitions of the powerful*'.²³⁵ He suggests we think in terms of 'primary and secondary definers' of news. In Hall's formulations, journalists and broadcasters are not the primary definers. Rather, the need in media production to turn to experts and representatives serves to 'orientate the media in the "definitions of social reality" which "accredited representatives" ... provide'.²³⁶ This means those from 'major social institutions' have significant influence on news reporting. It therefore must be kept in mind that much of what is published in newspapers is reflective of the most powerful voices in society and does not necessarily provide a generalised consensus on public opinion. As stated in the previous section, however, these publications have a great deal of power over the 'dominant cultural order' and thus it is crucial to interrogate

²³² Bernhard Forchtner, 'Critique, Habermas and narrative (genre): the discourse-historical approach in critical discourse studies', *Critical Discourse Studies* 18 (2021) 3: 315.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1803093>.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 319.

²³⁴ van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', 257.

²³⁵ Stuart Hall, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, second edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013 [1978]), 60. Original emphasis.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 61.

their articles in pursuit of my research questions.

I have drawn on a variety of different newspaper publications, which naturally serve different functions for different readerships. A degree of consistency can be traced, however, and existing studies into the impact different news media have on each other supports this. For example, in their comparative study of UK broadsheet coverage of Doherty and Winehouse, Berkers and Eeckelaer point out how broadsheet newspapers 'are likely to have a strong impact on how other media and society in general discuss a particular topic'.²³⁷ A similar phenomenon has been found in US-based studies; for example, Guy Golan has found through content analysis of a year's worth of data that the morning edition of the *New York Times* has a significant impact on the agenda of evening television news bulletins,²³⁸ whilst Philip Schlesinger identified in 2006 'a diminishing formal divide between national broadsheet and tabloid newspapers' as some former broadsheets moved towards more typically tabloid-style reporting and the distinction between the two became less clear.²³⁹ Publications that have an interest in proffering a conservative ideology may be more likely to demonise a female musician who transgresses a conservative view of gender codes. For example, Holmes and Negra have explored tabloid coverage of the 'trainwreck' celebrity, finding that tabloids, among other media forms, 'circulate particular discourse on the boundaries and politics of "appropriate" versions of contemporary femininity'.²⁴⁰ Likewise, Milly Williamson has found that tabloid depictions of 'ordinary' female celebrities on both sides of the Atlantic demonstrate a misogyny that also shows class prejudice.²⁴¹ Yet Berkers and Eeckelaer have discovered similar framings in their work on the *Guardian* and *Independent*, both publications that tend to veer left of centre politically. In the materials they gathered, Doherty was framed predominantly as a hedonistic 'independent individual' where Winehouse, by contrast, was cast in the role of victim (see also section 2.2.1).²⁴² It is thus possible to

²³⁷ Berkers and Eeckelaer, 'Rock and roll or rock and fall?' 7.

²³⁸ Guy Golan, 'Inter-Media Agenda Setting Global News Coverage: Assessing the influence of the *New York Times* on three network television evening news programs', *Journalism Studies* 7 (2006) 2: 331. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500533643>.

²³⁹ Philip Schlesinger, 'Is there a crisis in British journalism?' *Media, Culture and Society* 28 (2006) 2: 300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706061691>.

²⁴⁰ Holmes and Negra, 'Introduction', 2.

²⁴¹ Milly Williamson, 'Female celebrities and the media: the gendered denigration of the 'ordinary' celebrity', *Celebrity Studies* 1 (2010) 1: 118-120. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392390903519149>.

²⁴² Berkers and Eeckelaer, 'Rock and roll or rock and fall?' 3.

identify across different publications what Hall has called 'not the vast pluralistic range of voices which the media are sometimes held to represent, but a range *within certain distinct ideological limits*'.²⁴³ It has also been beneficial to gather a range of sources from across political and international divides in order to trace which consistencies persist and where the framings differ. For example, some of the more nuanced articles that have emerged in recent years (see sections 6.4 and 7.2.3) have come from the *New York Times*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *Times*, and *Independent*, none of which would be classified as tabloids, yet there is evidence of reductive narrativizing, particularly through removing the case studies' agency, across documents collected from these publications, too.

Within music journalism (both in specialist and general publications), there are distinct capitalist aims. Mark Fenster has pointed out that music journalists 'operate within the economic structures of the music industry and within the various cultural discourses (with their attendant structures of power)'.²⁴⁴ They thus have an interest in generating as much interest as possible, and in terms of my thesis, this may have influenced the narrative construction around the case studies. Indeed, the personal does seem to play a significant role in music journalism. As Fenster quite succinctly puts it, '[t]he questions consumer publication[s] ... ask and try to answer are: Should you buy this record? Should you attend that concert? Is this guy an asshole, and should I therefore like and buy his music more or less?'²⁴⁵ This highlights the role that extramusical interest plays in music consumption. In fact, Fenster's blunt use of language is perhaps reflective of celebrity gossip rhetoric. It therefore must be kept in mind that the publications from which I have collected materials have a vested interest in reporting on the more salacious aspects of the case studies' lives in order to promote public interest and thus sales.

In this thesis, I aim to critique publications themselves rather than journalists, as journalists generally operate in line with the aims and positions of the company they write for. As van Dijk has said, their actions 'are embedded in complex

²⁴³ Hall, *Policing the Crisis*, 64. Original emphasis.

²⁴⁴ Mark Fenster, 'Consumers' Guides: The Political Economy of the Music Press and the Democracy of Political Discourse', in *Pop Music and the Press*, ed. Steve Jones (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002), 82.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 85.

relationships'.²⁴⁶ In line with this, the gender, race, and backgrounds of individual writers are not remarked upon, rather, the publication itself is the primary concern in terms of media bias. Indeed, a question that has been posed to me several times (at conferences and in more casual conversations with peers) is whether I have identified a significant difference in source materials written by male and female writers. The difference is in fact minimal. Female writers constitute roughly 35% of the sources included that have a named author. A majority of male writers is perhaps not surprising as I have collected documents from periods including the mid-twentieth century when men would have dominated the newsroom. However, the themes emerging can be identified across the documents collected by both male and female writers. Gender identity does not appear to have played a quantifiable role in what is written. In line with Hall's discussion of primary definers and observations about political leanings in publications, then, I focus on institutions rather than individuals. On a related note, I also heed van Dijk's warnings to not picture 'these elites as the villains in a simplistic story of social inequality, but rather to focus on the unique access of these elites to public discourse, and hence on their role in the discursive management of the public mind'.²⁴⁷

In summary, to navigate issues of media bias, I have gathered materials from across many publications and geographical locations. There is considerable consistency across the implications of the articles collected, but the ways in which they differ allow for important observations about differences and similarities in reporting across political and international divides. The ways of communicating these perspectives may differ, but the redemptive impulse and a focus on the case studies' perceived authenticity has been traced across left- and right-wing publications, broadsheets and tabloids, and different English-speaking countries. Whilst the framing frequently differs, underlying similar themes indeed demonstrate the '*certain distinct ideological limits*' Hall has identified in the news media.

²⁴⁶ Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press: Critical Studies in Racism and Migration* (London: Routledge, 1991), xii.

²⁴⁷ van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', 280.

3.7 Limitations

One of the most significant limitations of this method is that whilst it exposes how commentators (essentially, those with the means to access and influence public discourse) have constructed meaning around the posthumous careers of the case studies, it does not provide information about how other key players in these constructions, such as fan communities, continue to interact with the artists. This is a vital element of a posthumous career, and a possible line of further study following this project. Existing examinations into the impact of a musician's death on their fan communities, such as those from Irene Stengs, Van Cagle, and Julie Andsager, have contributed important knowledge about themes such as individual, social, and national identities, varying forms of nostalgia, and online practices.²⁴⁸ Research into the fan communities associated with the themes of this thesis would likely also produce valuable outcomes.

As noted earlier, whilst use of Hall's model gives way to dominant cultural positions, such positions are 'neither univocal nor uncontested'.²⁴⁹ In line with Bødker's observations, this thesis also covers a timespan during which the dissemination and circulation of content has changed drastically – there are now 'processes on social media where circulation partly merges with commentary'.²⁵⁰ The project does not deal directly with the increasing influence of 24-hour access to news and the rise of social media. Bødker has pointed out how the decoding end of the model looks considerably different now, describing how the power of big tech companies means that 'aspects of the interpretive framework within consumption ... leave digital traces ... as aggregated user data that can be sold by social media companies to advertisers'.²⁵¹ These considerations of social media are also related to my previous point concerning the behaviour of fan communities in posthumous careers, of which online fan activity plays a significant role. It is clear that the modes of circulation have shifted over the timespan of the source materials collected for this

²⁴⁸ Irene Stengs, 'The Afterlife of the People's Singer: Bodily Matters in a Dutch Sing-along Culture', in *Death and the Rock Star*, ed. Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 17-31. Cagle, 'Flaunting It', 31-60.

Julie L. Andsager, 'Altared Sites: Celebrity Webshrines as Shared Mourning', in *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, ed. Steve Jones and Joli Jensen (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005), 17-29.

²⁴⁹ Hall, 'Encoding and Decoding', 13.

²⁵⁰ Bødker, 'Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model', 410.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 416.

project and that social media is an important site of meaning-making, but an in-depth analysis of this lies beyond the scope of the thesis.

As with all methods, CDA has its limitations. One major criticism is its vulnerability to researcher bias, which I will expand upon in the next section. Another is in its assumptions about the relationship between text and reader. Ruth Breeze has pointed out that this relationship has occasionally been approached somewhat simplistically in previous CDA studies as 'it is ... obvious that in a globalised world people are exposed to many different discourses and that they learn to navigate them'.²⁵² Whilst my project analyses discursive framings around the artists in media coverage, it does not approach the varying ways in which audiences may have responded to them, as explained above. Naturally, whilst news media are influential, the ways in which they are interpreted can never be said to be homogeneous. Instead, as illustrated in section 3.5, I aim to identify the dominant preferred meanings constructed through the journalistic mediation of each artist's posthumous career.

3.8 Ethical considerations

The artists examined in this thesis have been subject to media derision and have had their personal lives scrutinised in the public sphere. In light of this, efforts have been made to create an objective distance. The thesis aims to analyse the functions of the discourse surrounding the case studies without being part of this discourse itself. It has been important to bear in mind throughout that, whilst the artists in question have often been presented through the trope of the tragic female victim that has persisted in western storytelling for centuries,²⁵³ they are real people. I do present some materials in this thesis that have served to offer the private lives of these women as public entertainment, but my intention is to challenge the underlying power structures that have given rise to such attitudes. Although there is perhaps a question to be asked about the efficacy of reproducing derisive sentiment or problematic content by quoting from it in the thesis, these are all documents that are already publicly available and easily accessible. As newspaper coverage has such wide public reach, it is important to critique the ways in which sensitive issues are reported on, and this will

²⁵² Ruth Breeze, 'Critical Discourse Analysis and its Critics', *Pragmatics* 21 (2011) 4: 508. <https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.21.4.01bre>.

²⁵³ Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women*, trans. Betsy Wing (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988 [1979]), 43-59.

involve an examination of the contents of the documents that hold such sway over public opinion, as per van Dijk. To try to avoid becoming swept up in the spectacle of celebrity gossip as a researcher, I have avoided (as far as possible) assessing the veracity of the claims in the articles and thus contributing to a kind of celebrity gossip myself and focused instead on the underlying ideological functions of the documents.

Research into addiction and death involves approaching sensitive topics. Whilst this thesis does not deal directly with human participants and so the 'risks and sensitivities'²⁵⁴ outlined by Joan Sieber are arguably less immediate or potent, the presentation of such themes still requires careful consideration. There are two main things to point out in view of this: this thesis does not aim to make any moral judgements, and it does not investigate the psychology of addiction, rather its media presentation in these cases. Heidi McKee and James Porter's work on ethics in archival research focuses on the publishing of personal artefacts and communications that have found their way into archives rather than already publicly available newspapers, but their considerations have nevertheless been helpful in considering the ethics of researching the lives of my case studies. They point out that in official documents, women (amongst other groups) are sometimes presented in the archives 'not as subjects but as objects: people about whom others voice opinions but whose own voices are muted'. There is evidence of this in the materials I have collected, especially in the posthumous ones, in which commentators speak on behalf of artists who are no longer able to. McKee and Porter suggest examining the benefits of such research, particularly in terms of if it has value beyond 'personal interest'. One reason they give for extrapolating archival material is to 'challenge historical (mis)representations'.²⁵⁵ It is this intention that I align my research with; the materials presented here are offered for critique and debate, and I ask questions about how the case studies are presented in public discourse rather than about the case studies themselves.

McKee and Porter also suggest that the archival researcher asks 'how [their] personal and professional experiences shape the questions [they] ask ... and the conclusions [they] draw'.²⁵⁶ The power of media sentiment has already been discussed

²⁵⁴ Joan E. Sieber, 'The Ethics and Politics of Sensitive Research', in *Researching Sensitive Topics*, ed. Claire M. Renzetti and Raymond M. Lee (London: Sage, 1993), 18.

²⁵⁵ Heidi A. McKee and James E. Porter, 'The Ethics of Archival Research', *College Composition and Communication* 64 (2021) 1: 60-64. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264917>.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 65.

and as a consumer the researcher is as open to the media's 'discursive management of the public mind'²⁵⁷ as anyone. As mentioned in section 3.7, researcher bias has been argued to be a particular hazard in CDA, and much criticism of the method stems from this. Breeze claims that CDA is 'heavily motivated by political choice'²⁵⁸ whilst Jef Verschueren has gone so far as to say that '[t]exts are simply made into carriers ... of what one already assumes to be the case'.²⁵⁹ Whilst I would argue that these criticisms could pertain to several research methods, the above sources demonstrate that reflexivity is crucially important. My interpretations of the data are grounded in both my own perspectives, experiences, and position as a potential consumer as well as researcher of the materials I have analysed – it is not possible to completely avoid the effects of mediated narrative framings. I have navigated such issues by quoting from passages of the documents for the reader to see themselves, by explicitly stating that this work is grounded within a feminist theoretical framework, and by drawing on large datasets across different case studies to demonstrate that the trends found do indeed constitute trends.

3.9 Conclusion

I have concluded that the most efficacious method through which to pursue the research questions involves a combination of case study use, collection of relevant newspaper documents and an initial content analysis, and narrative discursive analysis. Use of case studies allows for in-depth analysis with illustrative examples whilst helping to control the project's scope. The similarities and differences between the five artists have demonstrated important trends and nuances between different contexts. An initial content analysis of the collected documents allowed for an initial thorough examination of them and their contents and thus uncovered the themes that warranted further exploration. Specifically, further exploration was carried out through CDA, with particular focus on the ways in which narratives have been constructed around the artists. Use of newspaper documents was decided upon for their wide-ranging impact, subscribing to Hall's theory that they contain 'institutionalized ... dominant preferred meanings'. Media bias has been navigated as

²⁵⁷ van Dijk, 'Principles of critical discourse analysis', 280.

²⁵⁸ Breeze, 'Critical Discourse Analysis and its Critics', 501.

²⁵⁹ Jef Verschueren, 'Predicaments of Criticism', *Critique of Anthropology* 21 (2001) 1: 69.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X0102100104>.

far as possible by drawing on several different types of publication from a range of provenances and considering what kind of vested interests might be involved in the ways in which they construct the life stories of the artists. This research also tries to distance itself as far as possible from the gossip-mongering that the lives of these women have attracted, as well as presenting extracts to justify the researcher's interpretations. Overall, this method has provided a varied representative of source materials, allowed for close work with and secure understanding of the data, and enabled a strong framework from which to pursue the research questions. In the following three chapters, the source materials collected for analysis are explored, beginning with an examination of perceived vocal authenticity, followed by perceptions of cultural authenticity, and finally constructions of suppressed or hidden authenticities.

4. Vocal authenticity: The singing voice and the ascription of authenticity

4.1 Introduction

The sonic qualities of the voice are treated as a wellspring of meaning, and in the data included in this chapter, the idea that evidence of personal trouble is detectable in the voice appears frequently. The embodied nature of the voice makes it highly personal and necessarily gendered and raced. The implications of the embodied voice have long been explored in the classical world by scholars such as Leslie Dunn and Nancy Jones, Carolyn Abbate, Suzanne Cusick, and Michelle Duncan.²⁶⁰ The significance of the voice has also experienced a surge in scholarship in popular musicology; in his 2006 book *Voicing the Popular*, Middleton illustrates how '[t]he bodily locations and representations of popular voices situate them in an irreducibly gendered universe. Vocality is always sexualized, and this quality comes to us through the screen of gender difference'.²⁶¹ Specifically in terms of popular music, Middleton points out that because voice is so often consumed through recording that it is separated from the body, 'at once making available new routes of imaginary identifications and evacuating the too-easy conflation of sight and sound characteristic of live music'.²⁶² I argue that Middleton is right in his argument that audio-only consumption opens the listener up to a wider variety of sonic identifications. However, I would suggest that because visuals play such an important role in popular music in particular, the knowledge of the artist's identity encourages identification with an image that is consistent with what is known. Due to the extent of the case studies' fame, by the time of their deaths, their voices had become inextricably bound up with their image and identities in both audio and visual consumption. Richard Elliott's book *The Late Voice: Time, Age, and Experience in Popular Music* draws on Steven Connor's research into ventriloquism to illustrate how when '[h]earing a voice whose source is not immediately apparent, we

²⁶⁰ Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones eds., *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women', in *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, ed. Ruth A. Solie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 225-258.

Suzanne G. Cusick, 'On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex', in *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*, ed. Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessley (Zürich: Carciofioli Verlagshaus, 1999), 25-48.

Duncan, 'The operatic scandal of the singing body', 283-306.

²⁶¹ Middleton, *Voicing the Popular*, 91.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 95.

create a vocalic body, either in our mind's eye or by projecting the source onto (or into) a visible, believable object'.²⁶³ This chapter identifies that the artists' voices and personhoods are almost always spoken of in the same breath – in these cases, it seems the vocalic body is *their* body.

It is my argument that in public discourse surrounding these figures, knowledge of the personal and the qualities of the voice have become bound together; the 'authenticity' detected in the sounds of the cases' voices is taken as evidence of vulnerability and innate sadness, thus diminishing agency and serving the redemptive impulse. I have identified five themes in the ascription of authenticity: reference to a voice's 'grain', a phenomenon coined by French philosopher Roland Barthes;²⁶⁴ the degradation of the voice; timbre; musical material and authorship; and authenticity as vulnerability. I will demonstrate how factors specific to each case study are manipulated to 'explain' their deaths and rationalise any attendant scandals.

Eidsheim's recent research into timbre and race highlights the central 'acousmatic question': 'Who is this?'²⁶⁵ Eidsheim's work goes some way to explaining why discourse around my case studies operates as it does: 'We assume that when we ask the acousmatic question we inquire about the essential nature of a person. The premise of the acousmatic question is that voice is stable and knowable'.²⁶⁶ For Eidsheim, this is a fiction – she writes that 'we don't ask the acousmatic question ... because voice can be known We think we already know, but in fact we know very little. We ask the question because voice and vocal identity are *not* situated at a unified locus'.²⁶⁷ Yet this is not the interpretation that has recurred in the data, which is more in line with Adriana Cavarero's claim that the voice is 'the vital and unrepeatable uniqueness of every human being'.²⁶⁸ Similarly, Grant Olwage claims that 'of all sonic phenomena timbre carries the most complete information about a sound source and its location'.²⁶⁹ Whilst the fame that these artists experienced might mean

²⁶³ Richard Elliott, *The Late Voice: Time, Age and Experience in Popular Music* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 42.

Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶⁴ Roland Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

²⁶⁵ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 1.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 2-3.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 3. Original emphasis.

²⁶⁸ Adriana Cavarero, *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Voice*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 7.

²⁶⁹ Grant Olwage, 'The Class and Colour of Tone: An Essay on the Social History of Vocal Timbre', *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13 (2004) 2: 205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1741191042000286167>.

that the question is not necessarily acousmatic, the public discourse surrounding them suggests that audiences do ‘ask the acousmatic question’ as if the voice can be known. Because of this conflation of voice and selfhood, the voice and perceptions of authenticity are closely linked – audiences tend to believe that the singer expresses something of themselves in their singing. This has been explored by Moore, who cites Paul Weller’s ‘Changingman’ as a song where ‘gravelly vocals ... convey to his audience that they are perceiving real emotion’.²⁷⁰ Yet as this chapter will demonstrate, it is not just ‘gravelly vocals’ (not to be confused with ‘grain’) that are perceived in this way, and that authenticity has been projected onto these five very different singers, of whom only two are regularly described as having ‘gravelly’ voices. As mentioned in section 2.4.1, the notion of ‘singing from the heart’ routinely came up in Coulter’s conversations with young female music fans, highlighting both how ‘the girls valued this mode of performance because they believed it offered insight into the emotional lives of their favourite stars’ and the importance of ‘vocal corporeality’.²⁷¹

The intention here is not, like Eidsheim, to explore the futility of ‘[reducing sound] through naming’.²⁷² Rather, I wish to examine writing about the voices of these women in the documents collected – and thus the ascription of vocal authenticity – through CDA in order to unearth the meanings that commentators have constructed around them. For the case studies, it appears that the sound of the voice is used to make sense of their lives and deaths.

4.2 Grain

In his influential essay ‘The Grain of the Voice’, Barthes set out to examine Benveniste’s theory that ‘language ... is the only semiotic system capable of *interpreting* another semiotic system’,²⁷³ in this case, music. This section will examine the rationale behind its inclusion here, drawing initially on Houston and Carpenter to demonstrate how it operates within the context of vocal authenticity.

Houston was most successful early on in her career (around 1985 to 1992), but accusations of superficial music followed her then, too. For example, 1992’s ‘I Will Always Love You’ has attracted criticism for its overwrought style, the implication

²⁷⁰ Moore, ‘Authenticity as Authentication’, 212. Original emphasis.

²⁷¹ Coulter, “‘Singing from the Heart’”, 270.

²⁷² Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 8.

²⁷³ Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 179.

being that the song serves as a vehicle for Houston's vocal gymnastics rather than the expression of any 'real' feeling. In this way, it is compared unfavourably with the original version by country singer Dolly Parton:

In Parton's hands, it's a painful confession of weakness and pain. Houston makes it a pronouncement The first half of the song works well, with nuance and rich gospel flourishes. But you know she's only pumping up for the finish The song's intimacy is buried in a cascade of strings and vocal high jumps.²⁷⁴

It seems in this case that vocal fireworks and perceived insincerity are closely linked. Negative references to Houston's range and belt seem to imply a lack – Melissa Rugieri, for example, says of the Mariah Carey duet 'When You Believe' (1998) that 'Houston and Carey desperately try to outscreech each other ... and you walk away feeling warm and tingly and ... unfulfilled'.²⁷⁵ More detailed descriptions of this lack point to the prioritisation of showcasing skill over expressive musical content. Mark Simpson, for instance, has outlined the disjoint between vocal craft and effective communication:

[Despite having] a voice like a fifth element ... the most striking ... thing about Whitney has always been that it is very difficult to believe that she bothers to mean any of the words she sings, however well she sings them.²⁷⁶

These sources point to a voice that is technically very accomplished but struggles to communicate effectively. It is at this point that I suggest introducing Barthes; it is not lack of expression but rather the *glossiness* of Houston's voice that is relevant here, as public reaction to the degradation of her voice in her later records encouraged audiences to perceive authenticity where it was missing before (see section 4.3). Consideration of how grain operates is useful in understanding this change.

²⁷⁴ David Zimmerman, "'Love': Better plaintive or passionate?' *USA Today*, Dec 9, 1992, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.

²⁷⁵ Melissa Rugieri, 'Son Volt's Latest Cements its Status', *Richmond Times Dispatch*, Nov 12, 1998, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Nov 18, 2019.

²⁷⁶ Mark Simpson, 'Whitney had it all', *Independent on Sunday*, Sep 15, 2002, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 21, 2020.

Drawing on his own observations, Barthes compares the popular, accomplished baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau unfavourably with the less successful Charles Panzéra. Borrowing from Julia Kristeva's notions of pheno-text and geno-text,²⁷⁷ Barthes explains how

From the point of view of the pheno-song, Fischer-Dieskau is assuredly an artist beyond reproach: everything in the (semantic and lyrical) structure is respected and yet nothing seduces, nothing sways us to *jouissance* With FD, I seem to only hear the lungs, never the tongue, the glottis, the teeth, the mucous membranes, the nose. All of Panzéra's art, on the contrary, was in the letters, not in the bellows An extreme rigour of thought regulated the prosody of the enunciation and the phonic economy of the French language.²⁷⁸

'Pheno-song' refers to 'everything in the performance which is in the service of communication, representation, expression, everything ... which forms the tissue of cultural values'. Geno-song, on the other hand, is 'that depth of production where the melody really works at the language – not at what it says, but at the voluptuousness of its sound-signifiers, of its letters – where melody explores how the language works and identifies with that'.²⁷⁹ It is also where the 'body in the voice as it sings' is identified. 'The Grain of the Voice' has attracted criticism for being vague enough that musicologists have sometimes invoked it without adequate engagement. Jonathan Dunsby writes that it has become a 'slogan' in writing about vocality and criticises Barthes for 'almost [occluding] argument by rhetoric and ... almost [occluding] music by ... semiological hubris'.²⁸⁰ Both Dunsby and Catherine Rudent hesitate at the transfer of the theory from *Lieder* to pop despite Simon Frith's encouragement of this.²⁸¹ Rudent also points out how often the term is misused and cautions against

²⁷⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1980 [1969]).

²⁷⁸ Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 183-184.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.

²⁸⁰ Jonathan Dunsby, 'Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134 (2009) 1: 118. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14716930902756869>.

²⁸¹ Simon Frith, 'Musicology and Semiotics', in *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written Word*, ed. Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin (London, Routledge: 1990), 276. Dunsby, 'Roland Barthes', 118-119.

confusing grain with timbre.²⁸²

Whilst I agree with Dunsby's points about Barthes' minimal use of evidence – as well as his 'actual human affection for Panzéra', which may make him something of an unreliable narrator – analysis of the newspaper documents included in this chapter suggest that the concept, when handled carefully, is beneficial in the study of popular voices, especially voices as famous as those of the artists examined. Indeed, both Jarman on queer voices and Elliott on the late voice have utilised the theory in ways that are both successful and beneficial to my explorations around discourse surrounding these five women. Jarman suggests that we might identify the grain 'as those aspects of the voice where the physiology of vocal production is audible ... for instance, the air in a whisper, or the movement of the lips, tongue, and teeth against each other as the language is given sound'.²⁸³ In other words, the grain lies in the audibility of the body undergoing the necessary steps to expel sound. This is relevant of course to the formation of language, and Elliott additionally uses the theory 'within a framework that can acknowledge the insights gained from invoking nonsemantic sound: the rasp of the voice, the rattle in the throat, the various signifiers of the passage of time through the lived body'.²⁸⁴ It is this combination of the 'physiology of vocal production' and 'signifiers of the passage of time through the lived body' that bears most relevance to my case studies. Using Houston's voice as an example, the excerpts of data included above imply that any degree of geno-song is lost amid flashy vocal tricks and over-singing. Yet critical reactions to Houston's voice shifted as signs of damage to her voice appeared; discourse surrounding her late work claims to gain insight from the 'rasps and rattles' present and, as will be examined in the next section, a notion of grain is identified in the degradation of the voice.

Jarman takes a novel approach to applying Barthesian concepts in her work on Carpenter. She suggests that there is a 'disciplining of the grain' at play in the music, achieved in three ways:

Catherine Rudent, 'Against *The Grain of the Voice*: Studying Voice in Songs', trans. Jack Sims, *Volume! The French journal of popular music studies* 16 (2020) 2: paras 1-44, accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://booksandideas.net/Against-the-Grain-of-the-Voice.html>.

²⁸² Rudent, 'Against *The Grain of the Voice*', paras 9-16.

²⁸³ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 5.

²⁸⁴ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 45.

[through] the solo voice of Karen, an intense use of overdubbing, and a strong tendency to use very close vocal harmonies. The distinction between the Barthesian notion of 'grain' and a general idea of 'graininess' is particularly significant in the case of the Carpenters, since it is very much the idea of the 'pure' voice that the Carpenters' music prioritizes.²⁸⁵

Jarman acknowledges both the fact that it is impossible to sing entirely without grain and the fiction of the 'pure' voice, but in Carpenter's vocal craft she finds an intense level of control and perfectionism, and a distinct aversion to the musical flaw.²⁸⁶

Although close harmonies go some way to allowing for potential geno-song by adding melodic lines, in practice, they serve to obscure it by '[blurring] the individual lines, thus rendering the grain in any one vocal part less accessible'.²⁸⁷ At all stages of music-making, the grain is resisted. In Jarman's formulations, the suppressed grain and thus perceived 'purity' of Carpenter's voice reflects the gendered expectations placed on her:

[the] description of [her] voice as 'pure' and the consistent assertion that her voice was 'natural' resonates strongly with this longstanding conflation of the two terms, reducing them to being mutually implicit while also tapping into a history of the asexuality in women, a particularly pertinent association given the utterly wholesome image they sustained, however unwillingly.²⁸⁸

As mentioned in section 2.4.1, Bradby explores the conflation of nature and femininity in her work on sampling in dance music, drawing on Haraway to explore dance music 'cyborgs [who] transgress the boundaries of the Enlightenment equation of women with nature'.²⁸⁹ Despite heavy use of overdubbing in her recordings, perceptions of Carpenter appear to be antithetical to this. Indeed, Cusick has drawn on Judith Butler's work on gender and performance to examine how the voice is culturally constructed. She says that although 'unlike external markers of gender identity, the voice is entirely

²⁸⁵ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 72.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 71.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁸⁹ Bradby, 'Sampling Sexuality', 157.

Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

embodied [v]oices are always performances of a relationship negotiated between the individual vocalizer and the vocalizer's culture'.²⁹⁰ These negotiations inevitably run along gendered lines and Jarman's work illustrates how the perceived purity of Carpenter's voice was geared towards the expectations of her intended audience.

These factors seem to suggest that the grain is as absent as possible – even though recording techniques arguably facilitate perception of grain, it is resisted in this case. Jarman suggests a queer reading of this based on three factors. The overdubbing generates multiple versions of the same voice, creating the effect of the doppelgänger, which has a 'symbiotic relationship' with the queer, as well as allowing for a reading based on cyborg theory.²⁹¹ The use of overdubbing and very close harmonies also merge their male and female voices into a 'queer union'.²⁹² Further, Jarman points out that critical derision of the Carpenters' work is 'ultimately based on a masculinist logic', facilitating a queer reading 'insofar as [the queer potential of] their work acts to wrestle the right to political engagement away from soundscapes discursively figured as masculine'.²⁹³ Jarman's rereading of the Carpenters' music and ideas concerning grain through a queer lens is evidence of how commentators have found more to the Carpenters' music than what appears on the surface. Importantly, Jarman's observations about the 'pure' voice take on significance in the source materials collected for this project: the nature of Carpenter's death has become intrinsic to retrospective examination of her voice in public discourse, particularly with regards to this perceived 'purity'.

Vocal grain is a notoriously vague concept and I hope to avoid Dunsby and Rudent's rightful criticisms of use of it without proper engagement. Yet this notion of 'the body in the voice as it sings' is prevalent in coverage of these five artists both as female singers and women who died early and unnaturally, as will become clear throughout. This initial comparison between Houston and Carpenter illustrates how vocal authenticity operates here: narratives that make sense of the lives and deaths of each artist are formed and manipulated through the individual sound of the voice. As

²⁹⁰ Cusick, 'On Musical Performances', 29.

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1990).

²⁹¹ Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women*.

²⁹² Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 77.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 93.

will be demonstrated, narratives concerning grain run along similar trajectories to the life stories of these women.

4.3 Degradation

In this context, 'degradation' is taken as the audible effect of time and unhealthy habits on the singing voice. Vocal capability naturally declines over time, with a singer's capacity to reach the upper limits of their range diminishing and their timbre often becoming thinner. For Holiday and Houston, this deterioration was likely accelerated through excessive alcohol and drug consumption, and in their later recordings and performances their voices sound weaker and huskier. Many commentators have forged explicit links between this reduced vocal ability and biography, and this has become a method of rationalising the women's deaths.

A change in perception of authenticity in Houston's voice seems to have begun with the release of her final album *I Look to You* in 2009. Most of the critical responses were lukewarm and accusations of ersatz emotion persisted. However, the effects of time and unhealthy habits on Houston's voice are interpreted as poignant – the grain is identifiable at this point, and this seems to grant her a degree of authenticity. Take, for example, the reviews below from Leah Greenblatt and Ann Powers, respectively:

I Look to You ... never truly lets listeners inside the heart and head of the woman she is today Houston's famous voice, which now sounds husky and glottal ... brings a gravity that the album's often generically worded ballads lack.²⁹⁴

But should we begrudge the fact that [she] now has to work at singing? It's all to her credit. What's hard to give up is the dream of painless perfection that the young Houston represented ... when her voice sounded like the easy money that was flowing everywhere. Of course, that didn't turn out so well for anyone else, either. Though *I Look to You* doesn't soar like the old days, it's fine to hear Houston working on her own recovery plan.²⁹⁵

²⁹⁴ Leah Greenblatt, 'Whitney reveals little in new album', *CNN*, Aug 27, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

²⁹⁵ Ann Powers, 'Whitney returns', *Telegraph Journal New Brunswick*, Aug 28, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

Greenblatt's review insinuates that evidence of authenticity lies not in the album's musical or lyrical content but rather in the quality of Houston's voice. Even when there is little to suggest that a song or album is explicitly autobiographical, despite early criticisms that Houston's voice was impressive but somehow insincere, authenticity can be projected through the guise of audible scars on the voice, with 'husky' and 'glottal' implying damage. Indeed, Miller has pointed out that there was some public anger directed towards Houston 'for squandering a kind of protected public resource through years of abuse',²⁹⁶ again illuminating the equation of voice with biography. Here, the degradation of Houston's voice acts as an audible reflection of her much-publicised troubles.

It is interesting that Powers compares the optimism and glossiness of Houston's early recordings to the economic boom that they accompanied, as it implies a trajectory of Houston's voice that runs parallel to the trajectory of the US economy and thus much of her audience. She seems to suggest that Houston's voice in the early years of her career provided a musical representation of the prosperous economic atmosphere, and when she says that 'that didn't turn out so well for anyone else, either' she draws a comparison between Houston and her fanbase: it unites her and her audiences along the same trajectory of ageing, misfortune, and nostalgia. It is unclear how far she wants her readers to run with this metaphor, but it is interesting to note that in 2009 the world was still reeling from the effects of the global recession of 2008. Drawing on Kaja Silverman, Elliott has written that the ageing voice offers an "acoustic mirror" in which to witness the passing of time in our own bodies as well as that of the singer',²⁹⁷ and this is the effect Powers describes. In this specific case, authenticity is granted through perceived shared or comparable experience. Indeed, Miller suggests that part of Houston's appeal lay in her suffering:

Her relationship to pain and the struggles of excess ... tied her to a pantheon of divas gone-too-soon It was this public suffering that enamoured her to her

²⁹⁶ Miller, 'Social Sorrow', 92.

²⁹⁷ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 220.

Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988).

most loyal fans, making space for them to identify with her turmoil and connect to her community of followers.²⁹⁸

This sentiment is echoed by Steve Rose, who explores how suffering remains crucial to Judy Garland's appeal, and particularly to her status as a gay icon. He references the scene from the 2019 biopic (*Judy*, dir. Rupert Goold) in which Garland meets two gay fans and the three commiserate together over her litany of traumas and their need to remain closeted in pre-1967 Britain, 'a moment of solidarity that gets to the heart of Garland's appeal'.²⁹⁹ Wayne Koestenbaum draws on gay fandom around Maria Callas and puts part of her appeal down to her unhappiness: 'she craved applause and died for lack of it. To mourn Maria Callas: there, cult happiness begins'.³⁰⁰ Gay iconography, fandom, and suffering is an important topic. Yet, according to Miller, the perception of pain appears to be central to Houston's appeal across her fanbase.

Keeping in mind these readings, in Powers' interpretation, Houston's suffering becomes a vehicle which connects her to her followers, who can relate her anguish to their own, and such suffering can be detected in the degraded voice. Whilst Houston's music was largely regarded (by critics, at least) as inauthentic, audience knowledge of the difficulties she faced throughout her life and degraded vocal qualities encourage projection of authenticity onto her. Elliott applies the Barthesian concepts of '*studium*' and '*punctum*', which usually refer to visual arts, to explore the late voice. Where *studium* describes the content of a work, *punctum* is the quality that elevates it above the sum of its parts, as Barthes puts it, the 'element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me'.³⁰¹ He writes that whilst all sonic arts can take on this quality, the embodied nature of the voice makes it particularly compelling due to its association with the self.³⁰² Sandy Denny's 'Who Knows Where the Time Goes' is

²⁹⁸ Miller, 'Social Sorrow', 87.

²⁹⁹ Steve Rose, 'Is Hollywood still in love with the suffering "gay icon"?' *Guardian*, Sep 23, 2019, accessed Aug 21, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/23/judy-garland-biopic-movie-renee-zellweger>.

Judy, directed by Rupert Goold (20th Century Fox, 2019), film.

³⁰⁰ Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (n.p., DaCapo Press: 2001 [1993]), 134.

³⁰¹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (London: Vintage, 2000 [1980]), 26.

Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 45.

³⁰² Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 45.

Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 2.

given as an example of the contrast between *studium* and *punctum*, particularly in ‘the moments where her voice becomes harsher, working against the placid beauty of the song’s *studium* and bringing ... a *punctum* that I read as the hardening of one’s hopes and dreams in the light of experience’.³⁰³ This observation about voice and experience can be connected to the projection of personal meaning onto Houston’s late voice, which demonstrates the importance of vocal qualities and knowledge of personal factors to audience perception of music as authentic. In terms of the grain, ‘those aspects of the voice where the physiology of vocal production is audible’ are now more obvious, creating the opportunity of perception of *punctum*, encouraging interpretation of meaning beyond the content of the music itself.

Many of the sources gathered about Holiday from during her lifetime praise her musical prowess, though they also comment often upon her arrests and troubles. The contested authorship of her autobiography and perceptions of ‘bitterness’ led to some backlash,³⁰⁴ and she was also hounded by authorities (see section 2.2.2). A distinct sense of rationalising her behaviours can be found in the posthumous source materials, however, even if the contemporary source materials collected contain less outright criticism than they do of Joplin, Winehouse, or Houston. Her late career is interpreted as similarly poignant as Houston’s. She is perhaps the case study who has been studied most extensively, and various scholars have described how her life and music have become discursively intertwined, particularly with regard to the sonic quality of her voice. Eidsheim has pointed out that this is a problematic interpretation: ‘Reducing Holiday’s voice to an a priori ... reduces her subjectivity and artistic agency to the oft-narrated arc of her biography’.³⁰⁵ Meanwhile, Lordi argues that this narrative serves a communal purpose:

Fans of black popular music ... will tell you that you could hear Billie Holiday’s tragic life through the audible wear in her voice In addition to revealing certain truths, these stories fulfil important functions – they help create community and serve as cautionary tales.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 46-47. Original emphasis.

³⁰⁴ Harvey Breit, ‘Books of the Times’, *New York Times*, Jul 21, 1956, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* May 5, 2020.

³⁰⁵ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 159.

³⁰⁶ Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 138.

She also, however, illustrates the problem with this approach. She explores why the word 'haunting' is so frequently applied to Holiday's performances of 'Strange Fruit'. In great detail, she puts the song's haunting effect (besides the subject matter) in Holiday's renditions down to her unusual approach to phrasing and the fact that she never performed the song in exactly the same way twice. There are several session and live recordings of Holiday's 'Strange Fruit' from across her career, so naturally the effects of time and lifestyle on her voice can be traced through the song. Lordi suggests that in light of this audiences 'figure Holiday's *voice itself* as expressing something "directly to them"'.³⁰⁷ However, Lordi suggests that it is reductive to posit her changing vocal timbre merely as a result of time and various vices, and that it can in fact be read as a deliberate musical technique: 'Rather than hear Holiday's timbre as a window that can't help but express her tragic life, I hear Holiday herself as a "timbral virtuoso" who continues to *use* her different vocal colors and textures'.³⁰⁸ What Lordi describes here is the consideration that there is more to the unusual tone of Holiday's voice than an audible reflection of what spectators think they know about her personal life. She illustrates how dismissive this reading is: 'Hence, I distinguish "Strange Fruit" from Holiday's biography not only because conflating them undermines her artistry but also because it demeans her complex political commitments'.³⁰⁹ Yet audience fixation on authenticity can lead to a forged link between the musical and extra-musical, regardless of the content or impact of the song, especially once the singer's biographical narrative is fixed in place. Although the meanings forged around an artist's life story can differ significantly, after death a broad biographical trajectory is established. In these cases, ways of linking the musical and the extra-musical particularly rely on the degraded timbre of the voice. Indeed, this phenomenon extends beyond the case studies in this thesis; Elliott, for example, points out how Nicholas Dawidoff has interpreted 'hard lives' in the 'rough edges' of the voices of George Jones, Merle Haggard, and Johnny Cash, but that this is a reading which 'seems incomplete'.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 140. Original emphasis.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 141. Original emphasis.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

³¹⁰ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 36.

Nicholas Dawidoff, *In the Country of Country: A Journey to the Roots of American Music* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), 14-15.

This incomplete reading is persistent in interpretations of Holiday's voice. For example, writing in 2000, Martin Longley praises her ability to bring expressive gravitas to a song and adds that this is compounded by the deterioration of her vocal ability over time, crassly combining this with her personal life:

She had a way of fully inhabiting her songs Much has been made of Holiday's hard-bitten life: the racism, the drugs, the passive acceptance of male abuse [T]he decline in her health during the final years [resulted] in a technically frayed voice, which arguably sharpened the cutting edge of her emotional expression.³¹¹

Here, Holiday's 'frayed voice' and 'hard-bitten life' are intertwined. Longley's problematic framing of Holiday's problems, especially the 'passive acceptance of male abuse' – Longley cannot make any claims as to how she handled it and the blame for the abuse should lie not with Holiday's supposed passivity but with the activity of those abusing her – speaks volumes about the importance of suffering to the public reception of the diva, especially if it can be perceived aurally. 'Frayed' itself is an interesting term, one that, whilst describing degradation, also suggests exposure and vulnerability. The adjectives used to describe timbre reveal much about perception because, as Cornelia Fales has illustrated, lack of academic attention means that with 'no domain-specific adjectives, timbre must be described in metaphor'³¹² and in these cases the adjectives and metaphors used work in the context of the artist's image and biography. As per the overall argument laid out in this chapter, descriptions of Holiday's 'frayed' voice render her vulnerable and thus go some way to undermining her agency over her actions. By identifying a sense of helplessness through the degraded vocal, commentators can rationalise her self-destructive actions and thus extinguish any perceived threat.

In line with Miller, Koestenbaum, and Rose's theories about the suffering diva, some newspaper articles situate her misfortunes as part of her appeal:

³¹¹ Martin Longley, 'It's still a difficult life for a lady singing the blues', *Birmingham Post*, Jun 7, 2000, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

³¹² Cornelia Fales, 'The Paradox of Timbre', *Ethnomusicology* 46 (2002) 1: 57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/852808>.

Mikki Shepard, the Apollo's executive producer, believes Holiday's struggles 'reflected what the average person was going through – not necessarily her problems with drugs, but with other challenges. She was broke a lot of the time, she had abusive relationships.'³¹³

This framing suggests that Holiday's talent for musical expression and the links made between it and her well-publicised troubles provide a cathartic outlet through which her followers can work through their own problems with the knowledge that Holiday had also struggled. The degradation of her voice appears to have strengthened the potential for this association between voice and personal life, allowing audiences to assign authenticity. Stephen Holden describes how her

vocal deterioration brought [her] greater emotional depth and realism. Studying a chronology of [her] records is like following a road map of [her life] that takes you deep into the mountains over increasingly rugged terrain. The bumpier the road gets, the longer the view.³¹⁴

Holden points to the increased 'emotional depth' of the (perhaps prematurely) ageing voice, but once more this is framed through the lens of her life story. Ultimately, closer analysis of discussion of the degradation of the voice suggests that it becomes perceived as evidence of emotional authenticity and that this is bound up in knowledge of personal trouble. All of the data excerpts in this section seem to suggest an innate sadness that can be heard in the degraded voice – the 'little girl blue' narrative persists in these readings.

4.4 Timbre

Closely related to grain and degradation is timbre, in this context defined as the non-verbal sonic qualities of the singing voice, a theme which has appeared frequently in the ascription of authenticity. Where the previous two sections dealt with the specific sounds of 'grain' and the weakened, degraded voice, this section examines the

³¹³ Mikki Shepard quoted in Elysa Gardner, "'Lady Day' gets another day in the sun; Billie Holiday's legacy lives, 100 years later', *USA Today*, Apr 2, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

³¹⁴ Stephen Holden, 'Something's Lost and Something's Gained', *New York Times*, Feb 13, 2000, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

meanings forged from vocal timbre more broadly.

Jarman's examination of the uncompromising control that went into the Carpenters' records is reflected in other academic work, often discussed in terms of how it went some way to concealing and/or exposing the melancholy audiences have since perceived in Carpenter's voice. In his Adornian analysis of the Carpenters' career, Eric Lott claims that

Nothing in the smooth, reified, even fetishistic sheen of 'Close to You' ... suggests the potential for authentic aesthetic experience or expression. The apparently unbroken surface of this industrially manufactured sound, however, is in fact riven by longing, constriction, and discomfort.³¹⁵

Lott does not expand on how or why 'longing, constriction, and discomfort' have been identified but this extract exposes again the notion that trouble can be heard musically. Importantly here, he also claims that 'Carpenter's voice is unmatched in its ability to summon a languid melancholy that is somehow at the same time evacuated of personality'.³¹⁶ Using Barthes' terminology, Lott implies that the geno-song is missing. Similarly, George McKay describes her 'extraordinary contralto pop voice, with wonderfully resonant low notes ... [which] always felt disembodied'.³¹⁷ Both Lott and McKay allude to the darkness underneath the façade, with Carpenter's beautiful but somehow disembodied voice an important and retrospectively haunting part of this.

These descriptions appear antithetical to what is generally perceived as authentic performance. Yet the data suggests that audiences do associate Carpenter's voice with a certain kind of soulfulness; it is rare for her to be referred to as an unemotional singer. Dave Gelly acknowledges her dogmatic approach to music-making but notes the striking effect of the features external to that which can be accurately measured (or '*punctum*'): 'With her crisp articulation and chillingly accurate control of pitch, Karen could sound a bit mechanical at times, but more often than not this was

³¹⁵ Eric Lott, 'Perfect is Dead: Karen Carpenter, Theodor Adorno, and the Radio; or, If Hooks Could Kill', *Criticism* 50 (Spring 2008) 2: 219. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23128741>.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 221.

³¹⁷ George McKay, 'Skinny blues: Karen Carpenter, anorexia nervosa and popular music', *Popular Music* 37 (2018) 1: 3. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114301700054X>.

redeemed by little rhythmic felicities ... which brought a performance to life'.³¹⁸ Other examples simply situate Carpenter's voice as the factor that has kept them selling records long after her death. In his examination of the resurgence of enthusiasm for the duo in the 1990s, Michael Bracewell discusses the matter with

Jon Wilde, a writer on music and popular culture, [who] has little time for the argument that the Carpenters revival is connected to kitsch, irony or ... post-modernity. 'It's the voice,' he says, firmly 'You don't stay that famous just because someone says you're camp or ironic'.³¹⁹

These extracts undoubtedly point to Carpenter's voice as central to her ongoing legacy. Cary Darling says that 'much of the Carpenters' material was forgettable, but what the knee-jerk derision overlooked was Karen Carpenter's voice: as sweet as honey'.³²⁰ Clearly, despite the reserved nature of her singing and the hyper-control of both studio recordings and live performances – not traditionally the features of perceived authenticity – audiences have found emotional connections with Carpenter's delivery.

Crucial to this are the timbral qualities of her voice. To return to McKay, he claims that '[t]rying to make sense of Karen's voice has us reaching for contradiction or antithesis' and refers to Lott and Tom Smucker,³²¹ both of whom point out the disjunct between the warm yet supposedly 'disembodied' qualities of Carpenter's voice. For McKay, this can be read as indicative of her eating disorder: 'Karen seemed to be striving for what she thought of as versions of perfection in voice and in body alike, could we say that?'³²² Personally, I hesitate at this conflation – complex mental illness cannot be condensed into soundbites and psychiatry is not the domain of musicologists – but this sentiment is widespread. As with Houston, this coverage is frequently crass. For example, Lisa Borstein claims that '[t]he bittersweet flavor of Carpenter's mellow alto became even more poignant when ... she died ... her heart and

³¹⁸ Dave Gelly, 'Triumph of the moderates', *Observer*, Feb 13, 1983, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 9, 2020.

³¹⁹ Michael Bracewell, 'Hip to be square', *Times*, Aug 27, 1994, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

³²⁰ Cary Darling, 'Album Review', *Orange County Register*, Sep 11, 1994, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

³²¹ Tom Smucker, 'The Carpenters: forbidden fruit', *Village Voice*, Jun 2, 1975, 86.

³²² McKay, 'Skinny blues', 12.

body ravaged by anorexia'.³²³ Going a step further than this, Ray Coleman suggests that not only did sadness make Carpenter the singer she was, but that it makes her inimitable:

With hindsight, it is clear that the haunting quality of her voice partly represented the heartache of her psychological distress, for she imbued sad lyrics ... with a poignancy that would have been impossible to craft without the impetus of a personal trauma.³²⁴

It would appear that the desire to make sense of what happened to Carpenter has led observers to project meaning at the most easily-accessible facet of her career – the music. This in turn has encouraged the posthumous interpretation of authenticity. It is becoming clear that the perception of emotional authenticity in the voice provides a way for commentators to make meaning out of the biographies of these artists. Projecting biography onto the voice involves understanding vocal features as an inherent expression of the vocalizer's personhood, even if they are largely the result of musical interpretation or skill. I argue that in this case such a projection goes some way to eliminating the fears associated with her downfall by diminishing her autonomy. The specific terms used to describe the timbre of Carpenter's voice merit closer inspection. The common descriptors of 'languid melancholy', 'sweet', and 'mellow' imply a passive quality; they present Carpenter as meek and unthreatening. The links forged between Carpenter's voice and biography make sense of her demise and preserve the notion that it was the result of an innate, remarkable sadness rather than active agency and thus it appears less frightening, especially as there was far less common knowledge about eating disorders and their treatment when Carpenter died.³²⁵

Holiday is presented in many of the excerpts as a singer who could extrapolate the emotions of a song and convey them in a commanding and compelling way. Her striking tone and her unconventional phrasing are a large part of this and her ability to

³²³ Lisa Bornstein, 'Yesterday Once More', *South Bend Tribune*, Oct 27, 1996, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

³²⁴ Ray Coleman, 'Too good to be through', *Sunday Times*, Sep 11, 1994, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

³²⁵ Saukko, 'Rereading Media and Eating Disorders', 156.

make songs take on 'genuine' emotional expression is central to her legacy. Some discussions of this recognise Holiday's musicianship yet many sources intrinsically link the musical and the personal, as noted earlier. This theme appears in a 1972 interview with the American jazz singer Carmen McRae in which she claims that 'there was always something strange about Billie Holiday When she sang, *that's* what she was. Her real life was coming from what she sang'.³²⁶ By 2000, statements like this were starting to become more explicit. John Laycock writes that 'Billie Holiday's hard life could be heard in her questioning voice. She moved more jazz musicians than any other singer'.³²⁷ Similarly, Michael Renner claims that

One could argue ... that Holiday wouldn't be the singer she was were it not for her tragic life filled with racism, failed romances, drugs and alcohol. By the time of her mid-1950s recordings, Holiday's voice had deteriorated, but her approach to a lyric had deepened emotionally.³²⁸

Renner recognises that there was work and skilful musicianship involved, yet this comes second to Holiday's personal experiences. It is common for discussions of this kind to place biography and musical material next to each other as though they were inextricably linked, sometimes in ways that are somewhat facile: John Bungey writes simply that '[h]appiness, of course, was sometimes in tragically short supply in her life and that sorrow came out in her sad, sweet sound'.³²⁹

Links between voice, music, and life story are forged in academic literature in Holiday's case, too. David Margolick, in his book about 'Strange Fruit', makes some particularly troubling assertions. He claims that

some of its sadness seemed to cling to her; as she deteriorated physically, the song took on a new poignancy 'Strange Fruit' might even have accelerated her decline. Surely a song that forced a nation to confront its darkest impulses

³²⁶ Carmen McRae interviewed by Harriet Choice, 'Sit up and dig Carmen McRae', *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 20, 1972, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* May 13, 2020. Original emphasis.

³²⁷ John Laycock, 'Popular Music is International; Americana Spin on Music', *Windsor Star Ontario*, Dec 30, 2000, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

³²⁸ Michael J. Renner, 'Packed House Hears Moving Tribute to Billie Holiday', *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, Feb 7, 2000, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

³²⁹ John Bungey, 'Billie Holiday: The Centennial Collection', *Times*, Apr 18, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

... did not win her any friends in high places who might have cut her some slack as she degenerated into substance abuse and assorted scrapes with the law.³³⁰

Margolick's point about 'Strange Fruit' winning Holiday enemies in high places seems plausible (for example, Johann Hari has pointed out the close proximity between Holiday's first performance of the song in 1939 and the beginning of her legal troubles),³³¹ yet the idea that 'some of its sadness' attached itself to her is symptomatic of the kind of myth-making Lordi refers to. Indeed, Margolick's book switches between solid musicological observation and mythologising throughout. For example, he does give a detailed explanation of why Holiday's performances of the song are so affecting, and the skill and care with which she approached it:

Then came the utterly distinctive sound of Holiday herself. She is grim yet purposeful, yet still with a lovely lightness to her [T]here is no weepiness, nor histrionics. Her elocution is superb, with but a hint of a Southern accent; her tone is languorous but unflinching, raw yet smooth, youthful yet worldly.³³²

This description recognises the dedication with which Holiday crafted her performances. However, his frequent conflation of the song and Holiday's travails situates her vocal timbre as evidence of misfortune, as in the journalistic discourse. This is most obvious in his disrespectful account of one of her final performances of it:

Haggard, largely wasted away, she had grown oddly, sadly suited to capture the full grotesqueness of the song. Now she not only sang of bulging eyes and twisted mouths. She embodied them Within a year, Holiday was dead.³³³

What the book illustrates is the extent to which musical meaning-making in these cases is bound up in biography, and it additionally exposes audience desire to rationalise her death. The descriptions of Holiday's timbre point to both passivity and

³³⁰ David Margolick, *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002 [2000]), 24-25.

³³¹ Hari, 'The Hunting of Billie Holiday'.

³³² Margolick, *Strange Fruit*, 67.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 132-133.

activity – there is recognition that part of her success was down to good musicianship, yet as Lordi has pointed out, commentators have heard her ‘timbre as a window that can’t help but express her tragic life’, diminishing her artistry.

The timbral qualities of the voice are similarly integral to perceptions of authenticity in Winehouse’s music. In a very early interview with her, Dan Cairns describes her voice as

A cracked, racked husk that will one moment coo at the object of her affection, the next emit a caustic rasp at the target of her scorn, it harks back to Billie Holiday in its emotional vulnerability ... and to Macy Gray as it lays bare its owner's feelings.³³⁴

This presentation of non-semantic sound is important. In this extract, vulnerability and feelings being ‘laid bare’ are attributed to ‘coos’ and ‘rasps’. Cairns almost describes Winehouse’s voice as a separate entity; he does not say that she herself ‘coos’ or ‘emits’, rather, it is the voice in control here. This is reflective of the lack of agency given to these figures. This is an early example and possibly does not discuss Winehouse in terms of having little agency for the same purposes as more recent examples (at this stage it is more likely due to her gender and youth, an issue explored in detail by Helen Davies, Marion Leonard, and Catherine Strong).³³⁵ Yet despite the comparatively less loaded implications, this extract points to perception of lack of control (the implication being that expression came from her opening her mouth and singing, not through any degree of skill on her part) that becomes dominant in later coverage and contributes to the narratives formed.

One theme that recurs is the contrast between Winehouse’s voice and age. Whilst the release of *Frank* (2003) met with some accusations of immaturity,³³⁶ by the release of *Back to Black* (2006) Winehouse appears to have sealed her image as a

³³⁴ Dan Cairns, ‘Winehouse, women and song’, *Sunday Times*, Oct 5, 2003, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

³³⁵ Davies, ‘All Rock and Roll is Homosocial’.

Marion Leonard, *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (Aldershot: Routledge, 2007).

Catherine Strong, ‘Grunge, Riot Grrrl, and the Forgetting of Women in Popular Culture’, *Journal of Popular Culture* 44 (2011) 2: 398-416. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00839.x>.

³³⁶ Phil Johnson, ‘Discs Etc’, *Independent on Sunday*, Oct 26, 2003, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

singer beyond her years, and this idea has become an important part of posthumous meaning-making around her. Peter Ross points out that the contradiction is striking but does not feel false:

Winehouse is remarkable, a gutsy singer (literally so - she sings from her stomach, which, not coincidentally, is the part of her body where she feels the thrill of love and the pain of love ending) with a voice that sounds a lot older than her 23 years but isn't jarringly inappropriate.³³⁷

By this time, the majority of sources point to the perceived mature quality of Winehouse's voice as genuine rather than affected. However, the tendency to conflate vocal qualities and biography is present again. It is unclear whether Ross is referring to 'singing from the stomach' as a reference to good technique – it is impossible to sing from the stomach, but it is often used as a term for supporting and controlling the voice – or if he intends it as a metaphor. Either way, what Ross does here is to locate Winehouse's voice and her emotions in the same place. He seems to refer to instinctive or 'gut' feelings when he discusses thrill and pain and when he places Winehouse's voice alongside it, he further promotes the notion of genuine emotion coming from a genuine place.

In a separate article, he expands on this combination of performance and personal travails:

Writing about personal crises ... was the only way she had of moving on from darkness. It must be very odd, though, to sing those songs now that she is back with the man they are about. Take ... September's Mercury Music Awards at which Winehouse sang Love Is A Losing Game while [her husband Blake] Fielder-Civil looked on. It was an incredible performance, brimful of vulnerability and strength [T]hough there was the awful thought, too, that her troubles had sharpened her talents.³³⁸

³³⁷ Peter Ross, 'Untamed melody', *Sunday Herald*, Jan 7, 2007, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

³³⁸ Peter Ross, 'A year of living dangerously', *Sunday Herald*, Nov 11, 2007, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

Ross here mostly seems to refer to Winehouse's autobiographical lyrics, but the performance of 'vulnerability and strength' would also have had to come in part from Winehouse's delivery or the effect would be the same as that of the studio version. Ross' description of the 'oddness' of her reunion with Fielder-Civil after she'd written most of *Back to Black* about him also demonstrates how central perceived authenticity was to Winehouse's appeal as there is little room for ambiguity in this framing: 'Love is a Losing Game' is not merely a sad song she wrote during a period of heartbreak, but has become entangled in a specific separation. What is particularly important is the idea that sadness somehow had made her a better singer, reflecting Miller's, Koestenbaum's, and Rose's points about the suffering diva. There are several examples of this taken from around *Back to Black*'s release. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Teresa Wiltz writes that '[i]n the three years between her two albums, pain seasoned her voice, deepening it until it took on the husky timbre of a much older and sadder woman'.³³⁹ Yet there is also a sense that she was as fierce as she was vulnerable, as per Ludovic Hunter-Tilney: 'Her voice is forceful and statuesque, more fierce than tender, so that even pain-wracked ballads sound oddly defiant'.³⁴⁰ Wiltz and Hunter-Tilney refer to two different perceptions of audible pain, one interpretation that made her weaker and one stronger, yet both suggest an increase in musical expression as a result. This theme becomes stronger following Winehouse's death, as will be examined in sections 4.5 and 4.6.

There is a contradiction at the heart of writing about Joplin; on the one hand, her raw vocals are taken as aural evidence of her hedonistic philosophy, on the other, they become evidence of a troubled soul. Her performances are perceived as wholly uncompromising and she is famed as a singer who threw herself so completely into a performance as to bring herself to the brink of exhaustion. This can be seen in journalistic accounts from her lifetime. Writing in 1968, Robb Baker claims that she 'epitomizes the complete performer: Each beat comes alive, in her hair, her face, her hands, up the pulsating right leg thru [sic] the entire torso'.³⁴¹ For Baker, authenticity comes partly from extra-musical performance factors, but the rawness of her voice is

³³⁹ Teresa Wiltz, '100-Proof Voice', *Washington Post*, Feb 7, 2007, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

³⁴⁰ Ludovic Hunter-Tilney, 'Amy Winehouse, Koko, London', *Financial Times*, Nov 16, 2006, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

³⁴¹ Robb Baker, 'Janis Joplin Displays Sexy Musical Alchemy', *Chicago Tribune*, Aug 19, 1968, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

also important: 'Janis screams. It's a chaotic, unholy sound that is, at the same time, music and control. It overwhelms thru a depth that is tenderness and pain, and thru [sic] sheer brute force'.³⁴² She is framed as someone who deliberately put her emotions into her singing. Posthumously, this is taken as evidence of inner turmoil.

For example, the release of Amy Berg's documentary *Little Girl Blue* in 2015 led to further reconsideration of Joplin's career in public discourse. A persistent theme is that she was deeply unhappy – evidence of this taken from letters that she wrote to her family throughout her career – and that this can be perceived aurally. Stephen Holden reviews the documentary, claiming that Joplin's 'neediness' is evident, but that she is nevertheless an honest and intelligent artist:

The sound that erupts from Janis Joplin singing the '60s R&B classic 'Cry Baby' ... is as disturbing and powerful as ever More than any rock star of her generation she fearlessly vented the emotions of her needy inner girl-child Read aloud by singer-songwriter Chan Marshall ... in a gentler voice than Joplin's scratchy yowl, [the letters] reveal a forthright honesty, emotional openness and fierce intelligence.³⁴³

A similar sentiment appears in Rebecca Dargie's review, in which she seems to suggest Joplin suffered from an innate loneliness, but recognises her ongoing influence as a musician and as a woman:

[T]he raw power of her unique voice and subversively poignant lyrics has endured Joplin's voice is inimitable [She] was a pioneer for hard-drinking rock chicks and her songs of loneliness and isolation sound remarkable among today's highly produced female soundscape.³⁴⁴

Some of the reviews situate this more simplistically than Holden or Dargie. In these accounts, Joplin's hard-living persona and the sadness lurking underneath are not

³⁴² Robb Baker, 'The Sound: Music and Radio: for young listeners', *Chicago Tribune*, Mar 31, 1968, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

³⁴³ Stephen Holden, 'Review: In "Janis: Little Girl Blue," Exploring Joplin's Demons', *New York Times*, Nov 27, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

³⁴⁴ Rebecca Dargie, 'New Tribute to Joplin's Legacy', *Inner West Courier*, Apr 4, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

down to the complexities and contradictions of human behaviour: the former is a cover for the latter. For instance, Sean Means claims that her 'powerful voice and life-of-the-party demeanor masked a lot of pain'³⁴⁵ whilst Jonathan Romney asserts that '[her] raucous crazy-mama persona concealed a profoundly wounded soul'.³⁴⁶ Holden's review also suggests that once her words are heard in a softer voice a deeper meaning is unearthed. The use of the verbs 'conceal' and 'mask' might imply an inauthenticity, but since the documentary is mostly made up of letters that Joplin wrote to her family, authenticity is not called into question. Indeed, all of the extracts imply that Joplin presented all of herself in her music and the intensity of this served to hide her perceived loneliness, yet sadness can still be perceived in the sound of her voice.

Jessica Clark's account of Berg's documentary also demonstrates how the contrast between Joplin's relentless stage performances and the vulnerabilities demonstrated by the letters are not mutually exclusive:

Unlike the typical, perfectly polished popstar, Joplin was boisterous, messy, flawed, but also more passionate than anything else. She was coarse, free, and sexual. She defied all the norms dictated by the conservative society in which she grew up during the 1950s These newly released letters depict Joplin's most intimate feelings. Despite her wild success, Joplin's personal reservations and loneliness pervade her letters.³⁴⁷

Clark presents Joplin as someone who was uncompromisingly true to her instincts and desires, but who was nevertheless lonely and apprehensive. The data here suggests that this has become the dominant narrative – despite some recognition of Joplin's radicality in terms of the make-up of the music industry at the time and the way she 'defied all the norms dictated by ... conservative society', her actions were ultimately the actions of someone who was lost and lonely. The timbral qualities of her voice are sometimes taken as an audible reflection of her pleasure-seeking lifestyle, but they

³⁴⁵ Sean P. Means, 'Movie Review: "Janis: Little Girl Blue"', *Salt Lake Tribune*, Dec 10, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

³⁴⁶ Jonathan Romney, 'Venice film festival - plenty of punch to disturb the peace', *Observer*, Nov 3, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

³⁴⁷ Jessica Clark, '"Janis: Little Girl Blue" depicts a new illustration of the iconic Janis Joplin', *Columbia Spectator*, Dec 10, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

also eliminate any threat posed by Joplin as 'boisterous, messy, [and] flawed' by allowing a narrative whereby they both conceal and expose an inherent vulnerability.

The degree to which the artist was perceived as (in)authentic during their lifetimes is irrelevant to the functioning of timbral meaning-making – the ascription of authenticity based on timbre serves a similar purpose in each case: to make sense of the lives and deaths of these figures by constructing sadness or vulnerability.

4.5 Musical content and authorship

I initially return to the change in reception of Houston's career to examine how narratives around musical content and authorship work in tandem with perceptions of vocal authenticity in these contexts. As stated, many of the songs on *I Look to You* were dismissed as superficial.³⁴⁸ However, other reviewers have made links between Houston's personal struggles and the album's content. Nekesa Mumbi Moody writes that '[w]hile Houston didn't contribute to the writing of any of the album's songs, many of them seem to have been written with Houston's many tribulations in mind',³⁴⁹ whilst Eric Chavez claims that '[t]he albums' two pop-ballads ... bring the listener into Houston's secret world of pain and triumph'.³⁵⁰ Lesley-Ann Jones has explicitly claimed that Houston became more interesting as an artist as her personal life became increasingly turbulent. Writing for the *Express* after the release of *I Look to You*, she is perhaps the most heavy-handed in expressing the benefit of public suffering to public reception:

Every cloud has a silver lining ... and if Whitney Houston's cloud was being married to a drug-crazed bully who dragged her to the depths of despair and misery and whose idea of fun was spitting in her face in front of their daughter or scissoring the heads off all her photographs ... then the silver lining is what we will see on television tonight ... in what is being billed as one of pop's

³⁴⁸ Sport Murphy, 'The Whit Parade – Houston, Here's Hoping We No Longer Have a Problem', *New York Post*, Aug 30, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

³⁴⁹ Nekesa Mumbi Moody, 'Whitney's Back', *The Record*, Sep 3, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

³⁵⁰ Eric Chavez, "'Crack is whack but Whitney Houston is back', *Georgia State University Signal*, Sep 16, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

greatest comebacks ... a singer who, finally, has soul Her voice ... is unscathed by the suffering. If anything, it's all the better for it.³⁵¹

Jones' claim that her voice had not weakened contrasts with the rest of the source materials, but she also finds biographical evidence in its sound. Her basis for the measurement of soul is unclear, and the idea that it would be achieved through being abused is problematic at best. It is clear, though, that soul operates as a synonym for authenticity. Whilst Houston's abusive marriage was doubtless painful, Jones' explicit chronicling of specific (presumably the most shocking) instances exposes not only public fascination with the tawdry details of Houston's suffering, but also the way in which these details change perception of the music. The glee in these extracts highlights the importance of perceived authenticity in music; where it can't be identified in the music itself, it can be projected with knowledge of the personal. Both imply an increased enjoyment of the music with the knowledge of personal details, especially if those details are scandalous. As demonstrated in section 4.3, Houston's ageing voice also contributed to this perception of personal authenticity in the album.

Naturally, the narrative shifts again in Houston's posthumous career. Despite the slight change of opinion, discussion of the issue following Houston's death seems to cement her failure to achieve 'authenticity'. Additionally, as Houston's greatest successes are mostly situated in her early career, these receive most coverage in posthumous journalism. Petridis points to a disjoint between polished vocals and her personal life:

Her voice was clean and cool, full of melismatic embellishments. It spoke of dazzling virtuosity rather than raw power or emotions dredged from the depths of a troubled soul. Even when her public image spiralled out of control, her music didn't follow suit.³⁵²

Essentially, at this point, Houston's overall narrative trajectory was fixed, and ultimately the release of *I Look to You* was unlikely to add anything to perception of

³⁵¹ Lesley-Ann Jones, 'Suffering has given Whitney real soul', *Daily Express*, Oct 18, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* March 16, 2020.

³⁵² Alexis Petridis, 'Whitney Houston: squandered talent of a record-breaking singer who had it all', *Guardian*, Feb 12, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

(in)authenticity in Houston's music based on that small shift in critical response. Yet there remains a tendency to posthumously ascribe some degree of authenticity to 'inauthentic' music based on the personal. In a 2015 article comparing the trajectory of Houston's life to Winehouse's, Paul Lester claims

it was [her] voice's very colourlessness and characterlessness that allowed a generation of X Factor wannabes to project their dreams onto it Whitney's fall was shocking because her before and after were so dramatically different If anything, the knowledge of what's happened has made Whitney's music seem like a lie while affording it an 'authentic' luster it previously lacked.³⁵³

Lester's claim that the music is both 'a lie' and has 'an "authentic" luster' seems contradictory, yet it points to how malleable the concept of authenticity is. Musical material appears to be irrelevant to how the narrative around Houston and authenticity operates – biography is far more important. The glossiness of her voice is read through an ironic lens posthumously. Furthermore, following her death, her failure to truly receive credit as an 'authentic' artist is reframed as a source of sadness to her and a result of producers and marketers' aim to turn her into a pop princess who would appeal to a range of demographics (see section 5.2). Importantly, Houston's lack of 'authenticity' is framed as not her fault.

Similarly, the Carpenters' back catalogue has undergone a substantial rereading since Karen's death. During her lifetime, their music was generally perceived to be antithetical to the idea of genuine self-expression.³⁵⁴ In a 1973 interview with the duo, Megan Rosenfeld describes the appeal of soft rock, which she puts down to

increased ... reaction to harsh electronic hard rock In reaction to rock's loudness, it is quieter In contrast to the angry anti-establishment lyrics of

³⁵³ Paul Lester, 'Whitney and Amy: worlds-apart artists who wound up in the same place', *Guardian*, Jul 28, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.

³⁵⁴ Larry Rother, 'Neil Sedaka is Back', *Washington Post*, Aug 11, 1975, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

Gary Deeb, 'Police Story debut unmasks real cops', *Chicago Tribune*, Apr 10, 1973, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

many rock songs, soft rock leans to songs that talk about love In terms of interpretation, strong feelings articulated in lyrics are muted in performance.³⁵⁵

The last part of this quotation demonstrates part of the appeal of the Carpenters. Their music served as an antidote to the fallout of the end of the 1960s in both content and image (a more in-depth exploration of this appears in section 6.3). Smucker points out that the release of the successful album *Now and Then* in 1973 coincided with the end of the Vietnam draft and the Roe v. Wade decision. In other words, in times of rapid social and political upheaval, the Carpenters offered something comfortingly naïve sounding for the audiences they were marketed towards (this is also discussed in section 6.3). He discusses the significance of their tightly controlled and clean production values and Karen's 'simple yet profound' vocals.³⁵⁶ For Smucker, '[c]ontrol and precision ... and elaborate pop production ... locate the Carpenters' soft rock in the suburban world'.³⁵⁷ Yet since Carpenter's death, an ironic reading has emerged.

McKay suggests retrospective autobiographical readings of the songs. He points out that although Carpenter did not write any of it, much of their original body of work was written for her, and claims that it was her voice that was crucial in its delivery:

Carpenters lyricist John Bettis was effectively writing words specifically for her [I]t is her characteristic vocal articulation and interpretation ... that brings them to life, even when that life expression includes the sublimation of emotion and feeling.³⁵⁸

In this reading, authorship clearly takes on some significance due to the insistence that the lyrics are as close to hers as possible without her writing them, but it is Carpenter's effective *metteurship* that is key. Examining the importance of *metteurs* and *auteurs*, Frith draws on Dave Laing, who borrows the distinction between the two from film criticism in his study of Buddy Holly:

³⁵⁵ Megan Rosenfeld "'Young America at its Very Best'", *Washington Post*, May 6, 1973, retrieved from ProQuest: *American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

³⁵⁶ Tom Smucker, 'Boring and Horrifying Whiteness: The Rise and Fall of Reaganism as Prefigured by the Career Arcs of Carpenters, Lawrence Welk, and the Beach Boys in 1973 – 74', in *Pop When the World Falls Apart: Music in the Shadow of Doubt*, ed. Eric Weisbard (Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 2012), 49.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

³⁵⁸ McKay, 'Skinny blues', 13.

The musical equivalent of the *metteur en scene* is the performer who regards a song as an actor does his part – as something to be expressed His aim is to render the lyric faithfully. The vocal style of the singer is determined almost entirely by the emotional connotations of the words. The approach of the rock *auteur* however, is determined ... by his personal style.³⁵⁹

Frith uses Laing's points to push back against the pervasive idea in rock/pop criticism that the *auteur* is superior to the *metteur*. Vocal interpretation is vital in bringing words to life, with the singer's personal style illuminating them, regardless of authorship. He explains that

the appeal of rock *auteurs* is that their meaning is not organised around their words My conclusion from this is that the song words matter most, as words, when they are not part of an *auteur*-ial unity, when they are still open to interpretation – not just by their singers, but by their listeners too.³⁶⁰

Carpenter can be understood as both *metteur* and *auteur* – although she transmits someone else's words, McKay frames her musical interpretations as authoritative. Yet her performance decisions, especially those related to her use of voice, as demonstrated in section 4.3, have become bound up with knowledge of her biography.

In 1994, Sonic Youth and some of the most prominent alt-rock acts of the 1990s released a tribute album to the Carpenters (*If I Were a Carpenter*). It appears that the album's altered soundscape encouraged a rereading of Carpenter's voice and musical and lyrical content. For example, Roger Catlin reviews the album and in one relatively brief quotation highlights the comparisons between sadness in the songs and perception of Carpenter as sad, the contrast between this and her accomplished vocal craft, and how a change in musical setting reframes the songs' messages:

³⁵⁹ Dave Laing, *Buddy Holly* (London: Studio Vista, 1971), 58-59.

³⁶⁰ Simon Frith, 'Why Do Songs Have Words?' *Contemporary Music Review* 5 (1989) 1: 93.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07494468900640551>.

Unrequited love was an ongoing theme of the Carpenters' music, just as it was, apparently, in the life of Karen [T]his theme, along with the dark despair of other songs, was often overlooked beneath the warmth and technical grace of Carpenter's unmistakable voice. Her best-known songs, as handled on the tribute album by singers with a more raw style, are freer to loose the demons within.³⁶¹

This re-examination is also present in academic discourse: Lott refers to 'Close to You' as 'an apparently dreamy evocation of intimacy that is in fact its opposite'³⁶² – it is the stark contrast between radio-friendly pop and Carpenter's demise that Lott interprets as an Adornian prophecy. The release of *If I Were a Carpenter* appears to have ignited this tendency in journalistic discourse. For example, Bracewell writes in the *Times* that

One also gets from this tribute LP a reminder of just how bleak and melancholy a great many of the Carpenters' songs were 'Goodbye to Love' and 'Rainy Days and Mondays' ... are revealed in all of their darkness and despair: without Karen's pitch and tonal purity, you feel as though these songs come from Leonard Cohen or the Swans.³⁶³

The songs are now reinterpreted through the lens of Carpenter's life story – as with Houston, the Carpenters' output was commonly perceived as inauthentic upon release yet gains the accolade of authenticity following an early death; sad songs become evidence of inner turmoil and upbeat songs become ironic. This extract also points to the ways in which Carpenter's voice and its 'purity' (reaffirming Jarman's observations about grain and the 'pure' voice)³⁶⁴ is said to both conceal and, retrospectively, expose melancholy. In Carpenter's case, the 'disciplining of the grain' is often understood as reflective of her life story.

As stated previously, Holiday is acclaimed as an artist who could take 'inconsequential' songs and imbue them with emotional meaning, 'transforming glib

³⁶¹ Roger Catlin, 'Look Who's Paying Tribute to the Carpenters', *The Columbian*, Sep 18, 1994, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

³⁶² Lott, 'Perfect is Dead', 227.

³⁶³ Bracewell, 'Hip to be square'.

³⁶⁴ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 72.

material into profound artistry',³⁶⁵ and this is crucial to the ascription of authenticity in her case. Writing in 1972, Nat Hentoff describes how 'Holiday ... excelled ... in her ability to make the lyrics of a song ... take on nuances of meaning and feeling that lifted whatever she sang to significance'.³⁶⁶ Indeed, Frith calls her 'the greatest *metteur* Tin Pan Alley pop ever had'.³⁶⁷ From this perspective, in critical reception, it seems that Holiday's compellingly communicative voice comes from her musicality rather than authorship (though she did write some of her songs). In some coverage of Holiday's ability to elevate whatever she sang, her talent for communication is not framed as some subconscious ability, but a skill developed through careful work and good musicianship: '[T]he way Billie Holiday handled a trashy song [was] by finding the love and pain beneath the story'.³⁶⁸ This stands in contrast to discussion of the links between the personal and the musical, which position her perceived vocal authenticity as the result of a difficult life. Noel Mengel explores the issue in more detail:

Even singing a disposable slice of dancefloor jazz ... Holiday imbues it with a depth and character that still speaks to us Holiday is often credited as being the first popular jazz singer to introduce the intense feeling of the blues to a mainstream audience, breaking down the Tin Pan Alley tradition where singers rarely personalised the music.³⁶⁹

Again, musical content is not crucial to how authenticity operates in this case – Holiday's wide range of musical material, from 'dancefloor jazz' to songs she had penned such as 'God Bless the Child' to 'the first great protest song'³⁷⁰ 'Strange Fruit', makes it difficult for a coherent narrative to be formed. Instead, Holiday's authenticity is constructed through the quality of her voice, the feature that runs throughout her back catalogue. However, when the music works to reinforce perceptions of

³⁶⁵ Longley, 'It's still a difficult life'.

³⁶⁶ Nat Hentoff, 'The real Lady Day', *New York Times*, Dec 24, 1972, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* May 13, 2020.

³⁶⁷ Frith, 'Why Do Songs Have Words?' 93. Original emphasis.

³⁶⁸ Roger Ebert, 'A masterpiece of tact', *Hamilton Spectator*, Nov 3, 2000, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

³⁶⁹ Noel Mengel, 'Review of the Week', *Courier Mail Australia*, Apr 18, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

³⁷⁰ Dorian Lynskey, *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs* (London: Faber and Faber, 2012 [2010]).

authenticity, it is seized upon. As John Szwed has pointed out, discussions of her musical output have commonly forged links between it and her private persona, 'as if the events of artists' lives are enough to explain their music'.³⁷¹

This is also the case for Winehouse; critics frequently praise her autobiographical approach to song-writing. Andy Coleman says that

[*Back to Black*] is a healthy balance of old and new, as she employs forefront beats and lyrics to bring her music bang up to date. And she sings from the heart, cataloguing her trials and tribulations in the jungle of love.³⁷²

Coleman's words here are reflective of the highest praise reserved for Winehouse: that she was able to draw on the best of her influences whilst creating a sound that was simultaneously hers, applying the musical features of North American soul to life in North London. The ways in which audiences have perceived her relationship to the artists who inspired her is an important feature in discourse surrounding her voice and the meanings drawn from it. Comparisons to singers that came before her are a prominent theme:

Amy has the voice, the songs and the sass of someone three times her age and, if her lyrics are anything to go by, the life experience to boot. Jazz, hip hop and soul all get a look-in, carried along by a voice that's part Macy Gray, part Billie Holiday, yet every bit her.³⁷³

As can be seen from the quotation above, the disjoint between Winehouse's voice and her image/identity are often taken as a sign of authenticity, rather than the opposite as might be expected. Even accusations that the music itself was unoriginal noted the extra-musical factors that made it novel. Shortly after the release of *Back to Black*, Tim de Lisle writes that '[t]he music verges on the derivative, but Winehouse makes it her

³⁷¹ John Szwed, *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* (New York: Penguin, 2015), 4.

³⁷² Andy Coleman, 'M2 Rock and Pop: Bright future for a new voice', *Birmingham Post*, Oct 17, 2003, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

³⁷³ 'The weekend starts here', editorial, *Daily Express*, Oct 17, 2003, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

own by telling stories that are starkly contemporary'.³⁷⁴ Much of the novelty seems to come from lyrical content, and I argue that Winehouse's position as someone who wrote her own songs, especially ones that appear so confessional, is important here. Keith Negus points out that 'since the 1960s, there has been a valuing of the performer who creates their own material'.³⁷⁵ Davies claims that it is more difficult for artists who don't write their songs to gain credibility because 'a performer's music must be seen as an accurate representation of him or herself'.³⁷⁶ As demonstrated, this is not always the case, however, song-writing is certainly helpful in the ascription of authenticity. Intent is another significant factor in its designation, as Moore has said, '[authenticity] is used to determine the supposed reasons [an artist] has for working, whether her primary felt responsibility is to herself, her art, her public, or her bank balance'.³⁷⁷ Winehouse is portrayed as a figure who wrote and performed because she had to: Neil McCormick has compared her to 'self-destructive stars from Billie Holiday to Pete Doherty ... the kind of artists who sing as if their lives depended upon it'.³⁷⁸

The common references to Winehouse singing like an older woman offer an interesting point for reflection. Winehouse was 23 when *Back to Black* was released, and I suggest that it is perceived communication of experience that causes the frequent surprise at her youth. Elliott's examination of Dawidoff's work on country music is again helpful here. He writes that 'Dawidoff's ... portraits of [Haggard, Jones, and Cash] dwell ... on the aspects of their lives that were hard. As is common with much writing on country music, this is seen to lead directly to the ability to voice experience'.³⁷⁹ Whilst Elliott's work deals largely with ageing artists, age is not a prerequisite for 'lateness', and I suggest applying his concept of 'early lateness', which describes the 'seemingly precocious wisdom found in work by young singer-songwriters'.³⁸⁰ Winehouse's personal life is communicated through her 'autobiographical' lyrics which deal with her volatile love life and addiction issues,

³⁷⁴ Tim de Lisle, 'Blur's genius stays focused', *Mail on Sunday*, Oct 29, 2006, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

³⁷⁵ Keith Negus, 'Authorship and the popular song', *Music and Letters* 92 (November 2011) 4: 610. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41418775>.

³⁷⁶ Davies, 'All Rock and Roll is Homosocial', 305.

³⁷⁷ Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', 211.

³⁷⁸ Neil McCormick, 'Fears grow for Amy Winehouse', *Daily Telegraph*, Aug 25, 2007, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

³⁷⁹ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 37.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

which were also well-documented by the UK tabloids. Combined with her 'husky' vocal timbre – indicative of an older voice – these factors have informed perception of Winehouse as someone who accrued much experience in her short 27 years. This experience is thought to be transmitted in her vocal timbre.

Whereas with artists such as Carpenter and Houston the disjoint between musical content and biography has had to be re-examined in order to ascribe authenticity, Winehouse appeared to lift directly from her own experiences – many of which played out in the public eye – and so the songs are mostly taken as they are. That Winehouse wrote from a completely genuine place based on personal experience is an interpretation that she embraced, telling an interviewer 'I wouldn't write anything unless it was directly personal to me or I'd feel that I wouldn't be able to tell the story right'.³⁸¹ This interview appears in Kapadia's 2015 documentary, and Kapadia reinforces this sentiment in promotional interviews:

Taking cues from Winehouse's startlingly intimate lyrics, he spent 20 months playing detective in the editing suite to create the most comprehensive retelling of her life to date. 'There were things that didn't make sense How did things turn out the way they did? The clues were in the songs. The songs tell you everything'.³⁸²

The use of 'clues' is interesting as it implies that Winehouse's death was a puzzle left to audiences and fans to make sense of and certainly, this method of musical meaning-making is prevalent. Winehouse's song-writing is an important element in that pursuit, but the properties of the voice are frequently mentioned alongside it. Nick Godwyn, for example, says that '[t]he voice could crush you with its emotion'.³⁸³ Musical material and voice work together here to form a coherent narrative.

For example, in an earlier review of *Back to Black* by Victoria Segal, who compares Winehouse favourably to contemporaries such as Katie Melua (who

³⁸¹ Amy Winehouse in *Amy*, directed by Asif Kapadia (Film4, 2015), film.

³⁸² Asif Kapadia interviewed by Tara Brady, 'Amy and the key changes', *Irish Times*, Jun 26, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

³⁸³ Nick Godwyn, 'The real Amy Winehouse by her first manager', *Times*, Jul 30, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Winehouse was, coincidentally, famously disdainful of)³⁸⁴ and Norah Jones:

Winehouse ... actually gave the impression that she understood the raw sexual etymology of the word jazz and wasn't just using it as a tasteful adornment to ensure maximum wine-bar airplay [T]hese are explicit, honest songs made all the more compelling by a voice ... dense and smoky.³⁸⁵

Here, Winehouse is positioned as an exception to the rule in terms of mainstream pop. The implication in Segal's review is that despite generally being categorised amongst mainstream jazz-lite artists, Winehouse had something that made her 'real'. Intent becomes important here again as in Segal's interpretation the jazzy qualities of Winehouse's music were not a cynical ploy to appeal to a certain demographic but came from an honest admiration of and affiliation with the genre. A crucial component in this is the perceived depth of Winehouse's voice, which communicates this 'explicit honesty'.

Whereas Carpenter and Houston have been described as being too perfect in their vocal delivery, forgoing emotion for accuracy, no such descriptions have been applied to Joplin. In fact, Joplin's lacking technical prowess is perhaps part of the 'authentic' appeal. Writing contemporaneously, Hollie West points to the disjoint between her enthusiasm and ability: 'Her version of "Searchin'" was electric. It was also indicative of Miss Joplin's assets and liabilities. She is a phenomenon But she has no musicality'.³⁸⁶ There is some historic disdain for Joplin's reluctance to show any restraint in her performances. Geoffrey Cannon suggests that it reveals an insincerity, that Joplin is playing the role of the lead singer rather than considering what that actually entails or reacting with musical sensitivity to the rest of the players:

the more [she] became the star ... the more she became impossible musically.

The new Big Brother album, *Cheap Thrills*, sounds as if Janis is putting herself

³⁸⁴ Hattie Collins, 'Notes of disdain', *Guardian*, May 22, 2004, accessed Jul 30, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/may/22/popandrock.amywinehouse>.

³⁸⁵ Victoria Segal, 'Amy Winehouse', *Times*, Oct 28, 2006, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

³⁸⁶ Hollie I. West, 'Janis Joplin Sells with Screeches, Sex', *Washington Post*, Oct 22, 1968, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

on, simply because she makes no attempt to relate herself seriously to the band.³⁸⁷

However, other sources suggest that a degree of musical deficiency contributes to perceived authenticity. William Kroman, also writing in 1968, is unimpressed by Joplin but concedes

Part of Janis's [sic] thing at the moment is not to know what she's doing on the theory that if she did she would spoil the emotional experience of performing Janis is an authentic slice of mid-century Americana but ... a major talent she is not.³⁸⁸

This extract alludes to the idea that to be musically proficient might mean to sacrifice the rawer elements of the performances. Other contemporary critics are more generous. Following a 1969 concert in London, Anthony Thorncroft writes that 'she puts so much emotion into her singing that the lyrics become throttled The art may not be very great, but it is genuine'.³⁸⁹ In other words, the value of Joplin's art came not from beauty or remarkability, but from 'realness', embodied in her comparatively clumsy vocal technique.

Indeed, scholars have explored the relationship between musical imperfection and perception of authenticity. Barker and Taylor have discussed how Sid Vicious became 'emblematic of the [Sex Pistols], in spite of his lack of musical competence or input'³⁹⁰ as he appeared to be the member who most embraced the punk ethos in other aspects of his life. Speaking about the punk movement in general, they claim that 'honesty was often signified by brutal simplicity and lack of musical skill'.³⁹¹ This was taken as authentic as it signified that their experiences were similar to those of their audiences and the music was a primal expression of dissatisfaction rather than

³⁸⁷ Geoffrey Cannon, 'Crumbling Rock Cakes', *Guardian*, Dec 17, 1968, retrieved from *ProQuest: Guardian 1821-2003 and Observer 1791-2003* Feb 10, 2020.

³⁸⁸ William Kroman, 'Rock: The 50's Come Back', *New York Times*, Sep 1, 1968, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

³⁸⁹ Anthony Thorncroft, 'Albert Hall: Janis Joplin', *Financial Times*, Apr 22, 1969, retrieved from *Financial Times Historical Archive, 1888-2010* Feb 11, 2020.

³⁹⁰ Barker and Taylor, *Faking It*, 272.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 277.

polished performance, and that anybody could perform punk music.³⁹² The authenticity perceived in the punk movement seems to come down to the idea that these bands reflected the experiences of their audiences and that self-expression was prized over musical competency. As with punk, Joplin's unpolished vocals signify to audiences the prioritisation of real emotion. As mentioned in section 2.4.1, Leach has pointed out that female musicians who might not traditionally be perceived as authentic, in this case 1990s girl band the Spice Girls, have been interpreted as authentic through an alternative framework by not pretending to be especially accomplished. Firstly, Leach discusses the markers of inauthenticity:

Clearly the success of the Spice Girls does not make sense in terms of the normal markers of authenticity. Their detractors criticised them for their lack of musical credibility (can't sing) for their general lack of talent (can't act, can dance a little), and the way they were formed.³⁹³

According to Leach, though, it is their 'ordinariness' that made them appear authentic to fans, particularly young women and girls to whom they held up a mirror: 'The traditionally authentic rock band speaks for their audience (who feel truly understood and that they truly understand). The Spice Girls speak *as* their audience and *with* their audience'.³⁹⁴ Obviously, Joplin meets more of the 'normal markers of authenticity' as a rock musician who arguably did not appear to be manufactured or to have financial gain as a central concern for her music-making. Yet as an 'authentic slice of mid-century Americana', she also fits this 'ordinary' descriptor. For Winehouse and Joplin, their authenticity is crucial to the posthumous rendering of them as vulnerable. This perceived authenticity is worked into narratives that make sense of their deaths in posthumous coverage.

The working of musical material into coherent narratives, significantly informed by vocal timbre, provides further evidence of how the ascription of authenticity operates within these contexts, particularly in the way music seems to be manipulated into biographical relevance.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 284-285.

³⁹³ Leach, 'Vicars of "Wannabe"', 148.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 150. Original emphasis.

4.6 Authenticity as vulnerability

In coverage during their lifetimes, Winehouse and Joplin were framed as both fierce and vulnerable, but in more recent coverage the balance tends to skew in vulnerability's favour and the ascription of vocal authenticity is an important part of this construction. Here is another extract from Petridis' obituary for Winehouse:

The production and songs on *Back to Black* were so unfailingly brilliant that it's tempting to think anyone could have had a hit with them But it was her voice that made it phenomenal. Even if you had known nothing about Winehouse ... you could have guessed something was up just from listening to her sing.³⁹⁵

This excerpt highlights how Winehouse's suffering supposedly made her inimitable and how her voice could alert an audience to her troubles. Petridis expands on these ideas by illustrating the need the industry felt for artists to fill Winehouse's role when she was unable to perform and why this was unsuccessful:

Plenty of female singers were making records with the jazz and retro soul affectations around the same time ... rushing into the void that had been created by the fact that she was unable to play live or complete another record But for the most part, they sounded like people ... doing something they thought would sell. Winehouse's performances ... were so heartfelt they chafed against the knowingness of the arrangements.³⁹⁶

Again, in this narrative, it is Winehouse's perceived vulnerability and thus emotional authenticity that elevates her above her peers. What Petridis' words reflect is an attempt to fill a gap in the market, a futile pursuit as no one else could reach the 'heartfelt' qualities found in Winehouse's performances. It's also possible to detect snobbery about mainstream pop, and the sense that the emotional authenticity found

³⁹⁵ Alexis, Petridis, 'A losing game', *Guardian*, Jul 25, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

in Winehouse's voice makes her an acceptable face of it, once more demonstrating authenticity's importance to commentators and audiences.

Caroline Sullivan illustrates the importance of voice, vulnerability, and biography in *Back to Black's* success:

Winehouse ... sang as if her heart were damaged beyond repair Its appeal transcended language barriers, sending it to No 1 in 18 countries A great imponderable was whether *Back to Black* would have connected so strongly with listeners if Winehouse had not simultaneously been playing out her emotional dramas in public.³⁹⁷

There are two factors at play in this extract. Sullivan is a little vague when she says that 'Winehouse sang as if her heart were damaged' but the mention of language barriers not impeding success implies that non-semantic communication is a space where emotional authenticity is perceived and the idea that emotional damages can be heard in the timbral qualities of the voice presents itself again. The extra-musical also contributes. Whilst the degree to which public fascination with her personal life contributed to her success cannot be measured, a link is made nonetheless. This suggests that the prominence of scandalous stories about Winehouse in the press added a layer to audience consumption of the album, that part of the appeal came from the idea that the music provided a soundtrack for a story playing out in the public eye.

Connected to this is a sense that it was Winehouse's authenticity that *made* her vulnerable. For example, Joanna Biggs writes in 2015 that

From the start, Winehouse had a voice that sounded as if she had already lived through it all, and she then also chose to write about what was happening to her, and we could tell There was an authenticity to the way Winehouse was ... that you hoped wasn't quite as genuinely reckless as it seemed. We couldn't

³⁹⁷ Caroline Sullivan, 'Obituary: Amy Winehouse', *Guardian*, Jul 25, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

tell when she was falling apart for real, but we believed, or just assumed, that it wasn't so bad that it would mean no more songs for us.³⁹⁸

There is a sense of martyrdom, that she put all of herself into her art at the expense of her own wellbeing. An initial reading of this extract might appear to place responsibility for Winehouse's demise with her due to use of the active verb 'chose'. However, I would argue that it actually places most responsibility with the public, who Biggs thinks prized musical productivity above Winehouse's health. After all, Sullivan and Petridis both centre perceived authenticity as the reason public demand for her music was so high. In this narrative, Winehouse becomes a victim of her own success – the popularity of her music leading to the pressure to produce more as well as intense media scrutiny as she dealt with issues of addiction. I argue that this sense of an inherent sadness and victimhood, embodied in the voice, absolves Winehouse of decisions she was largely derided for during her lifetime (it is easy to forget how often she was criticised; at one stage she was condemned by the UN's Head of Drugs and Crimes Office as the 'poster girl for drug abuse').³⁹⁹ It is likely that Winehouse was damaged by the industry, press, and public desire for both art and spectacle, however, for this chapter, it is the function that this narrative serves that is especially relevant – by placing responsibility with others, Winehouse's actions are less threatening.

Joplin is similarly perceived as an artist who performed out of a compulsion to do so, and the sound of her singing voice is taken as evidence of this. This can be detected in journalistic writing from her lifetime. An idea of an innate, irresistible urge to perform is described by Michael Lydon:

Janis – such a strange, unsettled mix of defiance and hesitancy, vulnerability and strength – doesn't wait; every moment she is what she feels The intensity makes her always magical She consumes vast quantities of energy from some well inside herself that she believes is bottomless, and the heat of it warms everyone who meets her. When she sings all that terrible energy is

³⁹⁸ Joanna Biggs, 'Why we're so confused about Amy Winehouse', *Observer*, Jul 5, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

³⁹⁹ 'United Nations attack Amy Winehouse', *NME*, editorial, Nov 19, 2007, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

brutally compressed into the moment. In great shouts ... the energy explodes
.... In every note there are infinite meanings.⁴⁰⁰

Lydon's words take on a supernatural tone here, suggesting that the authenticity perceived in Joplin's performances is such as to be transformational. His description of her willingness to expose her innermost thoughts and feelings to benefit the music and thus her audiences as 'terrible' and 'brutal' further contributes to a narrative in which she was a singer who performed because the urge to perform was too great, in spite of any detriment to herself.

Following her death, 'vulnerable' becomes a dominant descriptor. The sudden change in this narrative is exemplified by Stewart Parker for the *Irish Times*, who is worth quoting at length:

Three times in recent months, death has electrified the rock music factory [Al Wilson, Jimi Hendrix, Joplin] Joplin's is the most pathetic but perhaps the most comprehensible. From the moment she entered the limelight with that raddled face and slept-in hair and the odd irresistible voice screeching desperately towards ecstasy, she took her place alongside [Marilyn] Monroe, Judy Garland, [Édith] Piaf, and Billie Holiday. Moreover, with her tequila and her heroin and her heavy debt to Bessie Smith, she always appeared an anomaly in the rock world, more a figure from the Jazz Age stranded in the wrong generation. Certainly she never really seemed to find a group with which her express train of a voice could be musically reconciled. Even so, it is a voice that won't be easily forgotten. Already it begins to haunt, like the voices and legends of those other ladies. Why does this tormented figure of the female victim keep recurring in the iconography of Western popular culture?⁴⁰¹

Aside from the blatant sexism on display here (why, exactly, is Joplin's death more 'pathetic' than those of Wilson or Hendrix? Why is her lack of traditional beauty as perceived by Parker relevant? Additionally, their gender and nature of their deaths is

⁴⁰⁰ Michael Lydon, 'The Janis Joplin philosophy: Every Moment She Is What She Feels', *New York Times*, Feb 23, 1969, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 11, 2020.

⁴⁰¹ Stewart Parker, 'Spaceman Hendrix', *Irish Times*, Nov 16, 1970, retrieved from *ProQuest: Irish Times 1859 onwards* Feb 12, 2020.

the only thing that connects the very different artists listed – further validating Davies’ claim that female performers’ ‘very femaleness is deemed to give them something in common’),⁴⁰² the narrative that emerges here is interesting. The first part is the idea that she was somehow ‘lost’ – whilst Parker suggests she is musically lost, performing in the wrong era to truly be appreciated, the ‘haunting’ quality of her voice as a ‘tormented female victim’ seems to suggest a more general sense of being adrift. Further, Parker seems to claim that the timbre of her ‘screeching’ voice somehow cemented her amongst the other casualties he mentions, suggesting that the sound of her voice was some sort of foretelling of her fate. The qualities that made her ‘fierce’ (the drinking, the unpolished image, the uninhibited vocals) are now firmly signs of vulnerability and the beginnings of the change in narrative are clear. An editorial in the *Chicago Tribune* reiterates the idea that her intense style of performing made her vulnerable: ‘Her rough, throaty singing and the intensity with which she converted her songs to her personal style quickly attracted attention Her voice became hoarser all the time, and some rock writers feared she would burn herself out’.⁴⁰³ As with Winehouse, we might also connect the emphasis placed on Joplin’s ‘throaty’ singing to the ‘aspects of the voice where the physiology of vocal production is audible’, and thus the importance of the perception of the ‘body in the voice’.⁴⁰⁴

By 1995, discourse surrounding Joplin had developed to the point that her drug abuse and eventual overdose were the product of vulnerability and insecurity. Lisa Sabbage’s profile is particularly interesting:

She was known as the wild woman of rock, a hard-drinking, tough-talking singer Yet there was another side to Janis Joplin, one that longed to conform to the middle-class values of her childhood and dreamt of being the homecoming queen Unfortunately, while Janis gave the impression of being liberated and comfortable with herself, privately her self-esteem was at an all-time low, and she had become addicted to heroin.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² Davies, ‘All Rock and Roll is Homosocial’, 303.

⁴⁰³ ‘Coroner Says Drug Overdose Killed Janis’, editorial, *Chicago Tribune*, Oct 6, 1970, retrieved from ProQuest: *American Historical Newspapers* Feb 12, 2020.

⁴⁰⁴ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 5.

⁴⁰⁵ Lisa Sabbage, ‘Rock’s Mixed Up Heroine’, *Sunday Mail Queensland*, Oct 8, 1995, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK Feb 13, 2020.

Here, there is a clear continuation of the idea that Joplin was insecure and that it was this that made her turn to drugs. The narrative develops further; not only had audiences supposedly misunderstood her intense performances as the embodiment of her hedonistic lifestyle, but Joplin had actually wanted to ‘conform to middle-class values’, presumably a veiled reference to wanting to follow a more traditional path for women, rather than the Dionysian option she chose. Again, this softens the edges of Joplin’s personality and choices – in this narrative, her ‘hard-drinking, tough-talking’ demeanour was not dangerous, but a cover for crippling insecurity. In many of these accounts, her ‘raw’ vocals are taken to be indicative of this.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how the sonic qualities of the voice have become central to discourse surrounding these figures, contributing to a narrative in which agency is diminished and they can be redeemed from perceived misdeeds. This reading shows notable consistency across publication type and time, with publications from across the political spectrum and timelines set out containing the implication that a troubled woman’s life can be heard in the sound of her voice.

Vocal grain and the attention it draws to the body encourage association with the personal and thus the authentic. For both Joplin and Winehouse’s ‘raw’ or ‘gutsy’ vocal timbres and the degradation of Houston and Holiday’s voices, the data suggests that where audiences perceive ‘the body in the voice as it sings’, they perceive expression of the self. This is in line with Elliott’s examination of the ‘rasps and rattles’ of late pop voices.⁴⁰⁶ Conversely, as Jarman has illustrated, the ‘disciplining of the grain’⁴⁰⁷ at play in the Carpenters’ music can be reread through an ironic lens. In retrospective examinations of Carpenter’s voice, restraint and glossiness seem to be at odds with her psyche, but commentators suggest that upon further inspection and through an ironic lens, this in fact can be said to reflect her biography.

Examinations of timbre have also exposed how commentators have linked voice to biography in these cases. A sense of passivity can be interpreted in discourse surrounding Carpenter through journalistic accounts of her ‘sweet’, mellow’ voice. Additionally, since these qualities are often framed as inherent in the sound, they are

⁴⁰⁶ Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 45.

⁴⁰⁷ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 72.

less frequently cited as expressive musical decisions, and this contributes to an understanding of passivity. Passivity makes sense in the context of her music and image and so is an easy interpretation for audiences to assign – and the mellow and melancholic qualities of her voice appear to help audiences make sense of what happened to her. For Houston and Holiday, who lived for longer than the other three case studies, evidence of vocal authenticity is partly heard through the disintegration of the voice. In the discourse, the deterioration of their voices serves as aural evidence of their personal troubles and is ultimately therefore interpreted as poignant or sad. Interpretations around Joplin and Winehouse seem to require more narrative manipulation: Joplin's 'chaotic' vocals become not the disinhibition of a 'raucous blues mama', but the primal scream of a wounded soul, whereas for Winehouse, vulnerable qualities heard in her music take on a more prominent posthumous role than the 'sassier' aspects of her songs.

Similarly, musical material can be worked into narratives of authenticity regardless of its actual content. The sheer variety of material in Holiday's back catalogue makes it hard to form a coherent narrative based on musical content alone, and so it is moulded through the sound of her voice. On one hand, she is credited with elevating Tin Pan Alley 'dancefloor jazz' to great emotional heights through her timbre and phrasing. On the other, despite the significant political and social impact of 'Strange Fruit' and her skilful and sensitive interpretation, commentators cannot seem to help but conflate it with her biography. Music is manipulated to make sense of the biographies of each artist; Joplin and Winehouse were largely perceived to be authentic artists during their lifetimes, and this takes on new significance in posthumous writing, whereas for Carpenter and Houston, authenticity is ascribed posthumously with the help of biographical knowledge. For Joplin and Winehouse, an interesting interpretation that emerges is one where their perceived vocal authenticity actually served to expose their insecurities and made them susceptible to the vices which ultimately led to their downfalls.

Importantly, the thread running throughout this chapter is that the emotionally effective qualities of each of these cases' voices is taken as evidence of vulnerability or sadness. As reiterated throughout, this rationalises the self-destructive actions of the artists as it removes culpability. This thesis does not aim to measure any degree of blame or make any moral judgements about these figures. What is important about

these narratives is what they reveal about attitudes towards 'unruly' women. Through manipulation of interpretations of the sonic qualities of the voice, these perceived troubling behaviours are explained and rationalised through reference to victimhood and mental ill health. These constructions involve identifying an inherent sadness or vulnerability in the artists' voices. In turn, this helps to provide mitigating circumstances for the self-destructive actions taken by these women by diminishing their autonomy. The lack of agency thus granted to these women neutralises the peril of a transgressive femininity – a 'deviant' woman poses less of a threat if her actions are not deemed to be entirely her choice.

5. Cultural authenticity: Narratives of transgression and redemption

5.1 Introduction

A theme that has recurred throughout the time I have spent with these documents is that of cultural authenticity – broadly, ‘music that reflects a cultural tradition’⁴⁰⁸ – and the predominant subthemes arising within this are crossover and cultural appropriation. This chapter examines how perceptions of cultural (in)authenticity in these cases run along narratives of transgression and redemption and the broader implications of this. Specifically, the artists are posthumously redeemed from the perceived transgressions of crossing over (understood often in this case as ‘selling out’) and cultural appropriation in public discourse. In this context, crossover music is that which can enter the charts in more than one category. A crossover artist is someone who begins their career working in one genre of music and ‘crosses over’ into another, frequently taking on musical features that fit within a broad category of mainstream pop. ‘Crossover’ is a loaded term that often has racial implications; firstly, because the ‘mainstream’ is based on the tastes of dominant social groups and so entry to it often comes at the expense of adapting or diluting the musical features of a genre and secondly, because it relies on drawing distinctions between genres and demographics. Roy Shuker describes its history as follows: ‘The term is usually associated with black music achieving more mainstream chart success [It] is predicated on the existence of discrete boundaries, and a hierarchy of racially distinct genres and audiences’.⁴⁰⁹ Cultural appropriation, by contrast, is the ‘borrowing’ or ‘stealing’ of musical features developed and primarily performed by minority groups for the performances and financial gain of majority groups. Here, these themes operate within broader ideas of authenticity and forgiveness that surround the five case studies: narratives around cultural authenticity shift posthumously and there is a posthumous pardoning of perceived cultural inauthenticity which serves the redemptive impulse.

With reference to the previous chapter, ideas concerning the conflation of voice and biography fall into Barker and Taylor’s classification of ‘personal authenticity’. Yet, as can be seen in the work of Eidsheim and Middleton, the qualities

⁴⁰⁸ Barker and Taylor, *Faking It*, x.

⁴⁰⁹ Roy Shuker, *Popular Music Culture: The Key Concepts*, third edition (London: Routledge, 2012), 80.

of the voice also relate to identity traits such as gender and race, and therefore also fall into Barker and Taylor's categorisation of 'cultural authenticity'. Eidsheim has illustrated the falsity of equating race and timbre as this conflation is based on cultural assumptions rather than the actual materiality of the voice. As she says,

Both sound and person are complex events reduced to ... a placeholder that nonetheless is taken to stand in for the unnameable event [W]ith the limited parameter of sound selected as the aspect that defines it, complex phenomena such as human voices are further defined by socially, culturally, and economically driven categories such as race, class, and gender [T]he West's long history of entwining voice and vocal timbre with subjectivity and interiority has contributed to such truth claims remaining stagnant.⁴¹⁰

Again, however, Eidsheim's important and convincing arguments are at odds with the documents that I have collected, as audiences and commentators do seem to find meaning in these assumptions. Her work is a necessary corrective to the essentialism emerging from the data, but this essentialism nevertheless persists, and it is worth exploring what ends it serves. By considering how essentialised meanings are assigned to the voices of the case studies, I further explore the narratives constructed around them and their wider implications. Eidsheim draws on Peter Denes and Elliot Pinson's 'speech chain' to illustrate how the act of speaking is 'incomplete without the listener', who 'brings forth a series of assumptions about the nature of the voice'.⁴¹¹ In the data collected, these assumptions work along (real or imagined) divisions between genres, audiences, and demographics. I follow David Brackett in my explorations of dubious boundaries between genres, performers, and consumers; these categories lead to problematic stereotyping and the tendency to treat audiences as homogeneous groups, but they develop over time through specific social and historical factors. In Brackett's terms, assumptions about consumers of specific musics arise 'as a relational construct formed out of a history of black-white interactions and from the centrality of

⁴¹⁰ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 5.

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

Peter B. Denes and Elliot N. Pinson, *The Speech Chain: The Physics and Biology of Spoken Language* (New York, NY: W. H. Freeman, 1993).

race to US public discourse'.⁴¹² As with ideas about voice and biography in the previous chapter, genre categories and the division of audiences into simplified, broad demographics are imprecise and do not hold up to scrutiny, but they are nonetheless present and operating in the data I have collected, and significant to the posthumous reputations of the case studies.

Beyond vocal timbre, there are wider discussions of cultural (in)authenticity surrounding these cases. This chapter will explore primarily Houston's crossover success and accusations of cultural appropriation directed at Joplin and Winehouse and how these narratives are reframed posthumously. Whilst there is an abundance of research into both crossover and cultural appropriation, there is a lack of work concerning how these concepts work once the artist has died. I have identified two dominant types of narrative in these case studies, and the first two sections of the chapter address them in turn. The first section will approach ideas of crossover music. Often, when an artist crosses over into the mainstream, their original fanbase chastises them for 'selling out', a phenomenon described by Hesmondhalgh as the abandonment of 'previously held political and aesthetic commitments for financial gain'.⁴¹³ For Houston, her enormous mainstream success led to such accusations, particularly within the context of her gospel vocal training. Yet this narrative has been significantly reframed in posthumous coverage in ways that illustrate the radicality of Houston's popularity and have the effect of absolving her from accusations of any cultural betrayal. Joplin and Winehouse were both accused of culturally appropriating African American musics, and so the second section deals with the transgression of and redemption from charges of cultural appropriation and demonstrates the distinct reduction of discourse concerning musical pillaging once Joplin and Winehouse had died.

Holiday and Carpenter will appear in section 5.4, as notions of cultural authenticity have also emerged in their datasets, though to a lesser extent. I draw on literature from Davis, Griffin, Lordi, and Eidsheim to illustrate how many of the narratives formed around Holiday are grounded in harmful stereotypes about African American women and how a mythological 'authenticity' has had detrimental effects on

⁴¹² David Brackett, 'Black or White? Michael Jackson and the Idea of Crossover', *Popular Music and Society* 35 (2012) 2: 170-171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2011.616301>.

⁴¹³ David Hesmondhalgh, 'Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre', *Cultural Studies* 13 (1999) 1: 36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/095023899335365>.

how she is understood.⁴¹⁴ Additionally, I discuss the association between Carpenter and middle-class white identities and examine Karen Tongson's 2019 book about why the singer is so popular in the Philippines, where Tongson was born.⁴¹⁵ Ideas about cultural authenticity surrounding Holiday and Carpenter do not follow the same narratives of transgression and redemption but they demonstrate the posthumous malleability of cultural (in)authenticity and further illustrate how the narratives surrounding the women in this thesis are shaped into ones that reflect dominant social expectations concerning womanhood, especially in Holiday's case through the presentation of her in line with dominant stereotypes about Black jazz musicians.

The two types of narrative reframing around 'selling out' and cultural appropriation serve the same overall purpose – they both seek to redeem the singers from any transgression. Cultural transgressions such as 'selling out' or appropriating the music of minority groups are almost unanimously manipulated into narratives that absolve the artist of any fault.

5.2 Crossing over

5.2.1 Definition of terms

This section requires further exploration of the definitions of 'mainstream' and 'crossover'. I will begin with the former, as the latter is usually defined in reference to it. Indeed, 'mainstream' conjures up problematic assumptions without thorough interrogation: who or what constitutes the 'mainstream', and why?

Jason Toynbee has explored the term's meanings and implications. For him, mainstream is as much process as category, based on hegemony, desire for a 'stylistic middle ground', and economics.⁴¹⁶ He defines his position against those of Sarah Thornton, who argues that it is 'an inadequate concept for the sociology of culture' used to deflect 'issues related to the definition and representation of empirical social groups',⁴¹⁷ and Dick Hebdige, for whom formulations of the mainstream serve as an ill-

⁴¹⁴ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*.
Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*.
Lordi, *Black Resonance*.

Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 151-175.

⁴¹⁵ Karen Tongson, *Why Karen Carpenter Matters* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2019).

⁴¹⁶ Jason Toynbee, 'Mainstreaming, from hegemonic centre to global networks', in *Popular Music Studies*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (London: Arnold, 2002), 149-150.

⁴¹⁷ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 177-178.

defined concept against which to position 'subculture'.⁴¹⁸ In Thornton's words, 'Hebdige's multiple opposition of avant-garde-versus-bourgeois, subordinate-versus-dominant, subculture-versus-mainstream is an orderly ideal which crumbles when applied to historically specific groups of youth'.⁴¹⁹ Yet for Toynbee, the mainstream does constitute a genre, albeit one that involves 'parallel multiple networks' made up of various 'glocal scenes and regional blocs'. These scenes and their spread and popularity reflect 'the desire to affiliate, to produce large congregations which span social and geographical space'.⁴²⁰ Mainstream, then, may be understood as popular music stylistically broad enough to appeal to a large demographic, thus generating high sales and radio play. Most pertinently for the purposes of this chapter, Toynbee highlights the hegemonic function of the mainstream. Drawing on Antonio Gramsci, he points out that 'leading social groups attempt to make their world view legitimate across the divided terrain of capitalist society. Crucially, such a hegemonic project depends on negotiation and alliance with subordinate groups rather than simple dominion'.⁴²¹ Thus, control of the mainstream is in the hands of dominant groups, and entry to it is based on their standards and approval. Naturally, this means that ideas of mainstream are socially constructed and subject to overarching power structures, including those surrounding racial categories.

When the mainstream is viewed through the lens of racial hegemony in this way, it is possible to see how loaded the implications of crossing over – here, taken as the act of starting out working in one genre and adapting music for the tastes of mainstream audiences – are. According to Brackett, crossing over into the mainstream involves a degree of compromise. Through close analysis of George Clinton's 'Atomic Dog' (1982) and Michael Jackson's 'Billie Jean' (1983) and the latter's comparatively greater mainstream success – as well as a broader look at the charts from the early 1980s to avoid 'overly facile interpretation and racial stereotyping' – Brackett illustrates how

⁴¹⁸ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979).

⁴¹⁹ Thornton, *Club Cultures*, 146-147.

⁴²⁰ Toynbee, 'Mainstreaming', 159-160.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 150.

Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1971).

Understanding the makeup of the mainstream at this time ... does highlight some important distinctions about which factors were involved in the ability of certain R&B songs to cross over. Songs that were too funky ... or had too much gospel influence had limited mainstream success. The role of race in the construction of the mainstream is revealed by the appearance of funky dance numbers by white artists, such as 'Let's Dance' by David Bowie, in the 'Hot 100' immediately upon their release.⁴²²

Crossover, then, allows for 'non-mainstream' features but these stylings are often most successful when they are alluded to rather than fully integrated. For example, Brackett's observations suggest that songs that use funk rhythms within an otherwise 'mainstream' framework ('Billie Jean') are more successful in the mainstream than songs that work entirely within a funk idiom ('Atomic Dog'). Similarly, these features are more likely to be successful when delivered by a white artist ('Let's Dance'). As Matthew Morrison has observed, even in recent years white performers have often gained more success than their Black counterparts in predominantly Black-developed genres.⁴²³ These sources illustrate the mainstream's hegemonic power.

To take the 'mainstream' as the hegemonic domain of dominant social groups and 'crossover' as a process whereby artists must adapt their sound to obtain entry to it is to demonstrate the complex and highly sensitive nature of the matter, and thus to understand why the discourse operates in such complicated and contradictory ways. This chapter also illustrates how these notions can operate posthumously – ideas surrounding crossing over are not fixed and are often subject to social and biographical factors. In Houston's case, I have identified two dominant posthumous readings, which I call the sacrificial reading and the Svengali reading, the latter after George du Maurier's menacing hypnotist, a character whose name has become shorthand for manipulative producers in popular music journalism.⁴²⁴

It is important to reiterate here how difficult it can be for Black women specifically to be awarded the accolade of authenticity in masculinist understandings

⁴²² David Brackett, '(In search of) musical meaning: genres, categories and crossover', in *Popular Music Studies*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus (London: Arnold, 2002), 77.

⁴²³ Matthew D. Morrison, 'Iggy (Azalea) pop: Is cultural appropriation inappropriate?' *Oxford University Press Blog*, Feb 26, 2015, accessed Nov 4, 2020. <https://blog.oup.com/2015/02/iggy-azalea-music-cultural-appropriation/>.

⁴²⁴ George du Maurier, *Trilby* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 [1894]).

of the term – whilst there is a problematic interpretation of Black female singing as natural, which could suggest an authenticity, it can also lead to perception of singing as less skilled than composition, production, or playing an instrument (see section 2.4.2). Jaap Kooijman draws on Houston and fellow Black artists Diana Ross and Beyoncé to demonstrate how ‘as commodified superstars in the realm of pop music, their “authenticity” has been doubly questioned, in relation to the predominantly white rock aesthetic as well as music genres such as soul, R&B, and hip-hop that are connoted as “black”’.⁴²⁵ Marla Shelton makes the similar remark that Houston’s ‘performance style provokes skepticism about her race and authenticity because she does not resemble typical R&B singers, nor does she resemble the typical white popular singer’.⁴²⁶ Indeed, in his book *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, which sets out to examine the position of Black music in the US from 1900 until the late 1980s, Nelson George has described her music as containing ‘a hollowness of spirit that mocks her own gospel roots’.⁴²⁷ Houston’s position as a successful crossover artist has been central to her musical persona across her career, but is framed in significantly different ways posthumously, as will be explored now.

5.2.2 Stylistic considerations

The timing of the cultural moment that Brackett examines coincides with Houston’s rise to fame. Much has been made throughout Houston’s career of her crossover appeal, framed in turn as revolutionary and problematic. Regarding the latter, Houston’s popularity and mainstream musical stylings meant that she was sometimes ‘accused of sacrificing her soul roots for her amazing success in pop’.⁴²⁸ Her debut album (*Whitney Houston*, 1985), according to Petridis’ obituary, ‘had already attracted criticism for its mainstream sound at a time when hip hop was emerging as the gritty dominant force in black music’.⁴²⁹ Oliver Marre, however, dates the start of the backlash to the release of her second album in 1987:

⁴²⁵ Jaap Kooijman, ‘The true voice of Whitney Houston: Commodification, authenticity, and African American superstardom’, *Celebrity Studies* 5 (2014) 3: 306. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2014.911110>.

⁴²⁶ Marla Shelton, ‘Whitney Houston is Every Woman? Cultural Politics and the Pop Star’, *Camera Obscura* 12 (1995) 3: 151. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-12-3> 36-134.

⁴²⁷ Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988), 9.

⁴²⁸ ‘Houston’s new album has her old soul’, editorial, *Telegraph Herald Dubuque*, Dec 20, 1998, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Nov 18, 2019.

⁴²⁹ Petridis, ‘Whitney Houston’.

[Whitney] was another commercial success ... although critics pointed out that musically it was unadventurous Houston, who had been trumpeted as a great 'cross-over artist' ... found herself facing criticism for becoming 'too white.' At the 1989 Soul Train Music Awards ... she was jeered.⁴³⁰

Marre makes particular reference to Houston's 'technically brilliant' voice but compares her unfavourably with Aretha Franklin, who he sees as more 'soulful'. In this framing appears the notion that Houston had 'sold out', that she had diluted the gospel aspects in her music in order to better appeal to a broader demographic. Mike Alleyne, in his study of reggae crossover, provides an excellent example of how artists who cross into the mainstream have had to compromise their creative freedoms:

[O]n receiving [Bob Marley's 1973 album *Catch a Fire*] in London, [head of Island Records Chris] Blackwell felt that ... the appeal to the Western audience ought to be accentuated. Accordingly, he created a treble-oriented mix of the song elements and diminished the presence of the bass, while also accelerating the speed In effect, what was represented as reggae was a Western commodified reformulation of the textual format.⁴³¹

In the process of moving from a specialised genre into mainstream pop, certain features are altered or minimised to broaden musical appeal. This is frequently unpopular with audiences of the original genres: as Hilary de Vries wrote in 1992, 'Houston's transformation ... [fuelled] the impression, particularly within the black community, that she was a bland crossover artist'.⁴³² The 'watering down' of musical features is a key criticism of crossover, especially when the artist starts out working in a genre developed and primarily practised by minority groups and then seeks mainstream success. The documents suggest that some audiences saw the move away

⁴³⁰ Oliver Marre, 'Return of the troubled diva', *Observer*, Sep 20, 2009, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

⁴³¹ Mike Alleyne, "'Babylon Makes the Rules': The Politics of Reggae Crossover", *Social and Economic Studies* 47 (1998) 1: 67. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27866166>.

⁴³² Hilary de Vries, 'Whitney's New Roles', *St Petersburg Times*, Nov 24, 1992, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.

from her gospel background and the release of more 'mainstream' music at least in part as cultural transgression.

5.2.3 Personal considerations

During Houston's lifetime, the press made much of her perceived inauthenticity, personal as well as musical, though the two overlap. Often these remarks took on a mocking tone. A *Guardian* article from 1992, for instance, calls her a '(not very) black Barbie doll' and includes the following:

What do unkind critics say about her? That her recent marriage to ... Bobby Brown ... was (a) to gain credibility with the black audience who have spurned her ... (b) kill persistent rumours that she is a lesbian and (c) to father the baby she is now expecting.⁴³³

Rumours that she married Brown to regain some 'credibility' were common. Writing in 2002, Simpson claims that

the US black community itself was beginning to resent ... what they saw as her 'betrayal'. Hence her humiliation at the 1989 Soul Train Music Awards Perhaps it's just a coincidence that she ended up marrying the very next act up – rapper Bobby Brown – who had a reception as rapturous as hers had been the opposite. Bobby ... seemed an unlikely match for Whitney. But perhaps that was the point.⁴³⁴

Both of these documents involve an element of scandal of the 'sham marriage' variety, and ultimately Houston's mainstream appeal and accusations of musical insincerity seem to have added to speculation concerning her personal life. In other words, during her lifetime, perception of Houston's inauthenticity involved overlapping musical, cultural, and personal factors. Her perceived musical inauthenticity was based on the mainstream music she is associated with, which led to accusations of cultural

⁴³³ 'Pass Notes, no 53, Whitney Houston', editorial, *Guardian*, Dec 23, 1992, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.

⁴³⁴ Simpson, 'Whitney had it all'.

inauthenticity, followed by accusations that facets of her personal life were an engineered attempt for her to gain credibility. This stands in stark contrast to both the revolutionary and sacrificial frames common now.

5.2.4 'The Star-Spangled Banner' and the Svengali reading

Posthumous coverage of Houston's 1991 Super Bowl performance of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' illustrates how her mainstream appeal can be framed as both radical and questionable. Writing in the *Atlantic*, Brandon Tensley describes its cultural significance, pointing out the high viewing figures for the Super Bowl and the way the War on Drugs was disproportionately damaging Black communities. At this cultural moment, '[t]hat it was a black woman ... who sang the national anthem was no small thing'.⁴³⁵ In Tensley's account, Houston's performance at the Super Bowl was a significant step forward for Black female representation in the mainstream due to the exposure that the event provided. That this came at a time of high political tension also adds to the radical nature of Houston's popularity (a full account of the injustices of the War on Drugs can be found in the work of Michelle Alexander).⁴³⁶ Yet Rose frames the performance's impact rather differently, referring to the often ambivalent views on the anthem in US Black communities, particularly in its dubious third verse. He claims that '[t]he song has prompted black protests from the Black Power salutes of the 1968 Olympics to Colin Kaepernick in 2016, but Houston gave it her unironic all, backed by brass, flags and fighter jets'.⁴³⁷

These two documents, both from 2018, provide contrasting interpretations of this event. In the first, her performance served as a unifying force crossing racial and socio-economic boundaries in a country divided and struggling. In the other, there is an implication that Houston's performance was naïve at best. By situating Houston's rendition of the anthem against the protests of athletes such as John Carlos, Tommy Smith, and Kaepernick, Rose draws a line between resistance and conformity. He makes none of the claims to poignancy and progress that Tensley does, and the 'unironic all, backed by brass, flags and fighter jets' positions her performance as

⁴³⁵ Brandon Tensley, 'Whitney Houston and the Persistent Perils of the Mainstream', *Atlantic*, Jul 29, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁴³⁶ Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*.

⁴³⁷ Steve Rose, "'Not black enough": the identity crisis that haunted Whitney Houston', *Guardian*, Jul 7, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

either unknowing or lacking in solidarity. Interpretation of this event depends on the framing of the power of the mainstream: it could be said that an increase in representation of minority groups is progressive, yet it could also be claimed that adjusting music and image to appeal to mainstream audiences is ‘pandering’, that mainstream popularity is predicated on conforming to the expectations of majority groups and thus crossing over is problematic. However, in these narratives, Houston is relieved of any influence in these situations through reference to controlling powers; later in Rose’s article, there is a redemptive factor whereby Houston’s perceived lack of vocal and cultural authenticity are the work of others, which adheres to the Svengali reading, wherein ‘Clive Davis consciously moulded her into a white-friendly pop princess’.⁴³⁸

For the most part, posthumous coverage of Houston’s crossover success is sympathetic. Rose has discussed the particular pressures concerning authenticity on Black artists:

[W]here a white artist can ‘sell out’ their fanbase at worst, it has always been different for black ones. As Ta-Nehisi Coates recently put it in *The Atlantic*, ‘the gift of black music, of black art, is unlike any other in America, because it is not simply a matter of singular talent, or even of tradition, or lineage, but something more grand and monstrous’. His point was that African-American musicians are expected to represent more than simply themselves; they must represent their culture and their history.⁴³⁹

His claims here suggest that there is greater pressure on Black artists in terms of cultural authenticity due to the power structures that continue to influence the music industry. The history of white domination, abuse, and privilege in the western world means that predominantly Black-developed genres of music are imbued with sensitive historical context (see section 5.3.1). Rose references Coates, who illustrates how this music was born of subjugation, and so

⁴³⁸ Rose, “‘Not black enough’”.

⁴³⁹ Rose, “‘Not black enough’”.

Ta-Nehisi Coates, ‘I’m Not Black, I’m Kanye’, *Atlantic*, May 7, 2018, accessed Nov 9, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/05/im-not-black-im-kanye/559763/>.

When [Michael] Jackson sang and danced, when [Kanye] West samples or rhymes, they are tapping into a power formed under all the killing, all the beatings, all the rape and plunder that made America. The gift can never wholly belong to a singular artist, free of expectation and scrutiny, because the gift is no more solely theirs than the suffering that produced it.⁴⁴⁰

With particular regard to Houston, her crossover appeal was at least partially rooted in the marketing forces of producers. Arista Records CEO Clive Davis provides an effective personification of this in the discourse; his alleged claim that she looked ‘too ethnic’ on her debut album cover does little to present him in a good light,⁴⁴¹ which helps commentators to construct a reading in which he is positioned as a villain. Tensley also examines the controlling forces surrounding Houston’s career. Crucially, he observes that

While Arista’s efforts to make Houston less ‘black-sounding’ were commercially successful, they took a psychological and professional toll on the singer In both [*Whitney: Can I Be Me* and *Whitney*], Houston’s friends and colleagues proffer that they don’t think that she ever fully recovered from that humiliating denunciation.⁴⁴²

Here, there are two distinct frames of redemption operating. Both can be identified in the description of Arista’s control over her career: first, there is the implication that they deliberately manipulated Houston’s music and image to better appeal to mainstream audiences and thus maximise financial success, and second, that they did so at the expense of her wellbeing. Tensley uses emotive language to reinforce his point: ‘record moguls groomed Houston for public consumption to devastating effect’.⁴⁴³ This is echoed in other data extracts from 2018, such as in articles from Jacob Bernstein – ‘[w]hen she was signed by Mr. Davis in 1983, she was marketed with maximum crossover in mind and then became devastated when her middle-of-the-

⁴⁴⁰ Coates, ‘I’m Not Black, I’m Kanye’.

⁴⁴¹ Rupert Howe, ‘Appetite for Destruction’, *Q Magazine*, Aug 6, 2003, accessed Nov 9, 2020, http://www.classicwhitney.com/interview/q_september2003.htm.

⁴⁴² Tensley, ‘Whitney Houston’.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

road image led to a backlash from black audiences'⁴⁴⁴ – and Wesley Morris, who describes the 'wholesome, whiter image ... Davis wanted for Houston'.⁴⁴⁵ Tensley's arguments are certainly convincing, however, his article continues in the same vein of the majority of the documents I have collected by making sense of both Houston's perceived cultural transgressions and her drug-induced demise by placing responsibility for both with others.

5.2.5 The sacrificial reading

In a similar way to how criticism of Houston immediately after the announcement of her death 'electrified a defensive mourning public',⁴⁴⁶ the release of the 2017 and 2018 documentaries appears to have ignited public sympathy. Paul Whittington, for example, has directed criticism toward the Reverend Al Sharpton, an early critic of Houston's: 'To add to her travails, Whitney was turned on by her own community, who childishly considered her a turncoat: she was loudly booed at the 1989 Soul Train Music Awards, and [Sharpton] cruelly dubbed her "Whitey Houston."'⁴⁴⁷ Whittington's claim here, that consideration of her as a turncoat was 'childish', is unfair as he does not appear to have considered why Black audiences may have felt uneasy about the whitewashing of Houston's music and image. However, Broomfield's documentary frames the 'sell-out' criticism as a core contributor to her unhappiness. This lends itself further to a victimhood narrative: not only was Houston's crossover success revolutionary, not only was any 'cultural betrayal' the work of others, but the personal unhappiness that came from the backlash helps to make sense of her tragic death.

Adding weight to this reading is that in posthumous coverage Houston is often framed as having made a great sacrifice in forgoing her gospel roots to pave the way for Black artists (especially women and, in later coverage, queer women)⁴⁴⁸ in the mainstream. This is the sacrificial reading. One obituary states that '[f]ollowing Houston's breakthrough, doors were opened for other African-American female artists

⁴⁴⁴ Jacob Bernstein, 'New Whitney Houston Doc Features a Family Chorus', *New York Times*, May 18, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁴⁴⁵ Wesley Morris, "'Whitney," a Pop Music Tragedy, is Sad, Strange and Dismaying', *New York Times*, Jul 5, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁴⁴⁶ Miller, 'Social Sorrow', 92.

⁴⁴⁷ Paul Whittington, 'One tragic moment in time', *Irish Independent*, Jul 6, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁴⁴⁸ Tensley, 'Whitney Houston'.

such as Janet Jackson and Anita Baker to find notable success in popular music and on MTV'.⁴⁴⁹ It situates this within a broader cultural struggle:

During the 1980s, MTV was coming into its own and received harsh criticism for not playing enough videos by black artists. With Michael Jackson breaking down the color barrier for black male artists, Houston did the same for black female artists. She became one of the few black female artists to receive heavy rotation on the network.⁴⁵⁰

Here, Houston's crossover appeal is framed not as an inauthentic 'selling out' but as an important step forward. As Rose explains, '[t]oday's black artists operate with the freedom Houston dreamed of However that freedom is used ... Houston is undoubtedly one of those who helped earn it, and she undoubtedly paid the price for it'.⁴⁵¹ In these formulations, Houston's success was an initial step towards greater inclusion of minority groups in mainstream representation, and criticisms of it need to be understood in this wider context. Rose's claim here that Houston 'paid the price' is reflective of the overall sacrificial theme: that Houston's difficult position as a Black crossover artist in the 1980s and her success paved the way for greater mainstream representation today at the expense of her own happiness. This sacrificial frame is ultimately a redemptive one in which she contributed heavily to the improved position for artists now, and the forfeits she had to make help audiences make sense of her fate.

Re-examination of the speculation concerning her sexuality throughout her career also makes its way into these narratives. For example, Phillip Henry writes about the cultural importance of Houston's status as a queer icon in *Billboard*:

It's becoming easier to find relatable songs that explore queer experiences, but it wasn't always so simple. In the past, non-gender-specific anthems were the best bet 'I Wanna Dance with Somebody' is a queer anthem Gay icons are so often women who have struggled and experienced mistreatment in a society

⁴⁴⁹ 'Drugs and ego finally ends the life of Whitney Houston', editorial, *Weekly Blitz*, Feb 13, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ Rose, "'Not black enough'".

dominated by men They resonate with us because we recognize that pain
They give us hope.⁴⁵²

Rumours concerning Houston's relationships with women were always fiercely denied by her, her family, and her record label, but the rumours were persistent and it has been described as 'one of the worst kept secrets in Hollywood'.⁴⁵³ As examined in the previous chapter, gay icons are not necessarily gay themselves, but Houston certainly fits the bill as a woman who has 'struggled and experienced mistreatment in a society dominated by men'. The artist LaJohn Joseph claims in the *Independent* that it is 'trouble plus talent' that makes Houston and Garland gay icons, much in the same vein as Koestenbaum's observations about Maria Callas' connections to 'themes that have shadowed gay culture: premature mortality, evanescence, solitude'.⁴⁵⁴ Joseph does stray into the kind of mythologising criticised in Chapter Four, but they point out how 'the tragedy that emanates from those recordings which survive Whitney and Judy is palpable In the face of scheming families, homophobic infrastructures, drugs and tabloid scandal mongering, the signature songs of Garland and Houston sound ever more bittersweet'.⁴⁵⁵ Indeed, Dyer has written about '[g]ay writing [that] returns repeatedly to [Garland's] emotional quality as in some way representing the situation and experience of being gay in a homophobic society'.⁴⁵⁶ Houston is likewise considered a gay icon, and her own sexuality has become a factor in the overall redemptive trajectory, as explored in more detail in section 6.3.

I mention Houston's sexuality in this chapter because it works alongside her position as a Black woman in the music industry, particularly one working in mainstream chart music. Crenshaw's work on intersectionality was instrumental in highlighting how identity traits such as gender and race intersect and thus affect an individual's experiences and treatment by others. Whilst the focus of Crenshaw's work

⁴⁵² Phillip Henry, '6 Reasons Whitney Houston Is an Inspiration and Icon to the LGBTQ Community', *Billboard*, Jul 11, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁴⁵³ Tiffany Wallis, 'Whitney Houston's secret lesbian lover watched in horror as she wed Bobby Brown', *Mirror*, Nov 11, 2019, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

⁴⁵⁴ Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat*, 134.

⁴⁵⁵ LaJohn Joseph, 'For Whitney Houston (and Judy Garland before her), it's trouble plus talent that makes a gay icon', *Independent*, Feb 11, 2013, accessed Feb 18, 2022.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/whitney-houston-and-judy-garland-her-it-s-trouble-plus-talent-makes-gay-icon-8488763.html>.

⁴⁵⁶ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, 149.

is the intersection of gender and race, she states that ‘factors I address only in part or not at all, such as class and sexuality, are often as critical in shaping the experiences of women of color’.⁴⁵⁷ Thus, an examination of cultural authenticity and audience reception in this case would be incomplete without taking into account the impact of the rumours concerning Houston’s sexuality.

In her 2008 article on the Black bisexual singer-songwriter Meshell Ndegeocello, Andreana Clay points out that ‘[w]hile mainstream media contains images of white lesbians ... Black lesbians in popular culture are virtually nonexistent, or remain closeted’.⁴⁵⁸ She draws on Audre Lorde, who in 1981 – a few years before the release of Houston’s first album – describes the difficulties of being Black and queer:

Speaking up was a protective mechanism for myself – like publishing ‘Love Poem’ in *Ms.* magazine in 1971 and putting it up on the wall of the English Department [A]s bad as it is now the idea of open lesbianism in the Black community was ... totally horrible. My publisher called and literally said he didn’t understand the words of ‘Love Poem.’ He said, ‘Now what is all this about? Are you supposed to be a man?’⁴⁵⁹

For Houston, it would be reasonable to infer that open lesbianism would have been detrimental to her crossover success. Indeed, although this thesis tries to avoid any pursuit of ‘truth’ about the case studies (see section 3.8), it is perhaps worth noting that her friend and sometime lover Robyn Crawford has claimed that she ended any romantic element to their relationship just after she signed with Arista.⁴⁶⁰ This is particularly important due to Arista’s aims to market Houston to a broad ‘mainstream’ demographic. Stan Hawkins claims that ‘[t]oday it is often the case that when mainstream artists appropriate gender-ambivalent coding, their degree of acceptance is predicated on them signifying as queer rather than being queer’.⁴⁶¹ Thus, whilst

⁴⁵⁷ Crenshaw, ‘Mapping the Margins’, 1244-1245.

⁴⁵⁸ Andreana Clay, ‘“Like an Old Soul Record”: Black Feminism, Queer Sexuality, and the Hip-Hop Generation’, *Meridians* 8 (2008) 1: 58. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338911>.

⁴⁵⁹ Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Berkeley, CA: 10 Speed Press), 63.

⁴⁶⁰ Robyn Crawford, *A Song for You: My Life with Whitney Houston* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2019).

⁴⁶¹ Stan Hawkins, ‘On Male Queering in Mainstream Pop’, in *Queering the Popular Pitch*, ed. Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), 282.

mainstream audiences may consider a degree of performative queerness acceptable, actual queerness may prove more problematic.

The poet and essayist Cheryl Clarke stated, also in 1981, that '[f]or a woman to be a lesbian in a male-supremacist, capitalist, misogynist, racist, homophobic, imperialist culture, such as that of North America, is an act of resistance'.⁴⁶² As can be seen from the hegemonic nature of the forces controlling mainstream music, 'acts of resistance' are not always conducive to mainstream success. I have deliberately drawn on Black feminist writings from the 1980s to gauge a sense of the kind of structures operating around the time of Houston's greatest successes. In his examination of Houston's career, Tensley directs the reader to the Southern Poverty Law Center's 'History of the Anti-Gay Movement Since 1977' to obtain an idea of the prevalence of homophobia in the US during the 1980s.⁴⁶³ I must point out that at my time of writing, there appears to have been a good deal of improvement in Black queer visibility in the music industry. Figures such as Janelle Monáe, Kehlani, and Halsey have made great strides forward for the representation of queer women of colour in the mainstream in the late 2010s and early 2020s.⁴⁶⁴ Yet the mainstream can be said to have been less inclusive in the 1980s. Toynbee has pointed out that at this time, '[p]opular music was increasingly organized around distinct generational cohorts and diverse tastes and identities. Emerging trends towards globalization then compounded this fragmentation'.⁴⁶⁵ However, this process was in its early stages at the time of Houston's career, and the debates surrounding her 'sold out' music and image demonstrate the hegemonic power that the notion of the mainstream still held.

⁴⁶² Cheryl Clarke, 'Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance', in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York, NY: Kitchen Table, 1981), 128.

⁴⁶³ 'History of the Anti-Gay Movement since 1977', editorial, *Intelligence Report*, Apr 28, 2005, accessed Nov 7, 2020. <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2005/history-anti-gay-movement-1977>.

Tensley, 'Whitney Houston'.

⁴⁶⁴ Kristin Lieb, '2018 is the Year of the Queer Woman Pop Star', *BuzzFeed News*, Sep 20, 2018, accessed Nov 7, 2020. <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/kristinlieb/queer-women-in-pop-katy-perry-hayley-kiyoko-janelle-monae>.

⁴⁶⁵ Toynbee, 'Mainstreaming', 159.

Dave Laing, 'Rock anxieties and new music networks', in *Back to Reality? Social Experience and Cultural Studies*, ed. Angela McRobbie (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 116-132.

5.2.6 Summary

The overarching theme emerging is that Houston's multiple othered statuses – her Blackness, womanhood, and sexuality – make her crossover appeal culturally important and radical, especially within the discourse that seeks to redeem her. In a redemptive reading, Houston sacrificing her musical freedom to appeal to a wide demographic helped to pave the way for greater representation in mainstream music. This is one method of reframing. Drawing on the documents collected and the literature examined, it is reasonable to conclude that Houston did suffer under the staunch control of her record label and that there may be some validity to the Svengali reading, and her impact on the popular music industry should not be understated. Yet it is the way in which this is framed posthumously that is relevant to the themes of this thesis. These issues of mainstream crossover are incredibly complex and delicate, as exemplified by the contradictions in the data. Mainstream crossover success is often predicated on the dilution of musical features to appeal to a wider demographic and, particularly because of the hegemonic implications of the mainstream, often encourages accusations of cultural betrayal or inauthenticity. The other way in which this is framed is that Houston's huge success with a range of audiences was important in the advancement of the representation of Black women in the mainstream but also ultimately contributed to her personal unhappiness. In posthumous coverage, the latter reading is common, or else Houston's status as a sell-out is framed as the fault of others. In both the sacrificial reading and the Svengali reading, Houston is positioned as a victim, either of circumstance or the controlling forces of the industry. What a narrative of victimhood does is to undermine Houston's agency. Further, the framing of her crossover appeal is positioned here more commonly as radical than problematic, thereby serving the redemptive impulse.

5.3 Cultural appropriation and transgression

5.3.1 Definition of terms

The following two sections also require a working definition, in this case, of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation is grounded in the complex social structures that surrounded the development of popular music in the western world. In 2019, the *New York Times* started the impactful *1619* project, which explores 'how slavery has transformed America'. In the third episode of the project's podcast, 'The Birth of

American Music', Wesley Morris opens with some musings on western popular music in the last half century and the historical factors that have contributed to so many current musical trends:

What I'm hearing in all of these songs is basically blackness Then I started thinking of all these other singers I love. I'm thinking of Amy Winehouse This is the sound not just of black America, but of America ... almost especially when it's sung by British people And it fills me with pride But it also reminds me that there's a history to this ... and in the most perversely ironic way, it's this historical pain that's responsible for this music.⁴⁶⁶

The genealogy of what is classed as popular music today is well documented, but it is worth laying it out briefly for the purposes of this chapter. The US's musical history is a 'melting pot' made up of the traditions of several cultures and social groups. Morris cites American desire to move away from European influences and create an American musical and theatrical legacy as a reason for the emerging popularity of blackface minstrelsy in the nineteenth century. According to him, this is exemplified by Thomas D. Rice's public appearances as the 'mascot of American racism' Jim Crow between the 1830s and 1850s, as this provided (at least the perception of) an original American style: 'This is what America really wanted, which was its own original art form, that is not an Italian opera, it isn't some British guy This is the night that American popular culture was born'. Along with this 'imagined blackness' was the music of other immigrants in America, leading to combinations of 'Irish melodies and Polish music with what we would now call gospel ... harmonies interlaced together with this African banjo'.⁴⁶⁷ This structure became the standard for American popular music in the nineteenth century. In a related article, Morris elaborates on how

American music has been fated to thrive in an elaborate tangle almost from the beginning. Americans have made a political investment in a myth of racial

⁴⁶⁶ Wesley Morris and Nikole Hannah-Jones, 'The Birth of American Music', New York Times: 1619, podcast audio, Sep 6, 2019, accessed Nov 4, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/06/podcasts/1619-black-american-music-appropriation.html>.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

separateness, the idea that art forms can be either 'white' or 'black' in character when aspects of many are at least both.⁴⁶⁸

What he illustrates is how difficult it is to separate out the various features of what we know as popular music today into base categories of 'white' and 'Black'. This sentiment is echoed by Karl Hagstrom Miller in his exploration of American music history and the problematic compartmentalisation of genres along racial and regional boundaries emerging from the work of 'scholars and artists, industrialists and consumers'. Miller calls this process 'segregating sound', and demonstrates how it contrasts with the reality of southern music in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, when many musicians across racial and regional lines 'played any music they could'.⁴⁶⁹ Indeed, section 2.4.2 mentioned how the legacy of folk song collectors such as the Lomaxes and the constructed authenticity that arose from their collections has skewed perception of the history of popular music forms in the US.

Yet despite racialised categories in American popular music history being perhaps less prominent than commonly believed, Morris examines the legacy of appropriation and abuse that American popular musics have been built on, particularly their roots in blackface minstrelsy and 'imagined blackness'. The influence of this combined with all the other musical cultures that had found their way to the US meant that 'blackface minstrelsy tethered black people and black life to white musical structures'. Again, whilst Morris refers to this separation between musical features as a 'myth', the very fact that this topic has been covered so widely in both academia and journalism, and that Morris himself refers to the sound of 'blackness', suggests that the myth nevertheless influences discussion and consumption of western popular music. Indeed, its presence in the sources collected for the thesis suggest the same. By contrast, Morrison has laid out how the structures of the music industry allow for exploitation of Black-developed musical features and genres. He coins the term 'Blacksound' to incorporate processes through which 'sound and movement in

⁴⁶⁸ Wesley Morris, 'Why is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?' *New York Times*, Aug 14, 2019, accessed Feb 3, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/music-black-culture-appropriation.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=DDD34A8FD0E09D6216C77942C2CA53CB&gwt=regi&assetType=REGIWALL>.

⁴⁶⁹ Karl Hagstrom Miller, *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 2.

American popular music from its origins in blackface in the early nineteenth century ... through and after the Civil War ... and into Reconstruction and Redemption ... finally came to form the basis of the modern music and entertainment industry'. Thus, 'white (and other nonblack) people freely express themselves through the consumption and performance of commodified black aesthetics without carrying the burden of being black under white supremacist structures'.⁴⁷⁰ Cultural appropriation – here taken as the performance of musical features developed by members of a minority culture by members of a majority culture – is a contested topic that has provoked much debate in the source materials, particularly with reference to Joplin and Winehouse.

Some scholars maintain that all cultural appropriation is harmful, and necessarily taps into the darkest periods of American history. According to Morrison, '[w]hen we consider appropriation in the context of America's cultural and musical past, we might continue to think more about who stands to gain the least/lose the most ... by appropriating black signifiers in popular music and society, why that might be, and why we ... should care'. He illustrates that due to historic commodification and delimitation of 'idea(l)s of blackness through slavery and blackface minstrelsy', for white performers to reap success through appropriation without interrogation of what they are doing is 'to remain complicit in the history of cover acts of racial ... oppression'.⁴⁷¹ Dave Headlam similarly points to the potentially damaging effects of appropriation:

Viewed benignly, such appropriations are part of the inevitable evolution of musical styles and cultural values In a broader view, however, they are emblematic of the exploitation found throughout history in encounters between groups of peoples. In the United States, black musical expressions in blues and gospel have been appropriated by the recording industry for the mass white audience throughout the twentieth century, in a tension between music as identity and culture and music as mass-marketed, profitable diversion.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷⁰ Matthew D. Morrison, 'Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72 (2019) 3: 789-791. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2019.72.3.781>.

⁴⁷¹ Morrison, 'Iggy (Azalea) pop'.

⁴⁷² Dave Headlam, 'Appropriations of blues and gospel in popular music', in *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, ed. Allan Moore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 158.

Headlam's words point to a disjoint between music as 'true' expression and music for financial gain, another facet of the idea of authenticity in popular music. Yet in this case there is another layer to these economic concerns due to the exploitation involved in making money out of the work of disadvantaged groups. Winehouse and Joplin's performances may not be classed as culturally authentic but working alongside these ideas of artistic integrity are complex structures of advantage and disadvantage, of the people who stand to gain the most from appropriation, and of fairness.

Others have lent more towards a 'benign' viewing. Writing just after the launch of *Billboard's* crossover chart, Steve Perry claims that 'to jump ... to the conclusion that the story of American music is the story of "original" black music and "derivative" white imitation is too far a leap It reduces a complex dialectical relationship in which whites and blacks have mutually influenced each other to a simple instrumental one',⁴⁷³ citing the emergence of rock and roll – which encapsulated musical features from Tin Pan Alley, R&B, and country – as an example of musical collaboration and innovation. Perry recognises the racist panic arising from rock and roll – 'white supremacists correctly saw the music as an assault on their most deeply cherished values'⁴⁷⁴ – but argues that it 'was the first place where American blacks and whites began to approach genuine, wilful integration, and ... it certainly wasn't lost on *anyone* at the time'.⁴⁷⁵ Perry's remarks reflect Morris' concerning the impossibility of detangling American pop into separated white and Black features, and he cites popular music as a space of unification and collaboration between Black and white musicians. Perry recognises the inequalities rife in the music industry but suggests that to divide music into Black and white and to problematise musical crossovers is to ignore the role that music had in improved racial relations.

Patti Tamara Lenard and Peter Balint, in their 2020 study of what qualifies as cultural appropriation and the degree to which it is harmful, also refer to Berry and Presley: 'social circumstances may deny the appropriated the chance to profit from their own cultural symbols and practices. Here the Chuck Berry versus Elvis Presley case is paradigmatic'. However, in Lenard and Balint's estimations, Presley's success

⁴⁷³ Steve Perry, 'The Politics of Crossover', in *Facing the Music: Essays on Pop, Rock and Culture*, ed. Simon Frith (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988), 66-67.

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Original emphasis.

would not have made a difference to Berry: 'While Presley profited greatly ... it is not the case that Berry would have profited more if Presley had not profited. Racism in the US meant ... black musicians likely would not have prospered greatly from the music they pioneered in that era'.⁴⁷⁶ Lenard and Balint recognise the problematic nature of appropriation and unjust financial reward, but in their estimations the link between gains for majority groups and losses for minorities is not necessarily correlated and for them this is an important distinction to make.

Similarly, Lenard and Balint cite appropriate attribution and care as a defence against problematic practice. It would appear that this, for many, is the line between borrowing and stealing; when an artist takes the time to become proficient in a genre of music and shows reverence for the genre's pioneers, accusations of straightforward theft can be avoided. They point to the changing reception of the white rapper Eminem:

Early in [his] hip-hop career, he was accused of appropriating a traditionally black art form. And yet over time, in his skill and dedication to hip-hop, as well as his public acknowledgement of the privilege he benefits from for being white ... have led many to defend him from charges of appropriation.⁴⁷⁷

It appears that audiences generally respond more favourably to cultural appropriation when it seems to be carried out with acknowledgement and care, and this can be one way to avoid outright theft in Lenard and Balint's formulations. Yet concerns remain and Lenard and Balint illustrate two 'amplifiers' that make cultural appropriation nefarious: power imbalance and financial gain. The examples they give show ways in which these can be softened: Eminem overcomes them through craft and acknowledgement, and, according to them, Presley's financial success did not directly impact Berry's. It is clear from these sources that however cultural appropriation is approached, it requires deft handling and sensitive consideration, and even with these factors present contradictions and complexities remain.

Winehouse's Jewishness has the potential to further complicate the discourse

⁴⁷⁶ Patti Tamara Lenard and Peter Balint, 'What is (the wrong of) cultural appropriation?' *Ethnicities* 20 (2020) 2: 345. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819866498>.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

here. Documenting the history of Black-Jewish relations in *A Right to Sing the Blues*, Jeffrey Melnick has charted the significance of Black and Jewish figures in the formation of today's popular music. Melnick's work charts the ways in which this along with shared historical trauma and ongoing discrimination led to a 'mythologizing' around relations between these two groups that has 'privileged racial-historical analogy over class disparity'.⁴⁷⁸ Yet, as discussed in section 2.2.2, Winehouse's Jewishness was a central part of her persona, and it is important to note, following Stratton, how she was at times subject to 'exclusionary practices ... and stereotyping'.⁴⁷⁹ Stratton points out how in a specifically British context, '[p]eople understood as nonwhite, including Jews, continue to be marginalized' and the narrow definition of 'Englishness' as white Anglo-Saxon Protestantism excludes Winehouse.⁴⁸⁰ Stratton also illustrates similar prejudice and exclusion in the US and Australia. However, these important considerations do not emerge in the data that I have collected. As also mentioned in section 2.2.2, Winehouse is understood in the majority of the posthumous documents collected as white; any nuance here concerning her Jewish background is largely absent. Thus, she is criticised in some of the data extracts for her enactment of musical features understood as 'Black', but most pertinently to this thesis, these accusations dispel in posthumous coverage.

The literature in this section demonstrates the delicate and incendiary nature of cultural appropriation, and the contradictions laid out here are apparent in coverage of Joplin and Winehouse. Whether cultural appropriation is taken as harmful (Morrison, Headlam) or potentially collaborative (Perry, Lenard and Balint), it will become clear that its implications work in intricate ways posthumously. In music, cultural appropriation can be seen as especially egregious as it involves unequal financial benefits. Despite the complexities in discourse surrounding cultural appropriation, clearly it is largely seen as a transgression. This is what makes its dissipation from the discourse surrounding Joplin and Winehouse so pertinent in the context of the research questions of this thesis.

⁴⁷⁸ Jeffrey Melnick, *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 22.

⁴⁷⁹ Stratton, *Jews, Race and Popular Music*, 176.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 183.

5.3.2 Stylistic and economic considerations

Joplin was criticised throughout her living career for appropriation, for performing a facsimile of the blues – ‘Joplin ... [is] *margarine*’⁴⁸¹ – and becoming rich and successful from it in a way that African American artists had found more difficult to do. In 1968, cultural appropriation is a significant criticism levelled against her. The implication often is that she borrows features from blues and soul, musical genres developed by primarily Black musicians, and performs them poorly, as per Hollie West in the *Washington Post*:

[Her] version of Gershwin’s Summertime demonstrated what a vocal miniaturist she is Or take the cadenza she sang in a blues. She tried to bring it off like black Baptist preachers do But Miss Joplin slipped badly off-key several times.⁴⁸²

A distinct sense of inauthenticity emerges in West’s account. Similarly, Albert Goldman points out that white singers taking on musical features associated with Black music are able to benefit from them without having to deal with any discrimination. Goldman spoke to Joplin herself about the issue:

she discovered that when she put on her black voice ... she experienced a thrilling sense of release [S]he went on to develop her own music working behind this façade. Today ... she sounds less black than she did at first because she is beginning to discover her own identity.⁴⁸³

Despite admitting that he was (somewhat patronisingly) ‘surprised by [her] frankness and self-awareness’, the latter half of this argument is where the problem lies for Goldman. He says,

⁴⁸¹ Ben W. O’Nealos, ‘Butter’, letter to the *New York Times*, Feb 15, 1970, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Apr 14, 2020.

⁴⁸² West, ‘Janis Joplin Sells With Screeches, Sex’.

⁴⁸³ Albert Goldman, ‘Why Do Whites Sing Black?’ *New York Times*, Dec 14, 1969, retrieved from *American Historical Newspapers* Feb 11, 2020.

What is most likely to happen ... is [that] the white kids will swing back into their own tradition, fortified and enlightened by the adventure of transvestism. Already some of our leading culture chameleons are shedding their black skins, and while their brethren labor along in the Delta mud, these quick-change artists are turning out in startling new shades of white.⁴⁸⁴

There are two things to note with Goldman's article: he makes frequent reference to the 'black voice' without really explaining or engaging with what that might mean, and language like 'transvestism' is outdated by today's standards. However, it illustrates the valid criticisms against Joplin's musical borrowing: that she gained creatively from trying on various voices and personae but ultimately could return to the security of being white in the 1960s US without having to engage with the histories and realities of the blues.

Similar accusations have been levelled at Winehouse. For example, the *Times* review of *Back to Black* states that '[its] Motown sound ... came perilously close to pastiche'.⁴⁸⁵ In terms of the extra-musical, James Hannaham speculates that Winehouse's self-destructive behaviour was part of a self-conscious attempt to embody the stereotype of the tragic torch singer:

She may be a tragic talent, but she's also playing the part of the tragic talent In addition to foregrounding her knowledge of R&B history in her lyrics, she mines her personal experiences for material, naming names, keeping those names in the news, and ... eliminates the barrier between biography and artistic expression Meanwhile, she ... 'keeps it real' by defending her drug and alcohol addictions, and by standing by her jailed ne'er-do-well husband. The whole package smells like a bizarre simulation of a familiar black stereotype.⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁵ David Sinclair, 'Amy Winehouse', *Times*, Nov 16, 2006, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

⁴⁸⁶ James Hannaham, 'Living the blues – and loving it', *Ottawa Citizen*, Jan 3, 2008, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jun 3, 2020.

In Hannaham's account, inauthenticity extends into the extra-musical as well as the musical, though the two are closely connected. Here, the relationship between personal issues and musical content, as explored in the last chapter, is not taken as authentic expression, but a deliberate attempt to embody the musical stylings and narrative trajectories of 'tragic' singers before her. Further, the 'stereotype' here is a negative one, as illustrated by the scholars who have observed the way in which the narratives projected onto Holiday fall in line with reductive assumptions about African American women and the hegemonic functions that this fulfils (this is examined in section 5.4). He writes that 'it is hard to shake the sense of fakery ... the nagging suspicion that Winehouse might be ... having a tasteless joke at our expense'. Therefore, as well as being inauthentic, Hannaham suggests that Winehouse's performative image also had the potential to be harmful by perpetuating negative stereotypes.

Writing in *The Nation* in 2008, Daphne Brooks also takes a highly critical stance, claiming that Winehouse not only steals features from Black musics and cultures (ranging from the 'R&B greats' of the mid-twentieth century, Lauryn Hill, and male hip-hop artists) but defaces them. It is worth quoting Brooks at length:

Just about the only thing Amy Winehouse hasn't repackaged from the black music archives is the one thing she could use: a lesson in Motown etiquette The mannered, elegant look that Winehouse pairs with a shot glass was ... about more than Cleopatra eyeliner. It was about affirming black dignity and humanity amid the battle to end American apartheid [T]he most troubling aspect of her routine is rarely discussed. The real travesty of Winehouse's work is the way that her retro-soul draws from and yet effaces those black women – from Diana Ross to Aretha Franklin to Tina Turner – whose experiences helped to ignite the rock and soul revolution of our contemporary era.⁴⁸⁷

Brooks suggests that Winehouse is able to 'try on' these styles without having to engage with the realities of her influences' situations as Black women in the mid to late twentieth century. Brooks additionally takes issue with the way Winehouse

⁴⁸⁷ Brooks, 'Amy Winehouse and the (Black) Art of Appropriation'.

behaves as she feels that it demeans the sources she has drawn from. For Brooks, where Ross, Turner, and Franklin were ‘mannered and elegant’ and ‘helped to ignite ... rock and soul revolution’, Winehouse is able to appropriate musical and visual stylings from them whilst behaving in a manner that they would not have been able to get away with due to problematic notions of respectability politics (ideas concerning respectability are examined in section 5.4). Writing in the *New Yorker*, Sasha Frere-Jones claims that Winehouse’s ‘inflections and phonemes don’t add up to any known style’ and thus aren’t ‘really straight minstrelsy’, but he does remark on the ‘aural blackface’ identifiable in her vocal style.⁴⁸⁸ Brooks expands upon *The Nation* piece in her academic article about ‘sonic bluesface’ in which she situates Winehouse’s musical stylings within the history of vaudeville and British white female soul singers and describes her ‘(tainted) love and (unapologetic) theft’,⁴⁸⁹ referring to Greg Tate’s terminology of white performers taking ‘everything but the burden’ in their appropriation of Black art.⁴⁹⁰ Brooks illustrates a similar point to West: that Winehouse can benefit commercially and financially from the ‘black music archives’ without ever having to face the same discrimination as the artists she borrows from. Clearly, this can be framed as transgression.

Another criticism directed towards Joplin during her lifetime concerns how much money she earned from musical stylings that were arguably not hers to use. Writing for the *Washington Post* again, West illustrates how

Joplin, ballyhooed for the last year as the top rock star, is given space on the covers of the national slick magazines and earns \$10,000 for a night’s concert work. But Willie Mae Thornton, one of Joplin’s chief stylistic models, remains in the financial minor leagues, earning in a year what Miss Joplin may make in several days.

⁴⁸⁸ Sasha Frere-Jones, ‘Amy’s Circus’, *New Yorker*, Mar 3, 2008, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jun 3, 2020.

⁴⁸⁹ Daphne A. Brooks, “‘This voice which is not one’: Amy Winehouse sings the ballad of sonic blue(s)face culture”, *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 20 (2010) 1: 37. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07407701003589337>.

⁴⁹⁰ Greg Tate, *Everything but the Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture* (New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2003).

Adding insult to injury for West is that to him 'Joplin is a poor excuse for a blues singer'.⁴⁹¹ In this narrative, there appears an extra dimension of wrongdoing if Joplin is not only earning much more than the artists that inspired her, but also performing a simulacrum of their musical stylings. Part of the problem here is artistic credit and visibility. It is Joplin that is 'given space' on national magazines, increasing her visibility and exposing her to wider audiences, granting her a platform that Willie Mae Thornton would not have been granted. West refers to the jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, who similarly points out that white artists were frequently more visible than Black artists: "They sell nothing but white skin, blond hair and blue eyes. They sell that rock by Janis Joplin And ... it sounds like a Xerox copy of ... Otis Redding".⁴⁹² West illustrates once again how Joplin was able to experiment with musical features closely associated with African American blues music without facing the reality of the blues and this time also demonstrates how she earned greater financial rewards from it than her Black contemporaries. This becomes another transgressive framing. I will now look at the methods of redeeming Winehouse and Joplin present in posthumous coverage.

5.3.3 Alternative readings: Feminism and credit

As mentioned, there is little posthumous mention of this in Joplin's case in the newspaper documents. Whilst Ulrich Adelt points out that 'the intersection of race and gender in the life and music of Janis Joplin has been largely ignored', he does not consider why.⁴⁹³ However, some academic sources situate Joplin's cultural appropriation within the context of rebellion against stereotypes and potentially harmful expectations surrounding white femininity and arguably this becomes a way of fulfilling a redemptive impulse. For example, Gayle Wald has highlighted the significance of Joplin's well-documented admiration of Bessie Smith:

Joplin cultivated aspects of her own character that correlated with what she knew of Smith's: a taste for alcohol, a fondness for ornamenting herself with

⁴⁹¹ Hollie I. West, 'Blacks and Whites and the Blues', *Washington Post*, Jun 22, 1969, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 11, 2020.

⁴⁹² Miles Davis quoted in Hollie I. West, 'Black Tune', *Washington Post*, Mar 13, 1969, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 11, 2020.

⁴⁹³ Ulrich Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 112.

feathers and beads, bisexuality, and a reputation as a 'good-time girl' who talked frankly about her sexual needs.⁴⁹⁴

I find the idea that Joplin 'cultivated' her bisexuality problematic and dangerously close to the idea that a person can 'choose' their sexual orientation. Yet significantly, for Wald, the aspects of Joplin's career that were modelled on Smith's served as a means against which to rebel against dominant ideas of white femininity in the post-war period in which she grew up. Indeed, Eric Lott in his extensive research into blackface minstrelsy has extrapolated complex feelings of 'love and theft' in those who practised it. Whilst acknowledging the damage done by these acts, Lott argues that they are based on more complicated motivations than simple hatred. As he says, 'the very form of blackface – an investiture into black bodies – seems a manifestation of the particular desire to try on the accents of "blackness"'. In Lott's estimations, this phenomenon was 'less a sign of absolute white power and control than of panic, anxiety, terror and pleasure'.⁴⁹⁵ According to Lott, minstrelsy thus declined in the 1920s once it had served its purpose, though it has survived in a diluted form (Mick Jagger is cited as an example). A similar sentiment, one to do with fascination and escapism, can be found in Wald's discussion of Joplin's style:

My argument here ... is that [her] style ... reflected an ambivalent disidentification with whiteness and femaleness ... Joplin's screaming and screeching ... were thus not only her formal incorporation of a politicocultural stance ... but also the source of an admittedly problematic oppositional practice – a means by which to critique southern white bourgeois femininity and its insistence that women act 'little and pretty.'⁴⁹⁶

This 'insistence' is laid out in detail in Friedan's seminal work *The Feminine Mystique*, as referred to in section 2.2.2.⁴⁹⁷ It is within this feminist framework that Wald situates Joplin's musical stylings. I argue that this provides a redemptive reading in which

⁴⁹⁴ Gayle Wald, 'One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies', in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. Mike Hill (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1997), 156.

⁴⁹⁵ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 6.

⁴⁹⁶ Wald, 'One of the Boys?' 157.

⁴⁹⁷ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, 15-16.

despite being ‘admittedly problematic’, Joplin provided a means of opposition to harmful and limiting ideals of white, middle-class femininity.

In her biography of Joplin, Echols also illustrates the complexities in defining and discussing cultural appropriation, and this becomes a further method of redemption. In her view, performances by Joplin and Presley helped to counter cultural stereotypes, but this nonetheless involved problematic financial benefits. Yet Echols situates Joplin as proactive in her support of Black artists and reverential of the older musicians who had inspired her (reflecting Lenard and Balint’s observations about Eminem):

In their appropriation of black style, both Janis and Elvis undermined the color line by subverting notions of white sexual restraint and black promiscuity Of course, as whites Janis and Elvis also profited from their race bending [B]ut Janis handled her indebtedness to African Americans very differently from Elvis Janis promoted black artists and even put up money to finance a tombstone for Bessie Smith.⁴⁹⁸

Similarly, in Jana Evans Braziel’s work on Smith and Joplin, she claims that ‘unlike many other 1960s blues rock artists, Joplin publicly acknowledged her musical ancestors and influences ... as well as contemporary artists whom she admired’.⁴⁹⁹ These posthumous academic sources delve into the issue of appropriation far more than the journalistic documents I have collected do, and with more nuance. Yet they also provide two redemptive narrative arcs: in one, Joplin adopts the stylings of the blues as a reaction against the rigid expectations of femininity for middle-class white women, in the other, she was reverential of her sources and used her platform for good. It should be reiterated that these two identified redemptive framings for Joplin come from academic sources because these considerations are almost absent from the posthumous journalistic documents collected, and this absence also points to a redemptive impulse.

Winehouse is often praised for combining her admiration for American soul

⁴⁹⁸ Echols, *Scars of Sweet Paradise*, xxi.

⁴⁹⁹ Jana Evans Braziel, “‘Bye Bye Baby’: Race, Bisexuality, and Blues in the Music of Bessie Smith and Janis Joplin”, *Popular Music and Society* 27 (2004) 1: 18.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0300776032000144896>.

with her own experiences through her music, as mentioned in the previous chapter. Writing after her death, Ben Sisario posits her as reverential fan rather than thief:

With a husky, tart voice and a style that drew equally from the sounds of Motown and the stark storytelling of rap ... she was a fresh voice with a novel take on pop history. She spoke of her love for Frank Sinatra, Thelonious Monk and Motown, as well as Nas Her greatest love, however, was the 1960s girl groups, something that was evident from the instantly recognizable beehive hairdo and Cleopatra makeup that she borrowed from The Ronettes.⁵⁰⁰

Here, Winehouse is exonerated in a similar way to Joplin: in this framing, she is reverential towards her influences and has enough originality to avoid performing mere pastiche. Similarly, an editorial in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* frames originality and adaptation of existing styles as central to her legacy: 'update[d] jazz, R&B, and girl-group sass into a hip-hop-friendly blend that was an ideal vehicle for moody self-reflection'.⁵⁰¹ These two extracts encapsulate the main features that redeem her: musical quality, adding something new, and respect for that which was appropriated.

5.3.4 Absence in the discourse

In current critical circles, cultural appropriation is widely frowned upon, as can be seen in the work of Morrison and Headlam. Indeed, its significant presence in public discourse led Lenard and Balint to write their article.⁵⁰² This is why it is interesting that discussion of it in terms of Joplin has all but disappeared by 2015. Mention of it appears twice in 2005, but only in passing, and neither source is explicitly critical. In the first, gospel singer and choral director Horace Boyer discusses the importance of spirituals to the identity of US music and claims that 'people like Elvis and Janis Joplin knew what they were doing'⁵⁰³ in terms of the musical sources they'd drawn on, but does not elaborate. In the other, it is claimed that 'she was one of the white women

⁵⁰⁰ Ben Sisario, 'Troubled singer found dead', *New York Times*, Jul 25, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

⁵⁰¹ 'Documentary Amy charts the rise and fall of Amy Winehouse', editorial, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jul 5, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁰² Lenard and Balint, 'What is (the wrong of) cultural appropriation?' 332.

⁵⁰³ Horace Boyer interviewed by Penny Thow, 'Tassie voices tap into SOUL', *Sunday Tasmanian*, Jun 26, 2005, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jan 9, 2020.

who incorporated black sound the same way Elvis did'⁵⁰⁴ without commentary. There is no mention of it in the 2015 dataset. This implies that since Joplin's death, accusations of cultural appropriation are largely forgiven; they have not become a significant part of the narrative. The significance of this lies in the way it exonerates Joplin from charges of appropriating and profiting from minority cultures, something that would quite likely be criticised by audiences today. Wherever the truth lies about Joplin's success and her use of blues stylings, the disappearance of it from journalistic discourse and the relatively generous treatment of it in academic discourse show a much more forgiving attitude than contemporary journalistic sources about Joplin, indicative of a desire to absolve Joplin from this perceived transgression.

Similarly, cultural appropriation is almost completely dropped from the narrative posthumously in Winehouse's case, indicating again a redemptive impulse. However, it was the focus of an exhibition by Jennie Ottinger based on Brooks' essay at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco in 2015. The piece about Winehouse, taken from the broader project *Mouth to Mouth: Pieces from an Animation about Cultural Appropriation*, '[responds] to Amy Winehouse's music and legacy ... [and] addresses the icon's cultural appropriation of the legacy of female musicians, specifically African American singers'.⁵⁰⁵ Included on the Museum's website is a transcript from a discussion between Ottinger and an audience. Ottinger summarises her project thus:

Brooks ... talks about the specific things that [Winehouse] chose and how she made the music sound so amazing ... because she's taking the best parts of the musical history So she has the benefit of drawing upon history by these women. And a lot of them ... were pretty political about the rights of African American women and she's taking that and she has the benefit of being a white girl, and not really having to deal with any of the issues that these women had to face.⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰⁴ Jan Kudelka interviewed by Kerry Gold, 'Music: Fan of Janis Joplin gets to sing her songs in "opera"', *Vancouver Sun*, Jun 9, 2005, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jan 9, 2020.

⁵⁰⁵ Jennie Ottinger, 'Mouth to Mouth: Amy Winehouse and Appropriation', talk given at *Contemporary Jewish Museum*, Nov 2015. https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

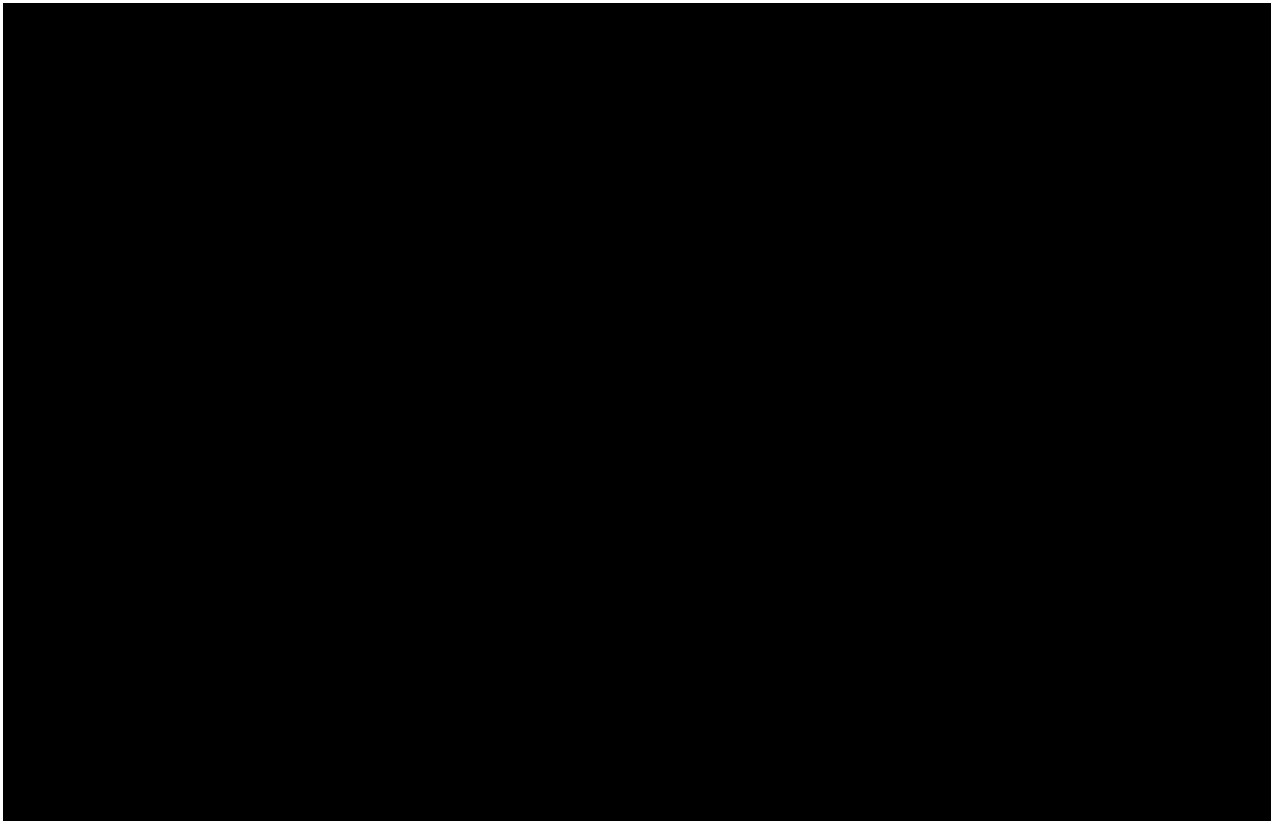


Figure 2: Jennie Ottinger, *Mouth to Mouth: Pieces from an Animation about Cultural Appropriation*, oil on canvas, Contemporary Jewish Museum, November 2015, https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312.

Ottinger's exhibition piece is critical of Winehouse, but it is presented here as an opportunity to explore the issue more broadly through discussion of such a well-known figure. Rather than being purely critical, the piece provides a springboard for the wider debate about appropriation and the line between influence and theft, as Ottinger says: 'From what people say, she loved an argument; so I think that she would love to open this up and to have this conversation. And there's no denying that her music is great'.⁵⁰⁷ Whilst Ottinger approaches outright criticism of Winehouse, it always comes with the caveat of her talent – she is still, after all, described as an 'icon' in the accompanying material to the piece.

Aside from this exhibition, the issue of appropriation is mostly framed more sympathetically after Winehouse's death. Firstly, it is absent from the data I have collected from 2015, its absence implying the same redemptive impulse as it does with

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

Joplin. Sammy Gordon refers to Brooks' article in 2018, and whilst acknowledging the validity of her argument, points out that Winehouse had serious substance abuse issues and was therefore not entirely to blame for the lack of graciousness that Brooks takes issue with. Gordon also suggests that debate about Winehouse's music be situated within wider cultural consideration:

Brooks' article was written before Winehouse's death, and it misses the enormous issue of substance abuse and addiction that Amy dealt with This lack of grace was not entirely due to lack of respect Amy was sick ... but that doesn't mean her music can't be used as a point in the argument for musical appropriation. Winehouse is not the only musical figure to effectively exploit, whether or not she wanted to, the music from a culture other than her own. It's important to recognize where your inspiration comes from and credit that place appropriately.⁵⁰⁸

Gordon refers to the validity of Brooks' argument, but there is a sense of pardon for Winehouse, particularly in light of her death. So, Winehouse does not get away as easily as Joplin appears to have. This may be due to the amount of time that has elapsed since Joplin's death in 1970: as with Holiday, there has been a lot of time for the main facets of her story to solidify and cultural appropriation has not become a dominant part of it. Winehouse's career, on the other hand, is within the living memory and her legacy will likely be shifting more actively. Yet, accusations of appropriation have diminished considerably and when they have appeared have taken on a more forgiving character, and any perceived lack of respect or grace is explained away through reference to mental ill health.

5.3.5 Summary

In both of these cases, accusations of cultural appropriation are reversed in posthumous coverage in a way that redeems the artist. Cultural appropriation seems to be most commonly regarded as transgression, and several methods of redemption

⁵⁰⁸ Sammy Gordon, 'Amy Winehouse and the Importance of Crediting Black Influencers', *34th Street*, Feb 15, 2018, accessed Feb 18, 2020. <https://www.34st.com/article/2018/02/amy-winehouse-music-appropriation-addiction-thinkpiece>.

have been identified in the data. Several valid criticisms were directed at Winehouse and Joplin: gaining stylistic musical benefits through appropriation, which led to financial reward, and not having to adhere to respectability politics or facing the same discrimination as those from whom they appropriated. Yet as can be seen throughout this thesis, the posthumous data surrounding these artists seems to avoid discussing this transgression altogether or else to rationalise it and provide a redemptive reading. This kind of musical redemption ties into an overall redemptive drive identified in the posthumous careers of these artists.

5.4 Malleability and ideological functions

As stated in the introduction, narratives of cultural authenticity do not serve the same trajectories as above for Holiday and Carpenter. Yet they do reveal important evidence surrounding the flexibility of the ascription of cultural authenticity, and how it can be used to reflect social norms.

Eidsheim describes Holiday as ‘an iconic singer, whose mythologized life story is imbricated with, and used to explain, the sound of her voice’.⁵⁰⁹ Examining vocal imitation, she first reiterates how closely entwined audience perceptions of Holiday’s voice and biography are:

The listener erases the vocalizer through a projected perception of him or her as iconic – in the case of Billie Holiday, as reduced to selected elements of her biography, viewed through the lens of the stereotypical tragic, sexualized, and wasted black female figure who lacks agency.⁵¹⁰

The first half of this quotation was crucial to the work in the previous chapter, and I now turn to the second. Holiday, unlike Houston, has not been accused of cultural inauthenticity or ‘selling out’. Perceptions of cultural authenticity in this case do not run along narrative lines of transgression and redemption but they demonstrate its ideological objectives. Holiday’s biography has come to mean different things to different demographics. For example, Angela Davis illustrates her importance and appeal in Black communities, and this reading rests on an interpretation of Holiday

⁵⁰⁹ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 151.

⁵¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

representing true cultural experiences: “‘My Man’ is frequently presented as evidence of female masochism, and, in a facile conflation of art and biography, of Lady Day’s own masochistic investment in relationships characterised by male dominance’. Davis refers to Michelle Wallace’s observations that this does not lend Holiday much feminist credibility, but that ‘black women across several generations are able to discover themselves in this ... because of the “existential truths” her singing reveals about black women’s lives’.⁵¹¹ In this reading, it is possible to interpret a sense of cultural authenticity – she gives voice to experiences based in race and culture. Davis’ study of Billie Holiday is a celebration of her musical craft and the impact her vocal stylings have had on jazz music. She presents a reading of Holiday’s life and music which illuminates how her performances may ‘divulge unacknowledged traditions of feminist consciousness in working-class black communities’.⁵¹² Ideas of Holiday and cultural authenticity in this account are nuanced and complex and stand as an important corrective to the common uncomplicated reading of Holiday as tragic victim.

Yet there are also more nefarious ways in which ideas of Holiday’s ‘cultural authenticity’ have been narrated. Griffin discusses how framing Holiday’s personal travails centrally within her story is not only reductive, but has harmful implications for other Black women as it is based on and perpetuates a stereotype of tragedy, trauma, and hypersexuality. As she says,

She is not only a woman who paid the price for living on the edge, not only a tragic victim who had to die, but also a black woman who suffered the fate of the jazz genius in a racist American society – substance abuse and underappreciation At its most pernicious, this interpretation of Holiday’s life insists upon her victim status. Holiday as tragic victim helps to contain and control black women who are multidimensional, talented and ambitious.⁵¹³

Formulations of Holiday that frame her in terms of these negative stereotypes of African American women (such as the sources included in Chapter Four and section 6.4) thus serve broader hegemonic ideological functions by preserving limiting notions

⁵¹¹ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 178.

Michelle Wallace, *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory* (London: Verso Books, 1990).

⁵¹² Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, xi.

⁵¹³ Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, 33.

of Black womanhood. They rest on a construction of a false cultural authenticity as when Holiday's story is reduced to its most traumatic elements, it is often presented as central to her identity as a Black jazz singer. Of course, Holiday did face racially motivated persecution and discrimination throughout her lifetime, but the ways in which this is framed as confirmation of her 'victim status', as per Griffin, play into a limiting stereotype. When this stereotype is then presented as truth, it preserves existing social hierarchies by continuing to impose barriers on minority communities.

Davis has examined how the various stories of how Holiday came to be introduced to 'Strange Fruit' serve similar purposes. As with Griffin, Davis illustrates how '[t]he most common portraits of Billie Holiday highlight drug addiction, alcoholism, feminine weakness, depression, lack of formal education, and other difficulties unrelated to her contributions as an artist'.⁵¹⁴ For example, the founder of Café Society, Barney Josephson, presents Holiday as unaware of the song's content and power. In his account, upon hearing the song

She looked at me and said ... 'What do you want me to do with that, man?' And I said, 'It would be wonderful to have you sing it – if you care to. You don't have to.' 'You want me to sing it, I sings it.' And she sang it. And that song was 'Strange Fruit.'⁵¹⁵

Davis points out that Josephson's claim that Holiday did not initially understand the content of 'Strange Fruit' 'paints her as an illiterate, ignorant, and passive woman His attempt to recapture her speech ... is reminiscent of the worst kind of minstrel caricatures of black "dialect"'.⁵¹⁶ The idea that Holiday did not 'get' 'Strange Fruit' is, of course, untrue, as evidenced by her autobiography, the strict conditions under which she would perform the song, and arguably common sense (it seems extremely unlikely that the meaning of the song would be lost on someone who experienced as much racial discrimination as Holiday did). According to Davis, readings of this kind 'capture Holiday in a web of gendered, classed, and racial inferiority and present her as capable

⁵¹⁴ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 184.

⁵¹⁵ *The Long Night of Lady Day*, directed by John Jeremy (BBC-TV Productions and TCB Releasing, 1984), film, quoted in Davis, *Blue Legacies and Black Feminism*, 185.

⁵¹⁶ Davis, *Blue Legacies and Black Feminism*, 186.

of producing great work only under the tutelage of her racial superiors'.⁵¹⁷ Thus, as with the presentation of Holiday as tragic victim, this presentation of her as ignorant also serves hegemonic ideologies by perpetuating limiting ideals – here, Holiday is portrayed as less intelligent and socially aware than her white, male peers and this is used as 'proof' of inferiority.

Holiday's position as an addict has also been framed differently in line with broader functions. Various efforts to hide and expose it have served different purposes in line with different aims concerning representation for Black women. For example, Griffin discusses the ways in which respectability politics have played into representations of Holiday:

[T]he politics of respectability tells oppressed groups to put their best face forward In an ethos governed by the politics of respectability, there is no place for the black bad girl In an attempt to counter press reports of her as a low-life junkie, Holiday, her handlers and many subsequent historians of her life and music have tried to fit her into narratives of respectability.⁵¹⁸

The term 'respectability politics' was coined by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham in her 1993 study into the Black Baptist Church in the years 1880 to 1920. The idea draws on W. E. B. Du Bois' theory of 'double consciousness' to explore how respectability politics 'emphasized reform of individual behaviour and attitudes both as a goal in itself and as a strategy for reform of the entire structural system of American race relations'.⁵¹⁹ The goal of policing Black behaviour in this way was to 'distance oneself as far as possible from racist stereotypes'.⁵²⁰ Fashioning Holiday's image into one that aligned with notions of respectability politics would provide a way to avoid criticism of her that was rooted in prejudicial assumptions about her race.

Allowing for the problems with respectability politics, this attempted rehabilitation of Holiday's image was, according to Griffin, in response to hegemonic forces that wanted to present Holiday as the personification of racist, sexist

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵¹⁸ Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, 73.

⁵¹⁹ Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 187.

W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903).

⁵²⁰ Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent*, 196.

stereotypes about drug users. The racism that motivated the police hounding of Holiday is well documented, with Hari having explored in depth her run-ins with Anslinger. The then Head of the Federal Bureau of Narcotics' racist hatred for jazz is evidenced by internal memos, and he became obsessed by the idea of making a public spectacle of Holiday, a high-profile jazz singer and addict, by arresting and imprisoning her.⁵²¹ Griffin has similarly drawn on Kandall's work on women and addiction (see section 2.2.2) to illustrate how the 1940s was a time of demonisation for Black female addicts and high rates of incarceration. Holiday's fame meant that

The media and law enforcement seemed to revel in a voyeuristic fascination with her and an abusive harassment of her. Each stalked her every move, and together they created a portrait of an overindulgent, highly sexualized but emotionally immature woman.⁵²²

As a 'high-profile drug addict', Holiday's arrest would provide Anslinger with 'proof' of the deviance he associated with jazz and Black musicians generally, a false presentation of cultural authenticity working along a similar prejudicial framework as the above accounts of Holiday's encounter with 'Strange Fruit'. What these differing interpretations point out is how Holiday's position as a Black woman and ideas of her 'cultural authenticity' can be interpreted differently for different purposes. There are sinister means, such as situating her within a racist and reductive stereotype of the Black jazz singer. There is the way that her handlers tried to fashion her image to fit into facets of respectability politics in order to avoid these harmful stereotypes. Finally, there is the way that Davis illustrates that Holiday's singing expresses "'existential truths" about black women's lives'.⁵²³ Whilst narratives of transgression and redemption aren't as clear in this examination of perceived cultural authenticity, what these readings demonstrate is its malleability – framed differently through the lens of different commentators – and the broader ideological functions that it can serve (such as the perpetuation of racist stereotypes or efforts to avoid them).

Carpenter has never really been accused of trying to portray anything other

⁵²¹ Hari, 'The Hunting of Billie Holiday'.

⁵²² Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, 44.

Kandall, *Substance and Shadow*, 117.

⁵²³ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 178.

than white middle America. Yet Tongson's recent book *Why Karen Carpenter Matters* has explored why the singer is so beloved in the Philippines. Tongson explores the 'myths surrounding ... Carpenter's voice, which eventually became reanimated through others bodies and voices, in the Philippines ... and elsewhere, through brown bodies, queer bodies, differently abled bodies'.⁵²⁴ Pertinently to this chapter, Tongson sets out to discover why she 'matters to people of color, immigrants, queer people, gender outlaws, and everyone other than the white Nixon-era suburbanites she and her music are said to have represented'.⁵²⁵ Tongson points out that Carpenter's popularity in the Philippines might be said to come from a combination of colonialism and Catholicism – what she describes after Vicente Rafael as 'yet another of the one of the many vestiges of the nation's colonial entanglements with the United States'⁵²⁶ and the importance of iconography in Catholic practice. Yet she argues that the situation is more complex; the popularity of the Carpenters and especially Karen in the Philippines means that 'Karen belongs to *us*, not the other way around'. In Tongson's estimations, this is because the countless Filipino performers who have performed her music and the omnipresence of her music in the Philippines means that 'we have the power to reanimate her ... as *our* voice'.⁵²⁷ Thus, despite the Carpenters' 'musical white bread', for Tongson, Karen is inextricably bound up with the Philippines.

Tongson's book is highly personal and, although it blurs the lines between the two, in some ways works more as a memoir than an academic text. However, what it demonstrates for this chapter is how malleable cultural authenticity is, particularly after death. Whilst the easy-listening, Californian sound of the Carpenters' records can be interpreted as an aural representation of what Smucker terms 'boring and horrifying whiteness', this is to ignore how different music comes to mean different things to different demographics, and how context can change the ways in which audiences interact with it. For example, posthumous reconsideration of Carpenter's voice for Tongson recalls her childhood and puts her in mind of her Filipino identity. As has been demonstrated throughout this chapter, posthumous narratives concerning cultural authenticity can be moulded to serve certain social purposes, and in Houston,

⁵²⁴ Tongson, *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*, xii.

⁵²⁵ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*, 122.

Vicente Rafael, *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

⁵²⁷ Tongson, *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*, 123. Original emphasis.

Joplin, and Winehouse's cases, these purposes concern the impulse to redeem them from perceived cultural transgressions.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways that perceptions of cultural (in)authenticity work posthumously and what this reveals about the post-death reception of the case studies. Ultimately, perceived transgressions are posthumously turned into narratives of redemption. This is achieved through two main different narrative themes concerning crossover and cultural appropriation. These narratives are present and operating in the discourse surrounding Joplin, Winehouse, and Houston, and I argue that the narratives all serve the same purpose – they fulfil the redemptive impulse. Whilst similar narratives of transgression and redemption are present in the stories of Carpenter and Holiday (see Chapters Four and Six), they do not follow the same trajectory concerning cultural authenticity. However, ideas of cultural authenticity do appear in the discourse, and what they demonstrate, pertinently to this chapter, is how malleable the concept of cultural authenticity is and how it serves broader functions. In Tongson's account, widely perceived notions of Carpenter as solely a representative of white middle America fall apart when examined through the lens of her popularity in the Philippines. Varying perceptions of a cultural authenticity in Holiday have served varying ideological functions depending on the agendas of those doing the framing.

The themes emerging have required exploration concerning definitions of the terms 'mainstream' and 'crossover'. Both terms that are as social as they are musical, their relationship to social power structures means that discourse surrounding them is highly sensitive and so they operate in revealing ways within the already delicate nature of the deaths of the case studies. In particular, there appears to be a redemptive impulse that extends to charges of cultural inauthenticity. The mainstream's association with hegemonic social groups means that an artist who crosses over is often derided for diluting the original genre, betraying their audience, or simply 'selling out'. This phenomenon was very much present in Houston's career: there is evidence that her 'generic' and commercially successful music and image as a

‘white-friendly pop princess’⁵²⁸ were perceived as particularly bland and problematic during times of high racial tension, especially when other genres such as hip-hop and rap were confronting the racial inequalities rife in the US. This chapter presented two ways in which she is redeemed from this, the Svengali reading in which she was a victim of cynical, financially driven record labels, and the sacrificial reading, whereby Houston sacrificed her musical freedom to cross over into the mainstream and pave the way for greater representation of Black female artists at the expense of her own happiness. This reading can be identified across a range of publications, both left-of-centre and right-of-centre.

Despite the complications in defining cultural appropriation and the debates that surround it, it has been demonstrated that a redemptive impulse persists in discourse surrounding Joplin and Winehouse, especially posthumously. Both received significant pushback for it during their lifetimes, but this has dissipated following death. Again, I suggest that there are two factors at play in the redemption of Winehouse and Joplin. The first is by ignoring cultural inauthenticity completely, which can be seen in the distinct reduction of it in the datasets. The second is to reframe it. Echols and Evans Brazier redeem Joplin by describing her as respectful and supportive of the artists who had inspired her, whilst Wald frames her Bessie Smith-inspired stylings as feminist. For Winehouse, the reduction in discussion of the matter posthumously also implies a sense of largely ignoring it. When it is addressed, the reframing takes two approaches. The first is to refer to Winehouse’s illness, as per Gordon. The second is to frame Winehouse as considerate of her sources, and as an artist that created something new with them – in other words, who avoided simple pastiche. It is also important to state here that Winehouse and Joplin appear to have been forgiven more easily for their perceived transgressions than Houston. Whilst the issue has largely dispelled in the cases of Joplin and Winehouse, it remains a significant factor in posthumous discussion of Houston. Drawing on intersectional considerations about how Black addicts are considered more ‘deviant’ than their white counterparts (see section 2.2.2), this points to compounded inequalities based on race and gender.

It is also worth pointing out that the issue almost disappears from both Joplin and Winehouse in the journalistic discourse, with the majority of posthumous

⁵²⁸ Rose, ““Not black enough””.

considerations emerging from academic sources. This thus shows consistency across publication type in this area. In terms of time, that the issue remains more pertinent in discussion of Winehouse is further proof of the malleability of these legacies – Joplin has been dead for longer, and cultural appropriation is not, the data suggests, a particularly prominent concern. Arguably, as Joplin's lifetime moves further from the living memory, certain elements of her career become more significant than others in the telling of her story.

Several different redemptive narratives have been identified in this chapter. In each, charges of cultural inauthenticity are rationalised in ways that forgive the artists for any perceived transgressions. Resolving perceived transgressions in the area of cultural authenticity operates in the same way as resolving perceived transgressions against dominant ideas of femininity such as drug abuse – if these behaviours are rationalised and reframed, they appear less menacing. Absolution in terms of cultural transgression arguably ties in with aims to rationalise or absolve pariah femininity or self-destructive behaviours; the redemptive drive can be said to persist both musically and personally.

6. Concealed authenticity: Suppression, disclosure, and filling the gaps

6.1 Introduction

The final theme emerging from the source material concerns the idea of suppressed or hidden personal authenticity. This chapter will explore how the unknown spaces in the stories of these women are filled in the public discourse surrounding them. How much is known and what is projected in the gaps in our collective knowledge? How do commentators attempt to complete the narratives, and how is the impulse to make sense of the deaths of these women and ultimately redeem them fulfilled?

In each overarching narrative emerging from the source materials there appears an implication of a concealed authenticity to each of the artists. This chapter works within Barker and Taylor's classification of 'personal authenticity', and the source materials presented here concern themselves more with the (perceived) personalities and characters of these case studies than their music. The common thread running throughout these reinterpretations of the artists' personalities is that they all appear to seek to redeem them from perceived transgression. One way in which this is achieved is through reference to the people around the singer. Introducing 'villains' removes culpability from the artists for perceived transgression and extinguishes the dangers that their stories represent. Frequently in these formulations, the actions of the villain are framed as hiding or suppressing the 'real' persona of the artist in question. In section 2.4, I referred to Dyer's observations about the importance of perceived celebrity authenticity, in which he describes how 'a rhetoric of sincerity or authenticity [is] ... greatly prized in stars because [it] guarantee[s] ... that the star really means what he or she says ... and really is what she or he appears to be'.⁵²⁹ I argue here that the construction of these concealed authenticities align with preferred personae for the artist in question. As with the previous chapters, the specific narrative devices vary in accordance with each artist's specific personal and professional trajectories, but they all serve the same overall redemptive impulse.

The first reframing device in the sources examined in this chapter is the notion of a hidden vulnerability, which can be found in the cases of Joplin and Winehouse. In

⁵²⁹ Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies*, 10.

posthumous narratives, Joplin is reconfigured from being a raucous blues mama to deeply insecure. This arc also appeared in Chapter Four, in which changing audience interpretations of the sound of Joplin's voice were explored. A very similar trajectory can be traced through examination of how the writers of the collected documents discuss the people around her. In these accounts, her romantic interests, social circles, and the cultural norms of the time in general all contributed to her perceived vulnerability and by extension, her death. Similar narrative tropes are constructed around Joplin and Winehouse, as in previous chapters. In Chapter Four, the ratio between interpretations of Winehouse as fierce and vulnerable began to lean heavily towards the latter in posthumous coverage, with musical content and vocal timbre used as narrative devices to support this. In the formulations included in this chapter, the trajectory is very similar, but interpretations of Winehouse as victim of fame, family, and the media become the devices used to complete the narrative: here, Winehouse becomes an ordinary woman who 'wanted to be left alone'.⁵³⁰ This hidden vulnerability becomes part of a reframing of the perceived authentic personae of Joplin and Winehouse and is used to make sense of their deaths: in this reading, their music is still perceived as authentic, but it also masks a vulnerability.

The other way in which the concealed authenticity frame operates in these cases is in the notion of suppressed authenticity, a narrative formed around Carpenter. This narrative arc maintains that producers, families, and marketing forces suppressed her creativity and desired musical pursuits and thus contributed to her perceived unhappiness and subsequent self-destructive actions. A similar narrative emerged in the last chapter concerning Houston and the framing of cultural (in)authenticity – that her own musical desires were dismissed, and this caused her pain, thus driving her to reckless behaviour. This also operates on an extra-musical level in which several villains served to drive her to self-destruction, most significantly her husband and family who in these narratives sought to profit from her success despite any detrimental effect on her. The suppressed authenticity frame works in the same way as the hidden vulnerability frame works with Joplin and Winehouse: it removes culpability. Holiday is famed as a figure shrouded in mystery ('[a]ll those who have

⁵³⁰ Henry Barnes, 'The 50 best films of 2015 in the US: No 8 – Amy', *Guardian*, Dec 9, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

attempted to write about her have discovered there are many Billie Holidays')⁵³¹ and one way of completing the narrative and constructing a preferred 'authentic' character has been reference to abuse or mistreatment from others, as with the other case studies. As I discussed in the last chapter, meaning-making and the construction of the out-of-field (and thus perceived concealed authenticity) around Holiday is frequently based on negative stereotypes about African American women and jazz singers more broadly. Often, framing around Holiday's downfall involves a degree of vilification and punishment, but also assigns alternative villains, helping commentators to remove her agency and thus redeem her.

Deleuze has written about the importance of the 'out-of-field' in cinema. While his use of 'framing' refers to 'the determination of ... a relatively closed system which includes everything which is present in the image', the 'out-of-field' constitutes 'what is neither seen nor understood, but is nevertheless perfectly present'. Even when a frame is relatively closed, this 'only apparently suppresses the out-of-field, and in its own way gives it an even more decisive importance'.⁵³² This philosophy has provided me with a framework for thinking in similar terms about closed systems in music. There is a propensity in the source materials to 'fill in the gaps' where things remain unknown, and the interpretations projected in these spaces take on great significance in posthumous coverage. This has to do with the gap between public and private lives – there is a tendency to invent the out-of-frame private sphere and use it to rationalise the fates of the women. In these narratives, the out-of-field indeed wields a 'decisive importance'.

What all of these formulations of suppressed or hidden authenticity have in common is removal of agency; in these readings, the artists are portrayed as having little control over their careers or personal lives. Culpability for self-destructive behaviour goes to others, all devised through ways that make sense in each specific case and ultimately, I argue, serve to redeem the artists from perceived wrongdoings.

⁵³¹ Tom Beer, 'Shedding light on Lady Day', *Tampa Tribune*, Apr 12, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁵³² Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 19.

6.2 Hidden vulnerability

In the cases of Joplin and Winehouse, public redemption partly comes from the notion of a hidden vulnerability. In these formulations, their tough personae and famed hedonism masked fragile centres. Rather than this perceived masking being interpreted as inauthentic, authenticity is reframed. Ideas of ‘fierceness’ – identified in musical and extra-musical factors – are framed as concealing vulnerability during their lifetimes and exposing it posthumously.

Some sources use specific instances to link Joplin’s fate to a perceived hidden vulnerability. In Chapter Four, this was traced through the timbral qualities of her voice. Here, behaviours from specific characters from Joplin’s life are used to shape a similar point. Ruby Millington, for example, explicitly (and heavy-handedly) links her death with unreliable romantic interests:

There’s a terrible poignancy in her failure to find any personal fulfilment offstage. Despite the advent of free love, she remains romantically impoverished. In fact, her desire for love is thwarted by her execrable taste in men. On the night she dies, Joplin’s fiancé Seth Morgan is playing strip pool with a couple of waitresses he has picked up. Even her beloved dog ... runs away.⁵³³

This ‘even the dog left her’ narrative serves the purpose of framing her actions in a sympathetic light – in this account, Joplin is lonely and abandoned. Millington links Joplin’s errant fiancé and her death by placing them next to each other in the same sentence, implying that her perceived loneliness and romantic misfortune contributed to her demise. Here, her death-by-misadventure is the product of abandonment by those around her, not the pursuit of any hedonistic thrill. It is important to note that it is impossible to know exactly what happened to Joplin or her state of mind at the time of her death. However, discursive framing of it being the former rather than the latter rationalises the transgressive act of overdose.

Similarly, much has been made of the bullying Joplin was subject to earlier in her life. Early suffering here serves as a narrative device that makes sense of her

⁵³³ Ruby Millington, ‘Janis’ Cautionary Tale’, *Daily Express*, Oct 28, 2005, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jan 9, 2020.

behaviours and seems to be based loosely on a Freudian model of childhood trauma and symptoms in later life.⁵³⁴ For example, in the *New York Times* review of Berg's documentary, Stephen Holden writes the following:

The emotional wounds Joplin sustained are the kind that never completely heal The antithesis of the all-American prom-queen ideal, Joplin suffered merciless verbal abuse and rejection At the University of Texas ... a fraternity campaigned to elect her the 'ugliest man on campus.' She put on a brave face, but how does anyone really shake off something like that?⁵³⁵

Through this narrative, Joplin's actions are again the result of some sadness and loneliness deep within her, and the most brutal and striking instances of her bullying are laid out here to reinforce this. Whilst Joplin's classmates were cruel, interesting implications emerge through exploration of the persistence of these narratives. If Joplin's hedonistic philosophy is reasoned to be a reaction to trauma rather than arising out of purely sybaritic desires, then it becomes easier for commentators to make sense of her troubling fate. This model of trauma provides a way to attach fathomable or reassuring meaning to Joplin's self-destructive streak.

The next stage of this reframing in the source material is to suggest that Joplin had alternative desires unrelated to her hedonistic pursuits. This helps commentators to construct a hidden authenticity. Once the threat of her behaviour is explained through reference to previous trauma, ideas of her 'true' motivations can be devised. I refer again to Sabbage's profile (mentioned in section 4.6):

She was known as the wild woman of rock, a hard-drinking, tough-talking singer Yet there was another side to Janis Joplin, one that longed to conform to the middle-class values of her childhood and dreamt of being the homecoming queen Unfortunately, while Janis gave the impression of being liberated and comfortable with herself, privately her self-esteem was at an all-time low, and she had become addicted to heroin.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁴ Sigmund Freud, 'The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis', *The American Journal of Psychology* 21 (1910) 2: 185. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/i261648>.

⁵³⁵ Holden, 'Exploring Joplin's Demons'.

⁵³⁶ Sabbage, 'Rock's Mixed Up Heroine'.

The relevance of this excerpt to both Chapters Four and Six demonstrates how the redemptive impulse is pursued through both personal and musical considerations. This alternative model for Joplin's desires can be read as a search for a suppressed authenticity. In this framing, her behaviours are read as an attempt to keep up in a masculine-dominated industry, yet a more vulnerable Joplin can be interpreted beneath. This reading is not confined to media discourse. Melissa Bradshaw recognises a similar construction of an alternative authenticity in the film *The Rose* (dir. Mark Rydell, 1979), loosely based on Joplin's life. As the film is only based on Joplin's story, it is free to construct an alternative Joplin without risking critical and audience condemnation of 'inauthenticity', as biopics often do.⁵³⁷ The modifications to Joplin's story are very telling in their formulations of femininity. For example, Bradshaw refers to a scene in the film in which Rose is impersonated and embraced by a group of drag queens:

However playful and joyous this postmodern moment, it ultimately serves a less nuanced narrative objective: underscoring the film's lesson that the bravado of the worldly, hard-living, hard-drinking, sexually deviant diva masks the pain of a real woman who hungers for love and stability.⁵³⁸

This demonstrates the desire to unearth a more 'acceptably' feminine figure, one who longs for domesticity, as in Sabbage's profile of Joplin. Indeed, Bradshaw points out that Rose typifies a more conventional diva image, one based on sparkly dresses and vocal virtuosity. In Bradshaw's reading, Rose is punished through death for her deviation from 'appropriate' femininity. What is also significant to this chapter is the perceived tension in Rose's ambitions, the presentation of her as a 'woman who could not reconcile her hunger for fame with her innate need to live up to cultural expectations of appropriate womanhood'.⁵³⁹ Here, the search for a palatable way to make sense of Joplin's self-destruction lies in the excavation of a hidden authenticity

⁵³⁷ Mattias Frey discusses the importance of perceived accuracy in such biopics in Mattias Frey, 'The Authenticity Feeling: Language and Dialect in the Historical Film', *Research in Film and History* (2018): 1-48. <https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14811>.

⁵³⁸ Melissa Bradshaw, 'Devouring the Diva: Martyrdom as Feminist Backlash in *The Rose*', *Camera Obscura* 23 (2008) 1: 72. <https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2007-024>.

⁵³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

that lines up with ideas of ‘appropriate’ feminine behaviour, rationalising pariah femininity.

Other sources point to the 1960s counterculture that Joplin belonged to as contributing to her fate. Whiteley describes the ‘counterculture’ as ‘a generic label for a somewhat loose grouping of young people ... who challenged the traditional concepts of career, family, education and morality and whose lifestyle was loosely organised around the notion of personal freedom’.⁵⁴⁰ Sources that posit Joplin as a victim of the counterculture illustrate both the realities and expectations of the scene – such as drug-taking – and the damage that these might do in the long term. This moral panic extended to all of the many rock and roll deaths-by-misadventure that occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and can be seen in Don Heckman’s obituary for Joplin in the *New York Times*:

[W]e seem to be caught in an almost hypnotic string of personal violence. Three weeks ago, Jimi Hendrix, and now Janis Joplin. The king and the queen of the gloriously self-expressive music that came surging out of the late sixties are dead, the victims ... of the very real physical excesses that were part of the world that surrounded them.⁵⁴¹

Writing a week after Joplin’s death, Heckman points to a general panic concerning the consequences of these ‘physical excesses’, Joplin and Hendrix placed in roughly equal positions as ‘king and queen’ – gender dynamics are arguably not especially operational in this extract. However, Joplin and Hendrix’s experiences would likely have been markedly different, as the counterculture, despite its perceived progressiveness, was arguably retrogressive in terms of its treatment of women.

For example, Whiteley has said that ‘the lifestyle and the musical ethos of the period undermined the role of women, positioning them as either romanticised fantasy figures, subservient earth mothers or easy lays’.⁵⁴² She dedicates a chapter of her book *Women and Popular Music* to Joplin, whom she describes as a ‘catalyst’ for women in rock. However, her considerations also tend to fall into a narrative of

⁵⁴⁰ Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*, 22.

⁵⁴¹ Don Heckman, ‘Janis Joplin 1943 – 1970’, *New York Times*, Oct 11, 1970, retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 12, 2020.

⁵⁴² Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*, 23.

victimhood. For example, she frames Joplin's hedonistic attitude as an attempt to 'keep up' in a male-dominated area:

While it would be reasonable to suggest that Joplin's personal edict of 'get it while you can' resulted in an excessive self-indulgence ... it is equally apparent that these character traits were exacerbated by being a successful woman in an all-male rock environment where success hinged on being able to keep up and be 'one of the boys'.⁵⁴³

Whiteley extends this pressure to the musical as well as the extra-musical: 'Joplin was confronted by the problems inherent in a ... performance style which valued hardness, virtuosity and control. Her solution was both confrontational and conforming: lead with arrogance, project toughness and be "one of the boys"'.⁵⁴⁴ This implies that the musical genre in which Joplin worked meant that there was pressure to behave in a way reminiscent of masculine-coded traits. Indeed, Reynolds and Press have examined the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity in rock, discussing how rock defined itself as the 'rebel genre' and how '[i]n the rebel imagination, women figure as both victims and castrating agents of conformity on men [W]omen represent everything the male is not (passivity, inhibition) and everything that threatens to shackle him (domesticity, social norms)'.⁵⁴⁵ Whiteley's claims that Joplin may have had to adapt or even overcompensate to fit in are reasonable as women in the counterculture were the minority in a male-coded environment. However, her framing of this leans towards the kind of assumptions made in the journalistic data. For example, she implies that Joplin's perceived unhappiness and insecurity can be identified in her music:

The extent to which Joplin consciously understood the limits of sexual rebellion is uncertain, but within the overall framework of her musical output, from her idiosyncratic covers of blues to the posthumous *Pearl* album, there is a fragile imbalance, a sense of sexual magnetism hinged to a self-tormenting insecurity.

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁵⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁵⁴⁵ Reynolds and Press, *The Sex Revolts*, 3.

Joplin's vulnerability, her need for affection, is particularly apparent in the 1967 recording of 'Ball and Chain'.⁵⁴⁶

Whiteley bases this appraisal of 'Ball and Chain' on Joplin's use of phrasing and the distinction between the 'breathy and close to the microphone' opening and the 'angst-ridden, power-driven scream' of the song's climax, and she frames this explicitly through the lens of Joplin's perceived insecurities. Whiteley does not entirely remove Joplin's agency as some journalistic sources have done and she avoids categorising addiction as a problem that can be attributed to one clear-cut reason, but her observations remain assumptive: that the pressure to be 'one of the boys' contributed to Joplin's death. In this reading, Joplin becomes a victim of the counterculture and the way its progressive attitude did not extend to women, as well as a music industry and genre that valued traits of hegemonic masculinity, as examined by Schippers.⁵⁴⁷

As has become clear throughout this thesis, Joplin and Winehouse's stories are handled in similar ways. Assertions about insecurity and being let down by those around them abound in both narrative trajectories, as can be seen in this review of Berg's Joplin documentary *Little Girl Blue*:

There are obvious and tragic parallels with Asif Kapadia's film *Amy* Both were fiercely talented young women with the blues in their souls, both were driven by insecurity and a need for love, both battled with addiction to drugs and alcohol, both were abruptly silenced just when they were beginning to find a new maturity in their voices.⁵⁴⁸

Where depictions of the villains formulated in Joplin's narrative treatment are sometimes vague (general romantic calamity and faceless bullies), there are two specific men perceived to be at fault in Winehouse's: her husband, Blake Fielder-Civil, and her father, Mitch Winehouse. Often, they are tied together as an interpretation that sees Winehouse as searching for a man to care for her – a patriarchal reading, one

⁵⁴⁶ Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*, 54.

⁵⁴⁷ Schippers, *Rockin' out of the Box*.

⁵⁴⁸ Wendy Ide, 'Old-school glamour brings the A-list to Venice', *Times*, Sep 7, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

that reinforces an idea of defencelessness and softens the edges of her destructive behaviour. Take, for example, Peter Bradshaw's review of *Amy*:

Amy was desperate to devote herself to a strong male protective figure: either Mitch, or her equally troubled and charmless husband Blake Fielder-Civil, who appears to have introduced her to hard drugs and a co-dependent, dysfunctional relationship in which he perpetually resented his own insignificance. There is a harrowing voicemail message in which Amy offers 'unconditional love,' her voice pulsing with loneliness – a kind of musicless torch song in itself.⁵⁴⁹

In these formulations, Winehouse gives all of herself to these men with little support or care in return. Bradshaw's description of this 'musicless torch song' reflects the stereotype of the tragic, troubled jazz singer, a legend modelled on Holiday, to whom Winehouse is frequently compared. This assumption that Winehouse was motivated by a desire for affection from the men in her life works with the stereotype and thus provides a way to portray Winehouse as a victim. Mistreatment from men becomes one rationalisation for her self-destructive behaviour, and they become the ones with agency.

The specific narrative arc around Fielder-Civil involves him introducing Winehouse to harder drugs. As Shapiro has pointed out, a common narrative trope around female addicts is that '[i]f she is "taken on" by a man who also happens to be an addict, he will force her into addiction'.⁵⁵⁰ He bases this primarily on the stories of Holiday and Anita O'Day. A similar trajectory can be found in formulations around Winehouse. Several sources interview friends of hers who suggest that she changed drastically around the time that they met. Nick Shymansky, for example says the following:

Amy changed overnight. For six years she was completely consistent and then all of a sudden it was like dealing with a different person. There were glimpses

⁵⁴⁹ Peter Bradshaw, 'Asif Kapadia's Amy Winehouse film is a tragic masterpiece', *Guardian*, May 16, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁵⁰ Shapiro, *Waiting for the Man*, 83.

of the Amy I knew right up until the end, but something really changed. My view at the time, and my view now, is that she was intoxicated with heavy drugs as soon as she met Blake.⁵⁵¹

This is also supported by Nick Godwyn: 'Blake is on the scene. And she changes Her behaviour became more erratic. She wasn't doing anything; not going away, not going into the studio'.⁵⁵² There is no reason to consider that Winehouse's friends have ulterior motives, but I argue this narrative and its presentation in the data nevertheless serve an overall purpose. Tellingly, it is commented upon frequently in journalistic discourse; Caroline Sullivan's obituary of Winehouse claims that '[i]f Winehouse had been fragile before, the marriage seemed to bring out the worst in her'⁵⁵³ whilst the *Daily Telegraph's* obituary describes Fielder-Civil as a 'petty drug dealer and junkie'.⁵⁵⁴ Reviews of *Amy* call Fielder-Civil 'morally challenged'⁵⁵⁵ and cite his 'wayward influence'.⁵⁵⁶ Depictions of him as the villain who introduced Winehouse to hard drugs and, as Lisa Verrico puts it, 'turn[ed] one of Britain's greatest singing talents into a self-destructive freak',⁵⁵⁷ work towards removing Winehouse's agency by displacing culpability. It is also worth noting here that Verrico's description of Winehouse as 'freak' positions her as abnormal, which helps to rationalise her actions and lessen any threat posed by a pariah femininity, as well as presenting her as someone who was vulnerable to such influence.

Yet there is some sympathy reserved for Fielder-Civil as a fellow addict, 'a lost kid who had his own issues'.⁵⁵⁸ Accusations of mistreatment are mostly directed towards her father, who provides a less complex villain for the narrative (his work with young addicts through the Amy Winehouse Foundation appears sporadically in the

⁵⁵¹ Nick Shymansky interviewed by Jessamy Calkin, 'Amy Winehouse: Behind the Controversial Documentary'. *Daily Telegraph*, Jun 13, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁵² Godwyn, 'The real Amy Winehouse by her first manager'.

⁵⁵³ Caroline Sullivan, 'Obituary'.

⁵⁵⁴ 'Amy Winehouse: Obituary', editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, Jul 25, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

⁵⁵⁵ Kenneth Turan, 'A rising talent's tragic descent', *Los Angeles Times*, Jul 3, 2015, *Nexis Advance* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁵⁶ Geoffrey McNab, 'Amy Winehouse documentary', *Independent*, May 16, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁵⁷ Lisa Verrico, 'One Demon Too Many', *Sunday Times*, Jul 31, 2011, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

⁵⁵⁸ Nick Shymansky interviewed by Kathryn Bromwich, "'She'd be so sweet and funny, but there were warning signs'", *Observer*, Jun 15, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

source material but is overshadowed by his perceived mistreatment of his daughter). The negative portrayal of him in Kapadia's documentary garnered a great deal of attention in the press as previously unseen incidents were made public. Reviews describe him as 'absent in Amy's early years'⁵⁵⁹ and 'a strange sort of intrusive, ineffective and almost parasitic Svengali to her career'.⁵⁶⁰ He has also been accused of profiting personally from his daughter's fame, in spite of any detriment to her wellbeing:

Mitch was not a great father. He is seen visiting her in St Lucia with a film crew in tow – seeking his own slice of fame via another documentary And there is a sense that he enjoyed the entree into showbiz which Amy provided But the uncomfortable truth is that, with his daughter gone, Mitch Winehouse has had both the charitable cause and the media platform to rise to a level of fame which he clearly rather relishes. And his fame by association leaves some feeling rather queasy.⁵⁶¹

The demonisation of Mitch Winehouse in these sources continues to serve the same purpose of limiting Winehouse's autonomy in her decision-making. As Andrews points out, '[a]lthough Kapadia's sympathy for Winehouse is clearly evident in the film, his willingness to conform to the "victim" narrative outlined, and his identification of Winehouse's father and husband as largely responsible for her troubles, can be read as patriarchal and patronising'.⁵⁶² The projection of villainy onto other figures in Winehouse's life continues to undermine her agency and serve the redemptive drive by eliminating any perceived notions of 'blame'.

Andrews has claimed that the documentary sought to present an 'authentic' Winehouse by presenting her as a reluctant celebrity.⁵⁶³ The data collected follows a similar narrative path. Working alongside these stories about the dastardly men in Winehouse's life is a similar 'hidden vulnerability' trope to Joplin's. Winehouse is

⁵⁵⁹ Barnes, 'The 50 best films of 2015'.

⁵⁶⁰ Bradshaw, 'Asif Kapadia's Amy Winehouse film is a tragic masterpiece'.

⁵⁶¹ Alison Boshoff, "'Are you only interested in me for what you can get out of me?' Amy Winehouse's devastating attack on her father Mitch from beyond the grave', *Daily Mail*, May 19, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

⁵⁶² Andrews, 'From unwilling celebrity to authored icon', 353.

⁵⁶³ *Ibid.*, 352.

framed as a woman who was not only vulnerable but deeply 'normal' and who desired a quiet life. London becomes an important narrative device here, tying Winehouse to a locale and emphasising her 'ordinary' roots. Bradshaw describes how Winehouse's singing voice supposedly contrasted with her speaking one, 'the unashamed, unpretentious, utterly relaxed sound of north London',⁵⁶⁴ whilst Tim Kroenert plays straight into cliché with his description of the 'preternaturally talented working-class girl from London who just wanted to sing'.⁵⁶⁵ The locational specifics work alongside a broader 'ordinary girl' stereotype, one that the home footage used in Kapadia's documentary reinforces. Commentators have claimed that these 'showed the star as a clever, witty and incredibly talented young woman'.⁵⁶⁶ Footage of her early career serves the same purpose, both in terms of her personality – 'a decidedly unfabricated popstar with a sassy, funny demeanour'⁵⁶⁷ and 'not some vacuous red carpet creature, but rather, an extremely talented, ambitious, and promising artist'⁵⁶⁸ – and her musicality and preferred performance style. Eva Wiseman claims that 'it looks awfully as though, if she had only been left alone ... playing to the small jazz crowds she says she craved, she would have lived'.⁵⁶⁹ This sentiment is echoed by Alexandra Levine, who says that '[s]uccess and fulfilment, for Winehouse, meant performing for tiny audiences in cosy, smoky jazz clubs'.⁵⁷⁰

All tie into a narrative of someone who was pushed towards self-destructive behaviour by a combination of unstable familial and romantic relationships and the pressures of fame and the media, which she was not equipped to handle. Despite portrayals of Winehouse during her lifetime as deviant, in posthumous coverage, her behaviour becomes a reaction to circumstances that she was not in control of. This is achieved in one way through the introduction of villains into the narrative. The fact that the villains in this case are male is important as the meanings created throughout

⁵⁶⁴ Bradshaw, 'Asif Kapadia's Amy Winehouse film is a tragic masterpiece'.

⁵⁶⁵ Tim Kroenert, 'Who killed Amy Winehouse?' *La Croix International*, Jul 2, 2015, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK May 27, 2020.

⁵⁶⁶ Jeananne Craig, 'Amy Winehouse documentary', *Belfast Telegraph*, Jun 30, 2015, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK May 27, 2020.

⁵⁶⁷ Dann Gire, "'Amy" celebrates the short life of Amy Winehouse', *Chicago Daily Herald*, Jul 10, 2015, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK May 27, 2020.

⁵⁶⁸ Alexandra Levine, 'The Amy Winehouse We Never Knew', *Forward*, Jul 9, 2015, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK May 27, 2020.

⁵⁶⁹ Eva Wiseman, 'What if Amy Winehouse had been left alone?' *Observer*, May 17, 2015, retrieved from Nexis Advance UK May 27, 2020.

⁵⁷⁰ Levine, 'The Amy Winehouse We Never Knew'.

much of the data collected for this project seek to remove female autonomy. In this case, it is the men in her life that have the power while Winehouse becomes the victim.

The hidden vulnerability trope identified in Joplin and Winehouse's cases serves the same purpose as the reframing of their perceived vocal and cultural (in)authenticity in Chapters Four and Five. Their 'authentic' behaviours are reframed; instead of being taken at face value, their tough demeanours become signifiers of hidden vulnerability. Important to this is the framing of the people around each artist – a degree of villainy in other characters means that agency and culpability can be removed from Joplin and Winehouse and thus a redemptive arc is easier to form. Winehouse is portrayed as constantly betrayed by the men in her life whereas Joplin is positioned as dying from her attempts to be 'one of the boys'. I argue that the introduction of these male villains has the purpose of removing autonomy from Joplin and Winehouse.

6.3 Suppressed authenticity

Where Joplin and Winehouse were largely perceived as personally 'authentic' artists during their lifetimes and the way that authenticity is ascribed alters after death, in Carpenter's case, it is projected mostly posthumously. Chapter Four demonstrated how this is achieved through interpretation of meaning in the sound of the voice. Another method of ascribing authenticity emerging in the data is to interpret a suppressed authenticity, whereby other characters surrounding the artists are said to have limited their musical, creative, and personal freedoms. As with hidden vulnerability, suppressed authenticity becomes a central means of rationalising the fates of the artists.

In posthumous coverage, Carpenter is framed as an artist repressed. Understanding of this is aided by an understanding of the social and political context in which the Carpenters emerged. It has already been mentioned that their music and image offered an antidote of sorts to the rock excesses of the late 1960s. Words frequently used in relation to the Carpenters are 'wholesome',⁵⁷¹ 'naïve',⁵⁷² and

⁵⁷¹ Catlin, 'Look who's paying tribute to the Carpenters'.

⁵⁷² Rob Hoerburger, 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life', *New York Times Magazine*, Oct 6, 1996, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

‘romantic’.⁵⁷³ In times of political turbulence and sexual liberation, the Carpenters offered a conservative, musical nostalgia. Indeed, the Carpenters’ image is tied up in specifically Republican Party values; in 1972, President Richard Nixon invited them to perform at the White House during a visit from West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and called them ‘young America at its very best’.⁵⁷⁴ The novelty of the musically talented brother-sister duo likely also contributed to their association with the Republicans’ ‘family values’ tagline.

They grew up in suburban Los Angeles during the post-war period. There was an increase in separation between cities and suburbs in LA during this time, wherein the suburbs were primarily occupied by white middle classes and the cities by primarily ethnic minority working classes. The historian Eric Avila, in his account of race relations and socioeconomics in post-war LA, discusses how extensive suburbanisation between 1945 and 1970 brought about a fixation on home ownership, predictability, tradition, and safety for the middle classes:

[It] sanctioned the formation of a new racial geography that spatialised a starker contrast between white and black [and] nurtured the development of a more expansive white identity ... that extended to various social groups who removed themselves from the racialised spaces of the inner city vis-à-vis home ownership [A]n expanding generation of suburban Americans exercised their preference for a landscape that epitomised homogeneity, containment, and predictability.⁵⁷⁵

The Carpenters and their music and personae reflected this conservative image back at their intended audience. Their suburban branding helped to affirm their position as an antidote to the social shifts and moral panic of the 1960s. However, the Carpenters themselves did not particularly want this image. At various points in their careers, they would attempt to push back against it, but with little success. The biographer Randy Schmidt documents an instance in 1970 in which the siblings were interviewed by the

⁵⁷³ ‘Karen Carpenter, 32, romantic singing star’, editorial, *Chicago Tribune*, Feb 5, 1983, retrieved from ProQuest: *American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

⁵⁷⁴ Schmidt, *Little Girl Blue*, 101.

⁵⁷⁵ Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 4-6.

radio DJ Dick Biondi and were openly critical of the Vietnam War, censorship, and organised religion. Following this, they were 'coached by the publicists to avoid controversial topics and anything not in the image prescribed to them'.⁵⁷⁶ This demonstrates already limited freedom before gendered aspects around Karen's career are considered.

This image particularly relied on the presentation of Karen as a representation of idealised, innocent femininity. One way in which this was constructed was through careful presentation of her persona. Bowers and Houston Grey have illustrated how she was often regarded as being childlike by those who met her, and this became crucial to her image:

As a singer whose public persona relied on a myth of retarded sexuality, Karen's handlers were quick to use her infantile nature as a marketing tool. In an era when women were beginning to express greater autonomy, Karen was distinctly traditional and non-threatening – a throwback to what was rapidly becoming an outdated image.⁵⁷⁷

They point out that the lyrical content of the Carpenters' music usually has Carpenter longing for an unattainable lover, never someone she is able to actually interact with. They point to the 1970 release of Burt Bacharach's 'Close to You' as an example of this, claiming that

The tension that would define the Carpenters was that Karen ... was to perform a repertoire of songs that often expressed adult desire The lyrics to this classic demonstrate the way that this tension was negotiated In this context, Karen is allowed to express her admiration and desire without explicit reference to her own body and desires.⁵⁷⁸

This is clear throughout the Carpenters' catalogue. Bowers and Houston Grey also illustrate 'Superstar' (1971) as an example of pining for a love that cannot be

⁵⁷⁶ Schmidt, *Little Girl Blue*, 105.

⁵⁷⁷ Bowers and Houston Grey, 'Karen', 101.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

consummated. Songs in which Carpenter yearns for some far-off, abstract love maintain her persona as naïve, lovelorn, and virginal. Crucially, there was great effort to maintain this image following her death. As noted in section 2.2.3, Bowers and Houston Grey examine the religious imagery around her family mausoleum, particularly the presence of Saint Agnes, the patron saint of virginity.⁵⁷⁹ Despite the fact that Carpenter was an adult, a sense of childlikeness persists.

However, there is a trend in the posthumous source materials I have collected to attempt to unearth a more ‘authentic’ persona. The hyper-control over Carpenter’s image is made especially clear through the treatment of her solo album, and this becomes particularly important in the framing of a suppressed authenticity. In 1979, whilst Richard Carpenter was undergoing treatment for an addiction to Quaaludes, Karen Carpenter recorded an eponymous solo album, produced by Phil Ramone, in which she attempted to cultivate a more mature persona and record in musical idioms that were popular at the time, rather than the musical throwbacks to the 1950s and 1960s that had made her successful. The record was ultimately shelved by the label and the recordings would not be released until thirteen years after her death. One of the forces preventing their release was her family,⁵⁸⁰ the other was her record label, A&M. Certainly, the album marked a distinct departure from the sanitised image described above, with many of the songs moving away from distant longing to actual interaction. Lott, in his Adornian analysis of Carpenter’s career, frames the rejection of Carpenter’s solo album as being due to its dubious quality, claiming that, ‘[she tried] on a more embodied, adult image [But] the result was so ridiculously unconvincing that A&M refused to release it’.⁵⁸¹

Indeed, upon its release the album met with a lukewarm critical reception, with some commentators criticising it as a continuation of the Carpenters’ easy-listening sound or comparing it unfavourably to other Carpenters records.⁵⁸² However, putting the label’s rejection of the album down to quality alone ignores other important factors. Whether Carpenter’s altered persona is convincing and whether the album contributes much in terms of musical quality or not, their refusal was likely at least

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵⁸⁰ Schmidt, *Little Girl Blue*, 289.

⁵⁸¹ Lott, ‘Perfect is Dead’, 231.

⁵⁸² Chris Dickinson, ‘Not even close to Karen at her best’, *St Louis Post-Dispatch*, Oct 24, 1996, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020. Bornstein, ‘Yesterday Once More’.

somewhat rooted in the restrictive image and musical style that they permitted her; to divert from what their market had come to expect would be economically risky. Whether the record was releasable or of high quality or not is arguably irrelevant, as upon consideration of the kind of role that the label and her family wanted her to fill at this point in her career, that of idealised feminine innocence in times of massive social upheaval, a potential ulterior motive to not releasing it emerges. The framing of the reasoning for suppressing the album in the sources collected is significant and continues to serve the same overall narrative purpose of constructing an alternative or suppressed authenticity.

As mentioned in section 4.5, Carpenter has become something of a countercultural icon since her death; writing in 1996, Rob Hoerburger claims that, 'lambasted by the pop elite during her life, she has become a mascot to the pop underground'.⁵⁸³ Haynes' 1988 film *Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story* casts Barbie dolls as the characters and weaves a disturbing tale of hyper-control and mental ill health. Director of films such as *Poison* (1991) and *Velvet Goldmine* (1998), Haynes is associated with the New Queer Cinema Movement and has at times been a controversial figure,⁵⁸⁴ and could certainly be classed as belonging to the 'pop underground'. Guy Lodge in the *Guardian* describes how the film encourages its audience to empathise with Carpenter whilst painting her family and label as manipulative and controlling figures:

Wholly sympathetic to its tragic subject, if not to her grotesquely portrayed family, the film treats its singing, self-destructive Barbie both with compassion and a kind of reserved distance, acknowledging just how little we truly know about her Far from disrespecting Karen Carpenter's memory, presenting her in 12-inch doll form wryly nods ... to the still-rampant objectification of female celebrity and the infantilising actions of her minders.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸³ Hoerburger, 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life'.

⁵⁸⁴ Justin Wyatt and Todd Haynes, 'Cinematic/Sexual Transgression: An Interview with Todd Haynes', *Film Quarterly* 46 (Spring 1993) 3: 2. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1212898>.

⁵⁸⁵ Guy Lodge, 'Superstar: Todd Haynes's banned Karen Carpenter movie is visionary', *Guardian*, Aug 11, 2016, accessed Feb 21, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/aug/11/superstar-todd-haynes-banned-karen-carpenter-movie>.

The film presents an account of the story whereby Carpenter acts as a blank slate for her producers and family to project their own interests onto, the implication being that this suffocation pushed Carpenter towards disordered eating and thus eventually killed her. This is also explored in Sonic Youth's 'Tunic (Song for Karen)' from their 1990 album *Goo*. The heavily distorted guitar riffs and repetitive, cloying refrain [REDACTED] [REDACTED] are musically representative of the hyper-control of Carpenter and her music and image. Singer Kim Gordon has spoken extensively about her admiration for Carpenter. She includes in her autobiography an open letter:

I must ask you, Karen, who were your role models? Did anyone ever ask you that question — what's it like being a girl in music? Who is Karen Carpenter, really, besides the sad girl with the extraordinarily beautiful, soulful voice?⁵⁸⁶

I would argue that Gordon's framing of Carpenter's psyche here is presumptive and perhaps somewhat simplistic. However, this letter reflects the general sentiment in the data: that Carpenter was prevented from expressing her own desired musical pursuits in order to fulfil the role that others wanted her to fill – be that as a reassuring antidote to women's liberation for more conservative audiences or as a golden goose for her record label – and because of this control and pressure, Carpenter began to self-destruct. As with Joplin and Winehouse, villains are introduced to the narrative to contextualise Carpenter's demise. I would additionally suggest that Carpenter's story also serves an ideological function for Haynes and Gordon as her story may be interpreted as a warning about the dangers of conservatism for women because in these narratives, as in the source materials collected, control over her from others and the pressures placed on her professionally and personally all contributed to her demise. However, whatever political ends might be at play in these artefacts, both involve a construction of an alternative, suppressed authenticity. This construction may mean different things for different demographics, yet each formulates an authenticity that lines up with a preferred 'hidden' persona for Carpenter.

The journalistic data follows a similar narrative trajectory to Haynes' and Gordon's works. Despite critics generally agreeing that her solo album was mediocre,

⁵⁸⁶ Kim Gordon, *Sonic Youth: Sensational Fix* (Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2009).

many see it as an attempt by Carpenter to get away from the controlling forces of her family and producers and alter her chaste image. Both Lisa Borstein and Hoerburger connect the nature of her death with the professional restrictions she found herself subject to. Borstein begins by interpreting an 'older and wiser' Carpenter in the album, suggesting that her family and record label had concealed her 'real' persona (or at least the one she wanted to express) by refusing to release it, and then linking this to her illness:

Suddenly she seems alive, older and wiser. But the music let her down The album's second song ... best projects what Karen Carpenter could have become In so many areas of her life, she depended on others Forever looking for approval from everyone, Karen stopped eating in what may have been the only aspect of her life she could control. Some may laud *Karen Carpenter* as her burst of independence.⁵⁸⁷

The tensions surrounding the release of this album seem to provide commentators with a means of trying to make sense of what happened to Carpenter. Illnesses of this nature are complex and it is too simplistic to identify one cause. Yet when the cause is presented as mistreatment from others as it is here, it removes the threat posed by a woman who self-destructs. There was comparatively far less knowledge about eating disorders when Carpenter died and so arguably the need to rationalise what happened was even stronger. Indeed, Bowers and Houston Grey have referred to a 'full-blown eating disorder panic' following her death.⁵⁸⁸ The presentation of causes also allows a space in which commentators and fans can construct an alternative Carpenter, a combination in this case of what was out-of-field (the 'older and wiser' Carpenter perceived in the album) and in what she 'could have become'. I argue that this serves two overall purposes: for fans, it provides a comforting presentation of a favoured artist, and those who withheld this 'burst of independence' and suppressed this authenticity become villains.

Hoerburger's sentiments reflect Borstein's, and he adds difficult familial relationships to the mix:

⁵⁸⁷ Borstein, 'Yesterday Once More'.

⁵⁸⁸ Bowers and Houston Grey, 'Karen', 110.

[The album was c]onceived as her exit from a stultifying goody-two-shoes image The last of America's virginal sweethearts was ... finally catching up to women's liberation At 29, [she] was, for the first time, working without Richard Carpenter, her producer, arranger and frequent songwriter – part Pygmalion, part Gepetto If anorexia has classically been defined as a young woman's struggle for control, then Karen was a prime candidate, for the two things she valued most in the world – her voice and her mother's love – were exclusively the property of Richard.⁵⁸⁹

Hoerburger presents two new literary characters that effectively work as synonyms for Svengali. Pygmalion is the Ancient Greek legend that tells the story of the sculptor who fell in love with his own creation, as well as the title of George Bernard Shaw's play about Henry Higgins and his protégée Eliza Doolittle, whilst Gepetto is Pinocchio's puppeteer. These literary references are reminiscent of a situation in which Carpenter was controlled by others and placed on a pedestal from which she could not climb down. Similarly, Miriam Longino describes the album as 'Karen's chance to establish herself as a solo artist and break from her Svengali brother-mentor'.⁵⁹⁰ This framing contributes to the projection of a suppressed authenticity, as Carpenter's public persona is presented as being formed by others for their own purposes. The introduction of Richard as Svengali (or other applicable literary character) serves several purposes. As with the other cases, the introduction of a male villain displaces female autonomy and returns agency to the male domain. It also provides a perceived perpetrator of the suppression of Carpenter's creative and personal freedoms, and thus also the suppression of the authenticity that fans and commentators seek to unearth in these extracts.

Fan desire for the release of the album shows how much audiences value authenticity and how strong the impulse to fill in the gaps in the narrative is, further evidence of the out-of-field's 'decisive importance'.⁵⁹¹ Much of the data has pointed to Carpenter as a beloved but mysterious figure – 'a frustratingly elusive presence: a

⁵⁸⁹ Hoerburger, 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life'.

⁵⁹⁰ Miriam Longino, 'Home Entertainment: the latest in music, videos and books', *Atlanta Journal*, Dec 12, 1996, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

⁵⁹¹ Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 19.

gleaming fringe, a painfully-stretched smile'⁵⁹² – and positions the solo album as a chance to map the 'out-of-frame'. The fact that fans were not able to access the album until Carpenter had been dead for thirteen years also bolsters the suppressed authenticity reading. For example, Hoerbuerger claims that 'for her fans ... [the album] ends up a cherished souvenir from the collection of a woman who was never allowed more than a vacation from her own image',⁵⁹³ whilst Longino says that '[n]ow fans can hear what Karen *sans* Richard might have been like Too often the album is rooted in dated production tricks of the day, but hard-core fans will want to check it out for its historical significance'.⁵⁹⁴

Carpenter's solo album, despite the fact that many fans and critics seem to agree on its mediocrity, is framed as evidence of the musical pursuits she would have wanted to explore. Her creative input means it is an important relic for fans; as Hoerbuerger says, '[f]ans typically crave an artist's most personal work – even if it isn't a masterpiece'.⁵⁹⁵ It points to how audiences often covet insight into musicians' lives, particularly to try to make sense of troubling issues such as eating disorders and addiction. The quality of the album is perhaps irrelevant to the function it plays for fans; it is evidence of the kind of directions Carpenter might have gone in had she been allowed more creative freedom. The narrative woven around Carpenter is one in which her personal and musical freedom is suppressed, and evidence of authenticity lies in what might have been. Where authenticity cannot be perceived, it can be projected. Framing an artist's perceived inauthenticity as the fault of others removes culpability and provides a redemptive reading. It is framed as a lack of creative freedom which has led to sadness for the artist and pushed them into self-destructive behaviour, removing agency and providing a redemptive trajectory.

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how a narrative of suppressed cultural authenticity emerged around Houston's image as a 'white-friendly pop princess'.⁵⁹⁶ In this framing, Houston's perceived musical inauthenticity (and cultural transgression) were out of her control and a key contributor to her unhappiness. This exposed the desire to redeem Houston from any perceived misdoing as well as to rationalise her

⁵⁹² Ajay Close, 'The taboo broken by thigh in the sky', *Herald Glasgow*, Aug 31, 1996, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

⁵⁹³ Hoerbuerger, 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life'.

⁵⁹⁴ Longino, 'Home Entertainment'.

⁵⁹⁵ Hoerbuerger, 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life'.

⁵⁹⁶ Rose, "'Not black enough'".

fate. Whilst her record label – particularly Clive Davis – were the primary villains in that reading, characters from her personal life serve the same purpose in readings of a concealed personal authenticity. In these interpretations, the redemptive impulse is pursued through reference to wrongdoing from her family and husband. Where the hidden authenticity in the previous chapter was musical, in these accounts it is personal – Houston becomes a victim of those around her and fans and commentators can thus construct an idea of who she would have been without these influences. This is demonstrated in the speculation that abounds in these sources. These readings also line up with the removal of agency, as exemplified by Kevin Macdonald in his rationale for directing the 2018 documentary: ‘I wanted people to see her on a human level as the little girl who got lost’.⁵⁹⁷

As with Winehouse, framing of the men in Houston’s life becomes central to a shaping redemptive legacy. Criticism of Bobby Brown appears frequently in the obituaries. For example, he is often faced with the charge of having introduced Houston to hard drugs.⁵⁹⁸ This was arguably proved false in the 2018 documentary but provided an effective method of alleviating agency in the immediate aftermath of Houston’s death. For example, Polly Dunbar and Paul Martin claim that ‘Brown eclipsed her talent and she began the descent into helpless addiction Brown began to travel with Houston ... and the pair would often hole themselves up in their hotel room with large quantities of alcohol’,⁵⁹⁹ dating the beginning of her troubles to her marriage. Eva Simpson, a long-time fan, documents her chagrin over their relationship, situating Houston within a stereotype of talented women undone by contemptible men:

Almost inevitably, like so many powerful female singers, Whitney fell in love with a wrong-un. I was stunned when she got together with Bobby Brown Their union was quickly followed by descent into drug abuse, endless court

⁵⁹⁷ Kevin Macdonald quoted in Chuck Arnold, ‘Triumph and Tragedy’, *New York Post*, Jul 6, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

⁵⁹⁸ ‘Whitney Houston’, editorial, *Daily Telegraph*, Feb 12, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁵⁹⁹ Polly Dunbar and Paul Martin, ‘Whitney, Bobby, drugs and death’, *MailOnline*, Feb 22, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.

cases and various stints in rehab. It was all so tragic, so heart-breaking to see this beautiful woman become a caricature, a cliché.⁶⁰⁰

This narrative trope appears frequently in the source material and has the effect of providing villains for the story who become responsible for the self-destructive actions taken by the artist. Simpson's framing of Houston as a caricature provides a familiar story arc which commentators can use to make meaning out of potentially uncomfortable readings around a beloved singer. It also allows a space in which commentators can formulate alternative futures for the artist, particularly the idea that, if it weren't for the villain, perhaps a favoured artist may have lived. Allison Samuels in *Newsweek* links Brown's shortcomings and Houston's death directly in her discussion of his behaviour at her funeral, which he left early: 'In the end, Brown wasn't there when Houston made her final exit from her hometown church in Newark. Like so many others in Houston's life, he had his own problems and simply couldn't be bothered with hers'.⁶⁰¹ As with Millington's account of the night of Joplin's death, the implication here is that Houston's demise and Brown are connected. Constructing villains provides a way to displace responsibility.

As stated throughout, once the artist has died, they are reduced to a broad set of significations and a largely accepted narrative arc is formed. When these narrative arcs are deviated from, this can prove unpopular. For example, Brian Moylan says of the widely panned *Lifetime* biopic (dir. Angela Bassett, 2015) that

Most shocking of all is how well Bobby Brown comes off in the whole affair. He's shown to be the good guy, never touching drugs and always doing right by his kids. Sure, he cheats a few times and gets drunk, but then he goes to rehab to try to fix it all. Now, I wasn't inside the relationship, so I don't know what happened, but just based on media coverage and their old reality show, it's hard to say he's as blameless as he comes off here.⁶⁰²

⁶⁰⁰ Eva Simpson, 'I Will Always Love You', *Times*, Feb 12, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁶⁰¹ Allison Samuels, 'Whitney's Private Hell', *Newsweek*, May 7, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁶⁰² Brian Moylan, 'Lifetime's Whitney biopic is the same old cheap and cheesy fare', *Guardian*, Jan 16, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.

The criticism of perceived biographical untruths in mediated portrayals of Houston's life illuminates the desire to reach the 'authentic' story, reiterating authenticity's importance. Here, Moylan draws on publicly available knowledge about Houston and Brown's relationship to refute this arguably rose-tinted recreation. But a suppressed authenticity is also operating; commentators try to construct the person Houston would have been without the influence of mistreatment from those closest to her. Many sources make reference to Houston before she was married to Brown, and her persona as a single person appears to be preferable to her married one. When the fate of a favoured artist seems unacceptable to fans, it appears that a concealed authenticity is sought out to provide a more palatable interpretation. Public knowledge of trouble within their marriage provides a means through which to project assumptions onto the out-of-field frame. Formulations of authenticity in the out-of-field tend to be based on available information so as to be convincing, and they serve social ends through the ways in which they are framed. In this case, villainy is projected onto Brown in order to rationalise Houston's fate.

Media treatment of other figures in Houston's life also demonstrates this tendency. Her family are invariably portrayed as opportunistic and parasitical. There are at first references to Houston as 'the family's cash cow'⁶⁰³ or a 'singing cash register'.⁶⁰⁴ Her parents bear much of the brunt of this, with Brian Lowry's takeaway from the 2018 documentary being that 'Houston was groomed to be a star by her mother, Cissy; her family, especially her father, parasitically feasted on that success'.⁶⁰⁵ Accounts of her family life take on a more harrowing tone when it is suggested that her family could have helped her with her addiction, but that they did not as this would have gone against their financial interests. Writing just after her death, Christopher Goodwin suggests that '[w]hile family members and close friends insisted Houston had shaken off drugs, others including therapists who spoke to her relatives claimed her loved ones had cynically ignored her drug abuse because they were relying on her as

⁶⁰³ Nicole Lampert, 'As she vows to marry her foster brother, why Whitney Houston's daughter seems bent on following her to destruction', *MailOnline*, Oct 25, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁶⁰⁴ Bernstein, 'New Whitney Houston Doc'.

⁶⁰⁵ Brian Lowry, "'Whitney' brings heavy hand to Whitney Houston's troubled life', *CNN*, Jun 29, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

their breadwinner'.⁶⁰⁶ This quite explicitly attaches her family's inaction and Houston's death. A similar sentiment emerges in critical reactions to Macdonald's documentary:

[There are] sobering ... on-camera interviews with her brothers, who recall taking drugs with Houston, and the inescapable feeling that no one in her entourage was willing to step forward and drag her back from the brink of oblivion when her gruelling touring schedule paid their wages.⁶⁰⁷

These accounts serve the same purposes as the ones which condemn Brown; they provide believable villains based on publicly available information. Publicly available information concerning the failures of her family become central to fashioning an authentic figure. With multiple other players in the story, commentators can use claims about their behaviour to move responsibility away from Houston and onto them. The out-of-field is here constructed in a way that rationalises Houston's enactment of a transgressive femininity by placing responsibility with others, allowing commentators to construct an idea of an imagined future for Houston without their influence. This demonstrates the redemptive impulse and the continued removal of agency across different perceptions and constructions of authenticity.

Houston's sexuality has also become a means through which to attempt to retrieve suppressed authenticity. I mentioned Houston's status as a queer Black woman in the last chapter in terms of her position in the music industry. In the hidden authenticity reading, it becomes central to commentators unearthing a more 'authentic' Houston. The release of Robyn Crawford's book *A Song for You: My Life with Whitney Houston* in 2019 generated much media coverage. Crawford was a close friend of Houston's and rumours surrounding the nature of their relationship were common. She worked closely with Houston until 2000 and did not comment publicly on their relationship until the release of the book, in which she claims they were romantically involved as teenagers but remained friends instead in light of homophobia within the music industry and disapproval from Houston's family. Her claims about the family are frequently remarked upon in public reaction to the book

⁶⁰⁶ Christopher Goodwin, 'Didn't She Almost Have It All?' *Sunday Times*, Apr 15, 2012, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

⁶⁰⁷ Damon Smith, 'Tragedy of a Diva', *Manchester Evening News*, Jul 6, 2018, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

and contribute to the suppressed authenticity reading common in the source materials. Crawford is presented as a potential antidote to mistreatment from others and subsequent self-destructive behaviour, as per this *Hamilton Spectator* article:

Much of her book paints a portrait of a supremely talented artist who ... found herself in the centre of an increasingly destructive maelstrom of competing personalities and interests Several people in the documentary *Whitney* described Crawford as Houston's 'safety net' and one of the few people who had the singer's best interests in mind.⁶⁰⁸

Crawford is treated as a means through which commentators might be able to access the 'authentic' Houston they wish to construct. Her disclosure of a romantic relationship additionally provides an authenticity that was previously hidden from fans. Through discourse surrounding this disclosure, fans and commentators can form ideas about who Houston might have been had she been able to be open about her sexuality and if her and Crawford's friendship had not broken down. Additionally, the book continues to present her family and Brown in an unflattering light, and this is mentioned frequently in critical reactions to it. For example, Emma Brockes in the *Guardian* highlights the claim that 'Crawford was maligned, marginalised, and allegedly threatened with violence by the singer's family'.⁶⁰⁹ Similarly, Allison Stewart in the *Washington Post* describes Brown as 'a malign presence through [Crawford's] book, a skulking, constantly aggrieved figure who abuses Houston physically and emotionally'.⁶¹⁰ By presenting Brown and her family as suppressors of Houston's 'authentic' self and taking the disclosure of information in the book as a chance to uncover a suppressed 'authenticity', commentators can shape an alternative future for Houston in which she may have been able to avoid her fate. Reactions to the documentary and the release of Crawford's book demonstrate commentators' desire to unearth a more authentic Houston and construct narratives where responsibility for perceived transgressions can be shifted onto others. There are several means available

⁶⁰⁸ '5 Things we learned about Whitney Houston from Robyn Crawford's new book', editorial, *Hamilton Spectator*, Nov 13, 2019, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

⁶⁰⁹ Emma Brockes, 'Robyn Crawford on her love for Whitney Houston', *Guardian*, Nov 16, 2019, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

⁶¹⁰ Allison Stewart, 'Riding the whirlwind with thrilling, doomed Whitney Houston', *Washington Post*, Dec 1, 2019, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

from public information about Houston from which a hidden authenticity, one that is preferable to fans and commentators, can be formed. For fans, this serves the purpose of creating palatable explanations concerning perceived transgressions from a favoured artist. Yet it also serves a broader purpose in terms of societal and moral norms by diminishing agency from Houston and thus forgiving perceived misdeeds.

As with Joplin and Winehouse, men in Carpenter's and Houston's stories provide effective male villains, placing agency in the male domain. Yet the vilification of mothers in these discourses is also interesting. In *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers*, Doyle draws on common tropes from horror films (including *Psycho* and *Carrie*) and discussion around real murderers (such as Ed Gein and Ed Kemper) to illustrate how '[i]n these stories, a woman who raises a monster *is* that monster. In the real world, mothers are endlessly blamed for any and every bad decision made by their children'.⁶¹¹ While the case studies discussed are not directly comparable to these historical or pop cultural figures, the vilification of mothers in the discourse surrounding Houston and Carpenter presents another way of displacing autonomy through a common narrative trope. Indeed, Hearsum and Jaworski have both examined the importance of motherhood to posthumous fame, Hearsum exploring the coverage of Houston's treatment of her daughter in her obituaries and finding that she is accused of 'moral failings'⁶¹² whilst Jaworski finds that Paula Yates was held to a much higher standard of parenting in coverage of her death than her partner and father of her child, Michael Hutchence.⁶¹³ Tongson also remarks on this trend in her book on Carpenter, and points out that it is problematic: 'In many respects Agnes is too easy a target There's something odious about how quick we all are to capitulate to yet another story that casts women as both victim and perpetrator in their dynamic'.⁶¹⁴ It seems that in these cases, moralising around motherhood has become an area in which to construct ideas of femininity. I borrow from film theory in identifying this trend; as Kathleen Rowe Karlyn has said in her study of motherhood on screen, 'ideologies of femininity are nowhere more intensely charged than around

⁶¹¹ Jude Ellison Sady Doyle, *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers: Monstrosity, Patriarchy, and the Fear of Female Power* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2019), 190. Original emphasis.

⁶¹² Hearsum, 'Three Faces of Musical Motherhood in Death', 126.

⁶¹³ Jaworski, 'Elegantly Wasted', 782.

⁶¹⁴ Tongson, *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*, 81.

motherhood'.⁶¹⁵ The 'evil matriarch' trope provides another familiar narrative trajectory from which commentators can make sense of the fates of the artist. This archetype can also be understood as a form of transgressive femininity, as there are pluralities around the term. In this case it seems that one form of transgressive femininity is used to contain another. Commentators seek to redeem the beloved figures Carpenter and Houston, and displacing responsibility through the 'evil matriarch' trope allows them to achieve this. Drawing on perceived maternal shortcomings provides rationalisation for the artists' behaviours and thus a palatable 'explanation' for fans and commentators.

Carpenter is presented as being contained musically and personally by those around her. This suppression is positioned as inherently harmful to her, helping to rationalise self-destructive actions. It also contributes to a framing of her in which she has little agency. For Houston, perceptions of suppression also work on both musical and personal levels. Once a trope of villainy is projected onto others, commentators can construct an idea of the 'true' Houston and what might have become of her without these influences. The pursuit of the 'real person' behind the headlines seems to entail manipulating the available information in order to construct a preferred persona.

6.4 Flexible authenticity

Debates around Holiday and the ways in which her story is told similarly demonstrate the political ends served in the attempts to excavate an 'authentic' persona and project meaning into the out-of-field. In many of the extracts collected, Holiday's persona and life experiences are framed in a way that reiterates negative assumptions around Black women and jazz musicians. Retrospection around Holiday's life frequently posits her as a victim of those around her, with Dave Gelly in *The Observer* describing her life as 'a nightmare of drugs, exploitation and abuse'.⁶¹⁶ These assumptions play into the stereotypical story of the tragic jazz singer, and so they provide a compelling and familiar narrative. Yet when Holiday's life is summarised into a few broad-brush strokes that fit a narrative trope in this way, the public discourse

⁶¹⁵ Kathleen Rowe Karlyn, *Unruly Girls, Unrepenting Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), 5.

⁶¹⁶ Dave Gelly, 'Sheer unstudied elegance', *Observer*, Apr 12, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

surrounding her becomes simplified and frequently reductive. Anna Pukas in the *Scottish Express* presents an especially limited and unnuanced account of her life: '[She] ... was born 100 years ago tomorrow. Not that Holiday would ever have reached a great age. Her rackets life encompassed heroin addiction, alcoholism, teenage prostitution, prison and a string of abusive lovers and killed her at 44'.⁶¹⁷ Such formulations point to an overly simplistic interpretation of Holiday's life in which her death was an inevitable outcome of her experiences. Without the complexities of more accurate biography-writing, Holiday's story can be manipulated to serve broader ideological functions concerning 'acceptable' female behaviour and the rationalisation of pariah femininity. The central framing of shady figures around Holiday in particular serves to diminish agency, as with the other case studies.

Several newspaper articles point to the abuse she suffered at the hands of romantic partners, playing into the same notions present throughout the chapter – that the men in the stories are the ones with agency. Journalistic retrospectives written around the centenary of her birth (2015) still tend to posit this centrally to her story. Andy Gill in *The Independent* claims that she 'had a romantic penchant for tough guys She was in fact notoriously attracted to the wrong kind of men, who tended to use and abuse her, leaching her earnings to leave her virtually penniless by her death'.⁶¹⁸ A similar sentiment emerges in James Maycock's examination of her long-standing musical collaboration and friendship with Lester Young: 'Holiday ... was besieged by racism and a myriad of vile, manipulative boyfriends, husbands and managers throughout her life'.⁶¹⁹ In journalistic accounts of Holiday's life, her musical legacy frequently acts as a footnote to more 'scandalous' aspects, which work to grab attention. Much scholarly work on celebrity culture has examined the appeal of scandal. Graeme Turner describes gossip as 'an important social process through which social and cultural norms are debated, evaluated, modified and shared'.⁶²⁰ Therefore, when the scandalous elements of the story are framed centrally, the challenge to social and moral standards posed by some elements of Holiday's life becomes a

⁶¹⁷ Anna Pukas, 'Rebecca Sings Billie', *Scottish Express*, Apr 6, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁶¹⁸ Andy Gill, 'Billie Holiday centenary', *Independent*, Apr 17, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁶¹⁹ James Maycock, 'Billie Holiday and Lester Young: the intimate friendship between Lady Day and Prez', *Guardian*, Apr 8, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁶²⁰ Graeme Turner, *Understanding Celebrity* (London: Sage, 2004), 24.

dominant source of meaning-making around her biography. As Doyle has pointed out, the salacious details of Holiday's life were always at least part of the appeal 'to an increasingly white, middle-class audience who were eager for a look at the much-mythologized underworld figure – the criminal, drug-addicted black jazz musician'.⁶²¹ Fascination and gossip around Holiday's personal life thus provides a space in which commentators can appropriately reframe a 'deviant' woman. Yet despite the degree of vilification of Holiday in these sources (they are much more critical than the other extracts in this chapter – reflective of the intersectional considerations examined in section 2.2.2), she is still framed primarily as victim. As with the other case studies, men are presented as the characters with autonomy whilst Holiday is spoken about in the passive voice – she is the one who is 'used and abused', has her earnings 'leached', and is 'besieged by racism'.

There is also the typical tabloid objective of laying bare the most sordid examples of Holiday's troubles, an extension of the observations above. For example, the *Straits Times* centenary piece includes personal and humiliating details:

Holiday died with just US\$50 to her name taped to her thigh She was broken down by heroin use, police harassment and a husband who would beat her so severely she would tape her ribs before concerts. When her body gave way at age 44 ... she was under arrest in her hospital bed for narcotics and her savings consisted of the US\$50 slipped to her by a reporter who wanted a deathbed interview.⁶²²

What these kinds of demeaning accounts do is distract from Holiday's talents and successes and therefore they can also be said to send out a warning about perceived transgressive behaviour. Doyle discusses a desire to 'punish' unruly women through death: 'By dying, a trainwreck finally gives us the one statement we wanted to hear from her: that women like her really can't make it, and shouldn't be encouraged to try'.⁶²³ Bradshaw points out a similar purpose in the film *The Rose*, noting that the way in which we try to punish 'the diva marks a cultural inability to imagine real and lasting

⁶²¹ Doyle, *Trainwreck*, 108.

⁶²² 'Billie Holiday celebrated as trailblazer', editorial, *Straits Times*, Apr 4, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁶²³ Doyle, *Trainwreck*, 114.

female achievement. But more than that, [it] marks a cultural reluctance to imagine such achievement'.⁶²⁴ Discussing the film's ending, in which Rose collapses and dies onstage, Bradshaw describes her dying 'disoriented and alone, proving that no adulation outside normativity will go unpunished'.⁶²⁵ By displaying the shocking image of Holiday's deathbed so graphically, I argue that sources such as these can be viewed through a similar lens to that which Bradshaw applies to *The Rose*: they send out a message about the perils of transgression. Whilst the redemptive narrative emerges over time, the above sources point to her death as an inevitable consequence of her lifestyle. Holiday has often been framed as a mysterious figure and so the out-of-field can be constructed with relative freedom. Seeking an 'authentic' Holiday who is a downtrodden, abused, drug-addicted, Black jazz singer serves tropes related to both negative stereotypes about Black women (as examined in section 5.4) and 'deviant' female jazz singers. Ultimately, such a portrayal continues to line up with the denial of agency to the women in this thesis through the introduction of external villains.

In recent years, however, central framing of Holiday's musical legacy seems to have become more of a concern. Her centenary year seemed to see the beginning of this, with some critics pointing out the imbalance between coverage of Holiday's personal life and musical influence. Ben Ratliff suggests that we 'move beyond a singer's tragedy', claiming that

It's not enough to see her as a passive or static entity – a victim, a sufferer, a collection of vocal mannerisms. The closer you look, the less she seems stuck in her time. She sang with Count Basie, Artie Shaw and Benny Goodman in the 1930s, and recorded 'Strange Fruit' in 1939, a brave and piercing meditation on American racism For decades after her death, she was understood as a doomed hero The change in that understanding has come slowly ever since.⁶²⁶

In section 4.4, I referred to Margolick's problematic and assertive conflation of the musical content of 'Strange Fruit' and Holiday's fate. Ratliff here moves away from this

⁶²⁴ Bradshaw, 'Devouring the Diva', 72.

⁶²⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁶²⁶ Ben Ratliff, 'Moving Beyond a Singer's Tragedy', *New York Times*, Apr 3, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

conflation of song and biography, referring to the enduring power of the song itself and Holiday's bravery in her persistence in performing it. Crucially, some of Holiday's agency is restored in this account. 'Strange Fruit' has maintained its power since Holiday first performed it; in the first six months of 2020, Holiday's performances of the song were streamed more than two million times, and the song was rerecorded by Betty LaVette in reaction to the Black Lives Matter protests that followed the murder of George Floyd. Yet, as mentioned in the section 5.4, some considerations of the song, including Margolick's, focus on rows concerning its authorship and make reference to Holiday not fully understanding the song. According to Angela Davis, this perpetuates myths of gendered and raced inferiority.⁶²⁷ Yet Ratliff recognises not only the song's power but also the personal and professional difficulties Holiday opened herself up to by continuing to perform it. In this account, Ratliff recognises her autonomy as an artist, a frame distinctly lacking in the earlier extracts examined.

In terms of academic discourse, Szwed published *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth* in 2015, which primarily focuses on Holiday as a singer. The book provides a necessary corrective to life-writing that has 'been bent to serve some other purpose than telling her story' and contains a detailed musicological account of her vocal craft.⁶²⁸ Reviews of this book point to a shift in perspective in broadsheet journalistic discourse:

Plenty of stars from yesteryear had crazy-juicy personal lives; very few left behind conceptual approaches that inspire in so many directions [This book] encourage[s] us to consider musicianship as the defining characteristic of Lady Day's legacy. That's about as fine a centenary-year gift as anyone has a right to expect.⁶²⁹

Neil Spencer likewise claims that upon reading the book, '[w]hat the reader is left with ... is not Holiday's familiar, ravaged private life but the triumph of a unique creative talent'.⁶³⁰ Several sources examined in the thesis have either disregarded Holiday's

⁶²⁷ Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 187.

⁶²⁸ Szwed, *Billie Holiday*, 2.

⁶²⁹ Seth Colter Walls, 'Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review', *Guardian*, Apr 3, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

⁶³⁰ Neil Spencer, 'Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review', *Observer*, May 5, 2015, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

musical legacy entirely or else framed it as inextricably linked to her biography (particularly in terms of vocal timbre). In these sources, through their celebration of Szwed's work, it appears that the imbalance between focus on personal strife and musical legacy may be beginning to be redressed. These more nuanced accounts are found in broadsheet rather than tabloid coverage, and further observation may indicate if this will spread to other types of publications.

6.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have drawn on Deleuze's theories concerning the importance of the 'out-of-field' to examine how commentators construct meaning in the gaps in the stories. This is achieved in the attempt to uncover hidden or suppressed authenticities, which involves constructing preferred 'authentic' personae and sometimes imagined futures. This is often formulated through the introduction of 'villains' into the narrative, and serves two purposes: rationalising these women's fates, and continuing to remove responsibility. Removal of culpability works towards redeeming the artists from their perceived transgressions.

In the cases of Joplin and Winehouse, hidden vulnerability is the dominant theme emerging. This involves a reframing of their music and personae; where both were largely perceived to be 'fierce' during their lifetimes due to their hedonistic behaviour and musical stylings, posthumously these factors become a cover for a hidden vulnerability. For Joplin, the gaps are filled in with ideas concerning romantic misfortune, early trauma, and sexism in the counterculture to construct this vulnerability. This is present in both journalistic data and academic discourse. The first step in reframing Winehouse's authenticity in the journalistic source material involves the projection of villainy onto her father and husband. The next is to construct Winehouse as an 'ordinary' (that is, authentic) person with a passion for performing jazz, who would have been fine had she been left alone by the villains in the narrative: her father, husband, and the press.

For Carpenter, suppressed authenticity is framed through presentation of her family and record label as controlling and manipulative. This can be seen in various media concerning Carpenter (such as the work of Haynes and Gordon) as well as the journalistic discourse. This suppressed creative freedom is framed as having been a central contributor to her perceived unhappiness, and crucially, the source materials

suggest she turned the control she did not have over her career inward. Imagined futures are constructed commonly through the persona that commentators perceive in her solo album. In Houston's case, family and record label figures provide similar villains and are accused of profiting from her misfortunes as well as limiting her creativity, as was explored in Chapter Five. Suppressed authenticity is again framed as a contributor to unhappiness and imagined futures are constructed in terms of who she may have been without these figures or through her relationship with Crawford. Similar framings also operate around Holiday. The coverage arguably sends out warnings concerning pariah femininity through the explicit chronicling of her misfortunes. Yet as with the other case studies, the projection of villainy onto the men around her neutralises the threat posed by perceived transgressive behaviour and agency in these narrative trajectories is placed with the male characters. However, from 2015 a more complex and emancipatory reading has emerged, in which Holiday was not just the archetypal tragic torch singer, but an innovative musician, a protester against racism, and a multi-faceted person. These reactions are indicative of a change in attitude towards Holiday and the complexities of her story. This shift is small but significant, and analysis of this discursive change beyond this thesis will demonstrate the extent to which nuance is emerging in the narrative (see sections 7.2.3 and 7.5).

The overall purpose of these reformulations seems to be to displace agency from the artists and therefore to attach fathomable or palatable meaning to the stories of these women. Where Schippers has suggested that social sanction is often the means through which perceived unacceptable, pariah femininity is rationalised,⁶³¹ I suggest that the construction of alternative narratives is another method of achieving this. This is perhaps most achievable when the artist has died and their story can be reduced to broad thematic arcs. The most common narrative tropes employed are those of romantic misfortune and perceived loneliness, neglect from men close to the artist, and manipulation and pressure from families and record labels. These are all familiar narrative thrusts and so provide an easy and arguably convincing basis from which to construct hidden or suppressed authenticity and imagined futures, especially when compounded by assumptions based on the extension of publicly available knowledge.

⁶³¹ Schippers, 'Recovering the Feminine Other', 95.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Summary

This thesis set out to explore the ideological functions in common trends across the mediation of the posthumous careers of five well-known female singers who died from unnatural causes. Early in the research process, I discovered that the ascription of authenticity is vital to the formation of posthumous personae, and that it is ascribed in several different ways. I grouped the main themes emerging from the source materials collected into perceptions of vocal authenticity, cultural authenticity, and suppressed authenticity. The narratives formed around each artist are positioned to serve the redemptive impulse, frequently working in ways that remove their agency, and this provides a way of posthumously ‘redeeming’ them from perceived wrongdoing and rationalising their enactment of pariah femininity. The five singers observed in this thesis are diverse figures and the narratives constructed line up with specificities from each of their lives and careers, yet the narrative meaning-making around each arguably serves this same overall purpose.

7.2 Findings

In order to identify the trends in posthumous life-writing for each of these singers, at the beginning of this thesis, I set out three research questions: how are narratives formed around well-known female musicians and addicts and how do these narratives change following the artist’s death? What role does the artist’s music play in the formation and perception of these narratives? How have these narratives changed from the first case study to the present day? Three main findings have arisen, which work to respond to these questions.

7.2.1 The gendered construction of posthumous narratives

A crucial facet of the study of posthumous fame is the understanding that meaning-making does not end with the artist’s death.⁶³² Once an artist has died, commentators are free to construct various meanings around them without the complexities of ongoing behaviour. This is why dead celebrities and musicians come to represent personae that are simplified from their living selves. Indeed, each of the artists

⁶³² Jensen, ‘On Fandom, Celebrity, and Mediation’, xix.

examined in this thesis has come to posthumously represent a series of broad narrative themes and I have identified a sharp shift in narrative at the point of death. Interestingly, the narratives formed during the artists' lifetimes tend to be more diverse than the posthumous sources – there is a greater contrast between positive and negative sentiment in lifetime coverage, whereas posthumous coverage leans far more heavily towards positive. A distinct shift in tone and a far greater degree of unification across sources can be identified at this stage. This finding corresponds with the first research question: how are narratives formed around well-known female musicians and addicts and how do these narratives change following the artist's death? I discovered this initial trend once I had collected the documents, before I had analysed them in more detail, and this demonstrated that the redemptive impulse was present. The next step was to observe how this impulse was satisfied.

During my initial close analysis of the data, I discovered that the idea of authenticity is crucial to posthumous meaning-making and the fulfilment of the redemptive impulse. The desire to unearth an 'authentic' persona in order to make sense of the fates of the artists is clear throughout the source material. Jensen has pointed out 'the desire of fans, journalists, and critics to locate the "real" person ... a desire to lay claim to their own version of the meaning of a particular figure's life' in the reception of posthumous careers.⁶³³ I expand on this work by arguing that this search for authenticity serves not just personal but ideological ends and that in the exploration of female posthumous fame specifically, considerations around the various meanings of femininity abound. I mentioned in the literature review that existing studies of female posthumous fame from scholars such as Jensen, Bowers and Houston Grey, Beltrán, Hearsum, and Miller supported the idea that posthumous fame operates along gendered lines and serves ideological functions. Having now carried out a more extensive exploration into female posthumous fame that spans genres and time periods, I argue that this remains accurate.

Importantly, in the cases I have examined, ideas about authenticity and agency are closely linked. Chapter Four demonstrated how authenticity is sought in the sonic qualities of the voice. Despite Eidsheim's observations about the futility of making assumptions based on vocal timbre, commentators do generally seem to believe that

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

the sound of the voice transmits the essence of a person. The positioning of 'vocal authenticity' in the extracts in Chapter Four situate the emotional qualities of the voice as information about each artist's personal travails rather than as a result of musical skill. In Chapter Five, ideas of cultural (in)authenticity were explored, as three of the case studies have been accused of musical cultural transgression. What I found here was that these accusations were often reversed after death, sometimes disappearing from the sources almost entirely, and other times being reframed in ways that worked to 'redeem' the artist. In Chapter Six, I illustrated how the ways in which the 'out-of-field' in the stories of these artists are filled in frequently posits villains in the stories through the construction of hidden or suppressed authenticities, framing the artists as victims of those around them. Each of these methods of ascribing authenticity serves the redemptive impulse and they are often consistent with the removal of agency and ultimately, the removal of autonomy in posthumous retrospectives rationalises 'unfeminine' behaviours and manipulates the stories of these women so that they better fit dominant gender codes; specifically, I suggest that such framing rationalises the enactment of pariah femininity. By applying Schippers' notion of pariah femininity, it is possible to identify how a deviation from dominant ideas of gender order – in this case, through a femininity that does not complement hegemonic masculinity – is contextualised within a framework that works towards absolving the 'deviant' woman of fault, and which often removes her agency.

7.2.2 The role of music

The intersection between perception of the musical and personal has also been a dominant theme in the data; the artist's music and their life trajectories are frequently spoken about in the same breath. This finding corresponds to the second research question: what role does the artist's music play in the formation and perception of these narratives? Vocal timbre plays a significant part in this, as demonstrated in Chapter Four. Despite the disparate styles of each of the case studies, interpretations of their music are often linked to the desire to displace responsibility and 'redeem' them. Essentially, music becomes a narrative device for attaching meaning to the fates of the singers; audiences seem to reappraise musical meaning in light of the artists' deaths. This can be seen in the way that perceived hoarseness in Joplin's and Winehouse's voices is reconfigured as suggesting vulnerability rather than toughness

(or even just consistency with a rock idiom, in Joplin's case), how perceived glossiness in the voices of Carpenter and Houston are reinterpreted as signifying inherent melancholy, and how the eventual degradation of Holiday's and Houston's voices gives rise to identification of personal trouble. These perceptions appear to help commentators make sense of the fates of each singer, as the musical meanings constructed are habitually manipulated into connections with the personal, and the sense of authenticity associated with the singing voice is taken as evidence of inherent sadness or vulnerability.

Accusations of cultural inauthenticity, along with their posthumous reversal, are also presented as closely linked to the artists' personal lives in posthumous coverage. For example, backlash against Houston's crossover appeal is framed as both a core contributor to her unhappiness (again working towards an idea of these women as 'sad' rather than 'bad' in the discourse) or celebrated as a step forward for Black representation in 'mainstream' music. For both Winehouse and Joplin, criticism of cultural appropriation either diminishes significantly or almost disappears posthumously. These readings tie into the redemptive narrative and provide further proof of how audiences tend to link the vocal and the personal, in line with other research into audience perception of singing voices.⁶³⁴ I mentioned Hearsom's observation about a musical back catalogue offering a redemptive legacy in the literature review.⁶³⁵ Building on this point, interpretation of specific musical features can aid commentators in fulfilling the redemptive impulse.

7.2.3 Temporal considerations

The final major finding concerns the final research question: how have these narratives changed from the first case study to the present day? This thesis has demonstrated how posthumous legacies rarely remain static and so temporal considerations will require additional attention in future research. One of the aims of this research was to explore if and how the formulations of these narratives have altered in a significant way between the first and last points on the timelines (see Appendix). Chapter Four suggests little fundamental change in the ways in which the idea of vocal authenticity

⁶³⁴ Eidsheim, *The Race of Sound*, 2.

Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 138.

Elliott, *The Late Voice*, 36.

⁶³⁵ Hearsom, 'A musical matter of life and death', 193.

operates in posthumous careers. Whilst specific observations about the sound of the voice may shift, the narrative trajectories constructed around the voice follow similar overall arcs in which the sound of the voice is said to express something of the singer. These interpretations provide a means through which to make sense of their demises. This consistency is identifiable not just in the different case studies and their respective time periods or the amount of time that has elapsed since their death, but also the provenance of the documents collected from the mid-twentieth century until now.

Chapter Five, on the other hand, indicates some significant temporal considerations. The ways in which accusations of cultural inauthenticity disappeared almost entirely from coverage of Joplin and only diminished for Winehouse further demonstrates how the broad narrative themes formed around the artist which solidify over time are simplified from their living persona. Because Joplin died 41 years before Winehouse, her live self is outside of the living memory for many people and therefore much audience understanding of her is based on posthumous presentation. It appears that for her the accusations of cultural appropriation have mostly not made it into the overarching themes in journalistic discourse, suggesting that the longer the artist has been dead for, the more simplified the overall signifiers become.

Media documents that have been published beyond the timelines set out for this project (see Appendix) point to significant recent changes in these narrative arcs in terms of Winehouse and Holiday, displaying more consideration of them as complex and multi-faceted. This can be seen especially in reactions to the 2021 biopic *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*. The divided critical reception of the film has interesting implications for future research. Whilst the performances in the film were largely acclaimed (Andra Day received an Oscar nomination for her performance as Holiday), critics have questioned whether the film prioritises traumatic experiences over musical legacy. Whilst generally accepted to be an improvement on the previous biopic *Lady Sings the Blues* (dir. Sidney J. Furie, 1972), it does rely on some of the archetypes around the 'tragic jazz singer'. For example, A. O. Scott points to the film's tendency to diminish artistic technique:

We see Holiday as a heroin user, a devoted but not always reliable friend, an operatic figure of towering pain and sublime resilience. But not really as an artist [The film] shows little interest in the discipline and craft that made

those indelible nightclub and concert-hall moments possible. The saxophonist Lester Young ... is a ubiquitous but peripheral presence, appearing more as a fellow addict than as an indispensable creative partner.⁶³⁶

The film has also proved controversial in its portrayal of Jimmy Fletcher, an undercover federal agent sent to spy on her, centring him as a love interest based on Hari's claims in *Chasing the Scream*, his account of the war on drugs.⁶³⁷ This is a disputed claim and so critics have questioned Fletcher's central framing in the film, particularly the ways in which he is presented as a caring, positive influence. After all, whilst much of what is assumed about Holiday and Fletcher is based on speculation, what is known is that he was sent to secretly follow her. Where many of the men in this chapter are cast as villains, this constructed version of Fletcher is a hero. As Roxana Hadadi has said, even fictional men seem to play a more central role in the biopic than its subject: 'All the qualities that made her singular play second fiddle to her many relationships with awful men. Some of those men were invented for the script'.⁶³⁸ Peter Bradshaw points out how

there is something tonally very odd about elevating this imagined love affair to an accepted part of her life, with sensitive G-man dreamboat Fletcher supportively hanging around That is especially so when, in real life, Billie Holiday's magnificent courage and defiance took place in spite of men and their reactionary bullying.⁶³⁹

The film's framing continues to follow a trajectory where the men in the story are the ones with power. Although the majority of men in this thesis have been posited as villains in public discourse, presenting them as heroes serves the same agency-removing purpose. As Bradshaw says, it 'cheapens [Holiday's] courage'. She is allowed

⁶³⁶ A. O. Scott, "'The United States vs. Billie Holiday'" Review: Singing for Her Life', *New York Times*, Apr 5, 2021, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 15, 2021.

⁶³⁷ Johann Hari, *Chasing the Scream: The Search for the Truth about Addiction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 23.

⁶³⁸ Roxana Hadadi, 'Hulu's United States vs. Billie Holiday cheats its fantastic star and subject', *Polygon*, Feb 26, 2021, accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.polygon.com/hulu/2021/2/26/22303082/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review>.

⁶³⁹ Peter Bradshaw, 'The United States vs Billie Holiday review – Lee Daniels' misguided biopic', *Guardian*, Feb 19, 2021, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 15, 2021.

little autonomy in the overall trajectory of the film; Hadadi says that 'it uses men to speak about Holiday's importance, aura, and appeal, without giving the same opportunities to the character herself'.⁶⁴⁰ This continues to work into the overall narratives identified in this thesis: that these figures are not granted agency or autonomy in their own stories. Fletcher is formulated in the film as a hero rather than a villain, but crucially, agency lies with him.

However, the backlash to the film and the increase in nuance in the way this story is told has intriguing ramifications. Holiday is the earliest case study examined, and therefore provides the best vantage point from which to consider temporal factors in these posthumous reputations. The many similarities in the broad narratives constructed around these figures would suggest that less has changed than would be desirable. However, it is possible to detect since her centenary the emergence of more detail in the discourse, and it is a shift to a more nuanced telling of the stories of these women advocated for in this thesis. Further investigation is needed here to determine whether this shift in narrative trajectory is likely to continue or if it is an anomaly. I intend to trace this beyond the scope of this project as these alterations in discourse are often slowly moving shifts rather than abrupt changes. This change is small but significant, and proof of the malleability of posthumous careers and the social and ideological ends that their construction often serves.

Media marking the tenth anniversary of Winehouse's death also led to some retrospective reconsideration in journalistic discourse, particularly in terms of challenging assumptions made about her and recognising complexities in her story. One common theme was the need for improved mental health provisions for musicians, which Rhian Jones points out were lacking for Winehouse:

It's hard to say whether Amy's death shocked the music industry into understanding its obligation to protect artists Whether the toll of exposure – particularly for female artists – can be lessened with support is another question To be a fan today is to understand ... that there's a cost to this.⁶⁴¹

⁶⁴⁰ Hadadi, 'Hulu's United States vs. Billie Holiday'.

⁶⁴¹ Rhian Jones, 'The fandom that made me: Amy Winehouse: the spiteful way she was treated still fills me with rage', *Guardian*, Apr 12, 2021, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

Jones situates Winehouse as someone struggling with ill health who needed more support than she received but she does not frame her as inherently troubled or stray into any of the mythologising around the links between music and personal life present in much of the other documents included in the thesis. Increased consideration of treatment of musicians who are prominently in the public eye is further reflected by Kate Solomon, who cautions against letting ‘the continual failings [she] bore ever happen again’. Solomon additionally points to the ways in which scandal surrounding Winehouse’s personal life has come to overshadow her musical legacy: ‘For years we were bombarded with photos of Winehouse in various states of disarray It’s tragic that the many problems she fought, overcame and succumbed to have overshadowed the story of her life’.⁶⁴² Likewise, Libby Purves calls for consideration of the nuances and complexities of the situation, claiming that ‘[t]he tale of tragic, doomed genius is Byronic mythmaking which ignores the fact that many addicts can and do save themselves’.⁶⁴³ As has been established in this thesis, complexity in the stories of these women have been repeatedly simplified, and so this reconsideration of nuance is significant. However, these changes in trend remain in their early stages and do not outweigh the overall sentiments in the source materials I have collected for this project. Further sustained research is needed here to discover whether this shift in narrative trajectory is likely to continue or if it is an anomaly.

7.3 Contributions

The most significant contribution I have made to original knowledge through this research project has been to strengthen understanding of how posthumous fame works for female musicians. There is no extended study into this yet, since existing literature mostly works on a smaller scale or examines one figure. My project expands upon current knowledge of posthumous fame by tracing trends across multiple singers operating in different time periods.

Vocal timbre appears to be one of the most important methods of musical meaning-making in posthumous fame. This is further proof of the ways in which

⁶⁴² Kate Solomon, ‘How we keep failing Amy Winehouse’, *Independent*, Mar 4, 2021, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

⁶⁴³ Libby Purves, ‘How we tell Amy Winehouse’s story matters’, *Times*, Jul 26, 2021, retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

audiences have tended to assign meaning to the sonic qualities of the voice based on knowledge of the personal. Lordi has already demonstrated how this is a common reading around Holiday, and I expand on her work by finding evidence of similar readings around the posthumous careers of other female singers, especially those who die in unnatural or scandalous circumstances. For Carpenter and Houston, the beauty and skill detected in their voices are reread through an ironic lens, they are taken to retrospectively reveal an inherent melancholy. For Joplin and Winehouse, the hoarser or throatier voice is similarly taken as evidence of vulnerability – harsh vocal sounds are often understood as the expression of pain in the source materials collected. Indeed, this thesis also contributes to collective understanding of how audiences perceive personal authenticity in popular music by examining how it operates posthumously. That audiences value authenticity is well-researched.⁶⁴⁴ However, the discovery of the ways in which commentators ascribe or alter perceptions of authenticity after the artists' death further demonstrates what an elusive and malleable concept it is, and how its assignment is grounded in social and ideological reasoning.

I have also contributed to an understanding of how perceptions of cultural authenticity operate posthumously in these cases. Accusations of cultural appropriation around Joplin have been explored in the academic world by Wald and Adelt. Wald does not mention its role in posthumous public reception, whilst Adelt does not explore why it is no longer a common theme in discussion around Joplin.⁶⁴⁵ Yet its dissipation from the data is significant in terms of identifying a redemptive impulse in posthumous coverage. A similar trajectory in coverage of Winehouse has also not yet been interrogated critically. Houston's crossover success has been explored in academic work,⁶⁴⁶ and I have contributed to this literature by identifying the posthumous redemptive impulse here, too. Much of the literature surrounding Houston focuses on the significance of crossover appeal,⁶⁴⁷ and Hopkins' review of Macdonald's documentary identifies the trajectory from living villain to dead victim to

⁶⁴⁴ Moore, 'Authenticity as Authentication', 211.

⁶⁴⁵ Wald, 'One of the Boys?'

Adelt, *Blues Music in the Sixties*, 112.

⁶⁴⁶ Kooijman, 'The true voice of Whitney Houston', 305-320.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Shelton, 'Whitney is Every Woman?' 135-153.

'resurrected icon'.⁶⁴⁸ I have expanded on these ideas by providing an analysis of how the reversal of perceived inauthenticity can serve the redemptive impulse; ideas of crossover appeal and status as a 'resurrected icon' are closely linked.

By applying the Deleuzian concept of the 'out-of-field' I have expanded on Jensen's observations about the 'desire ... to locate the "real" person'⁶⁴⁹ posthumously by contributing to an understanding of trends in narrative formulations and their political implications, especially in terms of femininity. Applying this concept has provided a framework through which to unearth the trends in meaning-making around the personal lives of the artists. Chapter Six revealed that other figures from the case studies' lives are crucial in the presentation of the artist in media portrayals following their deaths. Common narrative tropes are utilised to extinguish the threat of transgressive or pariah femininity by displacing any culpability and thus removing the artist's agency.

7.4 Reflexivity

My position as a female researcher has naturally had some influence on my work in this area. The difference I noticed between the ways in which male and female artists were written about after their deaths felt unjust (whilst this is not a comparative study, comparison did have some influence on my decision to pursue this research). In fact, at points I have had to make sure to take a step back to maintain critical distance in examination of the data extracts I have analysed. As a white woman, I have been careful not to make any assumptions about the role race does or does not play in the narratives identified, particularly in my exploration of meaning-making around the careers of Holiday and Houston. However, my findings suggest that race is a factor in this posthumous narrativizing. For example, it is clear in Chapter Five that Houston received more pushback for perceived cultural transgressions than Winehouse or Joplin (see section 5.5), and perceptions of Houston's music as 'inauthentic' are arguably tied to her position as a Black woman, as outlined by Kooijman.⁶⁵⁰ The data extracts surrounding Holiday are also arguably more critical than for the other four case studies. Additionally, an exploration of meaning-making around Holiday's voice

⁶⁴⁸ Hopkins, 'Trainwreck femininity', 154.

⁶⁴⁹ Jensen, 'On Fandom, Celebrity, and Mediation', xix.

⁶⁵⁰ Kooijman, 'The true voice of Whitney Houston', 306.

cannot be separated from her status as a Black jazz singer as commentators project tragedy onto her changing vocal timbre, reducing her to a tragic figure and thus perpetuating negative stereotypes about African American women, as laid out by Griffin.⁶⁵¹ As Lordi has pointed out, 'neglect of artistic agency is typical of discourse on black women's music'.⁶⁵² My main focus in this thesis has been on the presentation of femininity in the extracts collected, but I have attempted to align myself with an intersectional approach to feminism based on Crenshaw's work through consideration of other social characteristics.⁶⁵³ These findings concerning Holiday and Houston and the role that their race plays in their posthumous careers are important and further research would be beneficial. Additionally, drawing on the work of Skeggs and Finch it can be seen how the pariah femininities rationalised in the source materials are linked to issues of class, particularly the notion of 'respectability', based on moral rather than economic codes. Where the source materials remove the agency of these figures in order to diminish the threat of pariah femininity, they are arguably also controlling the narratives of women not deemed to be 'respectable'. Whilst issues of femininity have been the dominant concern in this research, it is understood that the underlying meanings of femininity in the data cannot be separated from issues of race and class.

My work deals with sensitive topics which I have tried to handle with as much care as possible. I have occasionally wondered throughout this process about the efficacy of interrogating the sexist and/or racist coverage of these figures, and whether I have contributed to the problematic fixation on their personal lives and violation of their privacy by presenting such source materials, thereby giving them a platform. This concern was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of the coverage I have examined deals with posthumous careers and thus the subjects (real social actors) can no longer speak for themselves. However, this project has sought to challenge the assumptions made rather than try to make any truth claims about the lives and deaths of the women examined. To this end, whilst my project has not dealt with live participants, ethical considerations remain, and efforts have been made to distance the research from the sentiments displayed in some of the source materials whilst examining their ideological functions.

⁶⁵¹ Griffin, *In Search of Billie Holiday*, 33.

⁶⁵² Lordi, *Black Resonance*, 8.

⁶⁵³ Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins'.

One of the limitations of this study concerns collecting data for the earlier case studies. For the three earlier case studies, some of the sets contain less than the 50 documents I allocated as a maximum. I believe there are two main reasons for this. The first is practical; for the collection of data after 1985, I have been able to make use of *Nexis*, which gathers documents from across a great range of different publications and locations (see section 3.3). For the earlier case studies, I have made use of separate archives to gather documents. The other reason concerns the increase in journalistic content since the start of the earliest case study (1939 is the first date on my timelines).

The limitations associated with critical discourse analysis are laid out in section 3.7. For example, this research speaks to the encoding of messages within the news media – it has not explored the varying methods of decoding from recipients. On a related note, there is a certain limitation in exploring newspaper discourse from recent years as methods of dissemination and circulation of information have altered so dramatically (see section 3.5). Social media is a particularly important site of meaning-making for a posthumous career. I suggest that consideration of the ‘decoding’ of messages imbued around musicians’ legacies may provide important avenues for further research.

7.5 Further research

One suggestion for further research arising from this thesis has to do with the temporal considerations. Posthumous careers and presentations constantly shift and develop; the meanings formed around them are by no means permanently fixed. The sources laid out in section 7.2.3 seem to indicate a modest change in discursive direction since the beginning of this project. However, this shift remains in its early stages and is limited to broadsheet or left-of-centre publications, and so will require ongoing monitoring to see if it constitutes an ongoing trend. Further research will allow me to assess whether the slight change in perceptions around Holiday and Winehouse will continue or apply to any of the other case studies. A revisitation of the themes explored in this thesis would provide an up-to-date interpretation of the discourse.

This thesis has opened up many interesting questions which have fallen outside of the scope of this particular project. I suggest another four broad themes for further

research arising from my findings. The first concerns more examination around audience reception through study of fan communities. In other words, whilst my project has looked at commentary in mainstream publications in order to obtain a general sense of public opinion, I have spent little time exploring fan communities and how they have memorialised and interacted with these figures. Critical and fan reactions are sometimes at odds with each other, and consideration of fan communities may provide a more rounded overview of these figures' posthumous careers.

Secondly, I have examined very famous artists in this thesis, and this raises questions about the impact of fame on the thesis findings. For example, when Whiteley mentions the disparity between reactions to dead male and female musicians, she mentions Wendy O. Williams of the Plasmatics, Mia Zapata of the Gits, and Kristen Pfaff of Hole.⁶⁵⁴ Arguably, these figures from the punk and grunge scenes have not reached the same levels of global fame as the five singers I have examined. As such, it would be interesting and valuable to explore if similar framings operate around lesser-known female singers.

Another interesting angle for further research concerns the redemptive impulse identified in this thesis. Can this reframing work outside of death? Is it possible for a singer who transgresses the boundaries of idealised femininity to be redeemed during her lifetime? At the time of writing, there has been a great deal of public discourse and debate surrounding the conservatorship of Britney Spears. This particular issue has pertinent links to the infantilisation of female celebrities and issues of agency. Widespread protests against the conservatorship and support from journalistic commentators also might suggest a slight change in discursive direction (journalist Pandora Sykes suggests that we are experiencing 'a time of cultural reappraisal about how we treat women, famous or otherwise').⁶⁵⁵ Clearly, this is a timely topic, and further observation may indicate whether the discourse arising from Spears' conservatorship might contribute to a more nuanced view of women in the public eye and the scrutiny of their personal lives and troubles.

Finally, one of the aims of this thesis was to combine sociological and

⁶⁵⁴ Whiteley, 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music', 334.

⁶⁵⁵ Pandora Sykes, 'Welcome to Pieces of Britney with Pandora Sykes', *BBC Sounds*, podcast audio, Jun 29, 2021, accessed Aug 3, 2021. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09mw16r>.

musicological methods. My work has been at the perception level of musical analysis – how have audiences made meaning out of musical material and how do they connect it with the social? Whilst outside the scope of the thesis, more specific music analysis would be interesting. For example, a thorough interrogation of the timbre of each voice may yield further understanding of the links made between musical content and social factors.

7.6 Rationale and significance

When I started looking into the topic of posthumous fame as a master's student, I realised that a great deal of what I was reading concerned male artists and the ways in which their music shaped their legacy for fans and commentators. Examination of the posthumous careers of female musicians seemed to exist mostly in separate chapters and articles that focused primarily on one artist, such as the chapters devoted to female figures in Jones and Jensen's collection, as well as the more recent explorations in Strong and Lebrun's work.⁶⁵⁶ Thus, I identified a gap in collective understanding of the gendered nature of posthumous fame for musicians in that there was no extended study on this topic. The common threads across these sources, particularly the ways in which posthumous imagery seemed to reflect and reinforce common moral norms concerning femininity and womanhood, suggested to me that further exploration would be worthwhile. The rationale for this thesis was to spend time researching the lives of diverse female singers and look at how their posthumous careers were mediated and consumed to unearth the common trends and their broader implications.

The posthumous careers of musicians can be studied from a variety of different angles and disciplines, particularly from the perspectives of musicology and sociology. I noticed also in my initial reading around this topic that the content of the artist's music becomes a valuable site of meaning-making for posthumous mediation. I have mentioned the role of specific musical features and the importance in audience perception of posthumous legacy. Especially in cases where female musicians have

⁶⁵⁶ Beltrán, 'Commemoration as Crossover'.

Bowers and Houston Grey, 'Karen'.

Jensen, 'Posthumous Patsy Clines'.

Miller, 'Social Sorrow'.

Hearsum, 'Three Faces of Musical Motherhood in Death'.

died early and understanding of them becomes based on what others say within a largely or somewhat patriarchal society, I was keen to explore how these musical considerations impacted their reception. Musicology has long been a largely interdisciplinary pursuit,⁶⁵⁷ and this thesis contributes to an understanding of how musicology and sociology might work together, particularly in its employment of social science-based methodologies to direct the researcher to musicological themes.

That some of the extracts I have examined are so recent demonstrates that limiting ideas about female performers, female success, and the high moral standards that women are held to are still operating within media coverage. Research into the specific narratives formed around these singers is indicative of wider trends within attitudes towards women. One of the aims underpinning this research has been to bring out the nuance in the stories of these singers – to recognise them as talented and multi-faceted and not reduce them to the ‘little girl blue’ stereotype. After all, following death, these women can no longer speak for themselves, and so perception of them becomes bound up in commentary from others. It is therefore vital that their stories are handled with care. These specific case studies also offer insight into attitudes towards female performers more generally, the kind of inferences made about their lives and music, and the broader ideological functions that these assumptions serve. This case study-based thesis has allowed me to explore these attitudes and the discursive framings and the way they produce and reinforce limits. A greater understanding of the rationale behind these assumptions and their attendant functions means that they can be more readily disputed.

⁶⁵⁷ Joseph Kerman, ‘How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out’, *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980) 2: 311-331. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343130>.

Appendix: Timelines

Billie Holiday

1915: born

1939: records 'Strange Fruit'

1941: marries Jimmy Monroe

1947: arrested for possession and use of narcotics and sent to prison, serves ten months, and has cabaret license revoked

1948: performs at Carnegie Hall to a sold-out audience

1949: arrested again, acquitted

1956: autobiography *Lady Sings the Blues* (co-authored with William Dufty) released, arrested again with partner Louis McKay

1959: dies (whilst under arrest) from cirrhosis of the liver

1972: *Lady Sings the Blues* (film) released

2000: inducted into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

2015: centenary birth year

Janis Joplin

1943: born

1966: joins Big Brother and the Holding Company

1967: appears at Monterey Pop Festival with Big Brother and the Holding Company

1968: Big Brother and the Holding Company release *Cheap Thrills*

1968: Big Brother and the Holding Company perform at the 'Wake for Martin Luther King, Jr.' concert in New York

1969: First solo album, *Kozmik Blues*, released

1970: dies of an accidental heroin overdose

1971: *Pearl* released posthumously

1995: inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame

2005: receives a Grammys Lifetime Achievement Award

2015: documentary *Janis: Little Girl Blue* released

Karen Carpenter

1950: born

1970: The Carpenters release *Close to You*

1973: The Carpenters asked to perform at the White House by President Richard Nixon

1975: hospitalised due to complications from disordered eating

1978: The Carpenters cancel tour

1979: records solo album with producers Phil Ramone. It is shelved and not released in its entirety until 1996

1981: marries Thomas Burris, divorces 14 months later

1983: dies due to complications from anorexia nervosa

1994: tribute album *If I Were a Carpenter* released

1996: solo album *Karen Carpenter* released

Amy Winehouse

1983: born

2003: *Frank* released

2006: *Back to Black* released

2007: marries Blake Fielder-Civil. Overdoses and is hospitalised. Arrested and jailed overnight in Norway for possession of marijuana. During a concert in Birmingham, Winehouse is booed and audience members walk out

2008: arrested after a video of her supposedly smoking crack cocaine is discovered, but is not charged as substance cannot be determined. Is denied a US visa to perform at the Grammys due to her drug use. Cautioned by police after slapping someone in the face. Allegedly punches fans during a set at Glastonbury

2009: charged with assault twice, once in March (found not guilty) and once in December (plead guilty, giving conditional discharge). Divorces Blake Fielder-Civil

2011: dies of accidental alcohol poisoning. *Duets II* with Tony Bennett and *Lioness* released

2014: statue unveiled in Camden Town

2015: Asif Kapadia's documentary *Amy* is released

2018: hologram tour announced

Whitney Houston

1963: born

1985: eponymous debut album released

1992: stars in *The Bodyguard*, marries Bobby Brown

1998: *My Love is Your Love* released

2002: *Just Whitney* released

2007: divorces Bobby Brown

2009: *I Look to You* released, Oprah interview

2012: dies; official cause of death is accidental drowning, heart disease and cocaine use also factors

2015: Bobbi Kristina Brown (daughter) dies

2017: Nick Broomfield's documentary *Whitney: Can I Be Me* premieres

2018: Kevin Macdonald's documentary *Whitney* shown in cinemas

2019: Robyn Crawford's *A Song for You* released

References

Bibliography

- Abbate, Carolyn. 'Opera; or, the Envoicing of Women'. In *Musicology and Difference: Gender and Sexuality in Music Scholarship*, edited by Ruth A. Solie, 225-258. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993.
- Adelt, Ulrich. *Blues Music in the Sixties: A Story in Black and White*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2010.
- Ahuvia, Aaron. 'Traditional, Interpretive, and Reception Based Content Analyses: Improving the Ability of Content Analysis to Address Issues of Pragmatic and Theoretical Concern'. *Social Indicators Research* 54 (2001) 2: 139-172.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1011087813505>.
- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Revised edition. New York, NY: The New Press, 2012.
- Alleyne, Mike. "'Babylon Makes the Rules": The Politics of Reggae Crossover'. *Social and Economic Studies* 47 (1998) 1: 65-77.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27866166>.
- 'Amy Winehouse "a heroin and cocaine addict" claim'. Editorial. *NME*. August 15, 2007. Accessed Nov 29, 2018. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/amy-winehouse-444-1339882>.
- Andrews, Hannah. 'From unwilling celebrity to authored icon: Reading Amy (Kapadia, 2015)'. *Celebrity Studies* 8 (2017) 2: 351-354.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2017.1311634>.
- Andsager, Julie L. 'Altared Sites: Celebrity Webshrines as Shared Mourning'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen, 17-29. New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2005.

- Associated Press. 'Explaining AP style on Black and white'. *AP News*. Jul 20, 2020.
 Accessed Apr 19, 2022. <https://apnews.com/article/archive-race-and-ethnicity-9105661462>.
- Avila, Eric. *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004.
- Auslander, Philip. 'Musical Personae'. *The Drama Review* 50 (2006) 1: 100-119.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4492661>.
- Barker, Hugh, and Yuval Taylor. *Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007.
- Barrett, F. S., Grimm, K. J., Robins, R. W., Wildschut, T., Sedikides, C., and Janata, P.
 'Music-Evoked Nostalgia: Affect, Memory, and Personality'. *American Psychological Association* 10 (2010) 3: 390-403.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019006>.
- Barthes, Roland. *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. London: Vintage, 2000 (1980).
- _____. *Image, Music, Text*. Translated by Stephen Heath. London: Fontana Press, 1977.
- Bell, Emma. 'The Insanity Plea: Female Celebrities, Reality Media and the Psychopathology of British Pop-Feminism'. In *In the Limelight and under the Microscope: Forms and Functions of Female Celebrity*, edited by Su Holmes and Diane Negra. 199-223. New York, NY: Continuum, 2011.
- Beltrán, Mary C. 'Commemoration as Crossover: "Remembering" Selena'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 81-96. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Bennett, Andy. 'Mediation, Generational Memory, and the Dead Icon'. In *Death and the Rock Star*, edited by Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun. 61-71. Abingdon, Routledge: 2015.

Berkers, Pauwke, and Merel Eeckelaer. 'Rock and roll or rock and fall? Gendered framing of the rock and roll lifestyles of Amy Winehouse and Pete Doherty in British broadsheets'. *Journal of Gender Studies* 23 (2014) 1: 3-17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2012.754347>.

Bødker, Henrik. 'Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model and the circulation of journalism in the digital landscape'. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 33 (2016) 5: 409-423.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1227862>.

Bogren, Alexandra. 'Women's intoxication as "dual licentiousness": An exploration of gendered images of drinking and intoxication in Sweden'. *Addiction Research and Theory* 16 (2008) 1: 95-106.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/16066350701668895>.

Born, Georgina, and David Hesmondhalgh. 'Introduction: On Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music'. In *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music*, edited by Georgina Born and David Hesmondhalgh. 1-58. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Bowers Peggy J., and Stephanie Houston Grey. 'Karen: The Hagiographic Impulse in the Public Memory of a Pop Star'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 97-120. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

- Brackett, David. 'Black or White? Michael Jackson and the Idea of Crossover'. *Popular Music and Society* 35 (2012) 2: 169-185.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2011.616301>.
- _____. '(In search of) musical meaning: genres, categories and crossover'. In *Popular Music Studies*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus, 65-83. London: Arnold, 2002.
- Bradby, Barbara. 'Sampling sexuality: Gender, technology and the body in dance music'. *Popular Music* 12 (1993) 2: 155-176.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143000005535>.
- Bradshaw, Melissa. 'Devouring the Diva: Martyrdom as Feminine Backlash in *The Rose*'. *Camera Obscura* 23 (2008) 1: 69-87.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-2007-024>.
- Brady, Kathleen T., Susie E. Back, and Shelly F. Greenfield. *Women and Addiction: A Comprehensive Handbook*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2009.
- Breeze, Ruth. 'Critical Discourse Analysis and its Critics'. *Pragmatics* 21 (2011) 4: 493-525.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/prag.21.4.01bre>.
- Brooks, Daphne A. "'This voice which is not one": Amy Winehouse sings the ballad of sonic blue(s)face culture'. *Women and Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 20 (2010) 1: 37-60.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07407701003589337>.
- _____. 'Amy Winehouse and the (Black) Art of Appropriation'. *The Nation*. Sep 29, 2008. Accessed Feb 18, 2021.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/amy-winehouse-and-black-art-appropriation/>.

- Brooks Higginbotham, Evelyn. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1990.
- Cagle, Van M. 'Flaunting It: Style, Identity, and the Social Construction of Elvis Fandom'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*. Edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 41-60. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.
- Cavarero, Adriana. *For More than One Voice: Toward a Philosophy of Voice*. Translated by Paul A. Kottman. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Clarke, Cheryl. 'Lesbianism: An Act of Resistance'. In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. 128-137. New York, NY: Kitchen Table, 1981.
- Chetty, Ray, Nathaniel Hendren, Maggie R. Jones, and Sonya R. Porter. 'Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States: an Intergenerational Perspective'. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 135 (2019) 2: 711-783.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/qje/qjz042>.
- Clay, Andreana. "'Like an Old Soul Record': Black Feminism, Queer Sexuality, and the Hip-Hop Generation'. *Meridians* 8 (2008) 1: 53-73.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338911>.
- Clément, Catherine. *Opera, or, the Undoing of Women*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1988 (1979).

Coates, Norma. '(R)evolution Now? Rock and the political potential of gender'. In *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*. 50-64, edited by Sheila Whiteley. Oxon: Routledge, 1997.

Cobb, Shelley. 'Mother of the Year: Kathy Hilton, Dina Lohan, Lynne Spears, and Bad Celebrity Motherhood'. *Genders* 48 (2008): paras 1-25. Accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2008/11/01/mother-year-kathy-hilton-lynn-spears-dina-lohan-and-bad-celebrity-motherhood>.

Coleman, Ornette. 'Something to Think About'. In *Free Spirits: Annals of the Insurgent Imagination*, edited by Paul Buhle, Jayne Cortez, Philip Lamantia, Nancy Joyce Peters, Franklin Rosemont, and Penelope Rosemont. 117. San Francisco, CA: City Lights, 1982.

Collins, Hattie. 'Notes of disdain'. *Guardian*, May 22, 2004. Accessed Jul 30, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/may/22/popandrock.amywinehouse>.

Collins, Patricia Hill. *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

_____. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Second edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2000 (1990).

Connell, R. W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Cambridge: Polity, 1987.

Connell, R. W., and James Messerschmidt. 'Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept'. *Gender and Society* 19 (2005) 6: 829-859. <https://www.istor.org/stable/27640853>.

Connor, Steven. *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

- Cooper, B. Lee. 'Tribute Discs, Career Development, and Death: Perfecting the Celebrity Product from Elvis Presley to Stevie Ray Vaughan'. *Popular Music and Society* 28 (2005) 2: 229-248.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760500045360>.
- Coppock, Alexander, Emily Ekins, and David Kirby. 'The Long-lasting Effects of Newspaper Op-Eds on Public Opinion'. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 13 (2018): 59-87.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/100.00016112>.
- Coulter, Bridget. "'Singing from the Heart": Notions of Gendered Authenticity in Pop Music'. In *The Routledge Companion to Popular Music and Gender*. 267-280. Edited by Stan Hawkins. London: Routledge, 2017.
- Crawford, Robyn. *A Song for You: My Life with Whitney Houston*. New York, NY: Dutton, 2019.
- Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1993.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43 (1991) 6: 1241-1299.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1229039>.
- Cusick, Suzanne G. 'On Musical Performances of Gender and Sex'. In *Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music*, edited by Elaine Barkin and Lydia Hamessle. 25-48. Zürich: Carciofioli Verlagshaus, 1999.
- Daly, Mary. *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1978.

- Davies, Helen. 'All Rock and Roll is Homosocial'. *Popular Music* 20 (2001) 3: 301-319.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001519>.
- Davis, Angela Y. *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude 'Ma' Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1998.
- Dawidoff, Nicholas. *In the Country of Country: A Journey to the Roots of American Music*. London: Faber and Faber, 1997.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013 (1986).
- DeNora, Tia. *Music and Everyday Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Denes, Peter B., and Elliot N. Pinson. *The Speech Chain: The Physics and Biology of Spoken Language*. New York, NY: W. H. Freeman, 1993.
- Doubleday, Veronica. 'Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender'. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 17 (2008) 1: 3-39.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17411910801972909>.
- Dougher, Sarah. 'When Loud Means Real: Tween Girls and the Voices of Rock Authenticity'. In *Voicing Girlhood in Popular Music: Performance, Authority, Agency*, edited by Jacqueline Warwick and Allison Adrian. 191-207. New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Doyle, Jude Ellison Sady. *Dead Blondes and Bad Mothers: Monstrosity, Patriarchy, and the Fear of Female Power*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2019.
- _____. *Trainwreck: The Women We Love to Hate, Mock, and Fear... and Why*. Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2016.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1903.

du Maurier, George. *Trilby*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009 (1894).

Duncan, Michelle. 'The operatic scandal of the singing body: Voice, presence, performativity'. *Cambridge Opera Journal* 16 (2004) 3: 283-306.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954586704001879>.

Dunn, Leslie C. and Nancy A. Jones, eds. *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Dunsby, Jonathan. 'Roland Barthes and the Grain of Panzéra's Voice'. *Journal of the Royal Musical Association* 134 (2009) 1: 113-132.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14716930902756869>.

Dyer, Richard. *Heavenly Bodies: Film stars and society*. Second edition. London: Routledge, 2013 (2004).

Echols, Alice. *Scars of Sweet Paradise: The Life and Times of Janis Joplin*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 1999.

Eidsheim, Nina Sun. *The Race of Sound: Listening, Timbre, and Vocality in African American Music*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019.

Ellen, Barbara. 'Amy was brilliant. Now she's just a bore'. *Guardian*. Apr 27, 2008.
Accessed Nov 29, 2018.
https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2008/apr/27/1?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other.

Elliott, Richard. *The Late Voice: Time, Age and Experience in Popular Music*. London: Bloomsbury, 2015.

- Evans Brazier, Jana. "'Bye Bye Baby': Race, Bisexuality, and Blues in the Music of Bessie Smith and Janis Joplin'. *Popular Music and Society* 27 (2004) 1: 3-26.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/0300776032000144896>.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Media Discourse*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995.
- Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. In *Discourse as Social Interaction*, edited by T. A. Van Dijk. 258-284. London: Sage, 1997.
- Fales, Cornelia. 'The Paradox of Timbre'. *Ethnomusicology* 46 (2002) 1: 56-95.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/852808>.
- Fenster, Mark. 'Consumers' Guides: The Political Economy of the Music Press and the Democracy of Political Discourse'. In *Pop Music and the Press*, edited by Steve Jones. 81-92. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002.
- Filene, Benjamin. "'Our Singing Country': John and Alan Lomax, Leadbelly, and the Construction of an American Past'. *American Quarterly* 43 (1991) 4: 602-624.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/2713083>.
- Finch, Lynette. *The Classing Gaze: Sexuality, Class and Surveillance*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1993.
- Fornäs, Johan. *Cultural Theory and Late Modernity*. London: Sage, 1995.
- Forchtner, Bernhard. 'Critique, Habermas and narrative (genre): the discourse-historical approach in critical discourse studies'. *Critical Discourse Studies* 18 (2021) 3: 314-331.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1803093>.
- Freud, Sigmund. 'The Origin and Development of Psychoanalysis'. *American Journal of Psychology* 21 (1910) 2: 181-218.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/i261648>.

Frey, Mattias. 'The Authenticity Feeling: Language and Dialect in the Historical Film'.

Research in Film and History (2018): 1-48.

<https://doi.org/10.25969/mediarep/14811>.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. London: Penguin Modern Classics, 2010 (1963).

Frith, Simon. 'The Discourse of World Music'. In *Western Music and its Others:*

Difference, Representation, and Appropriation in Music, edited by Georgina

Born and David Hesmondhalgh. 305-322. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

_____. 'Musicology and Semiotics'. In *On Record: Rock, Pop, and the Written*

Word, edited by Simon Frith and Andrew Goodwin. 235-236. London,

Routledge: 1990.

_____. 'Why Do Songs Have Words?' *Contemporary Music Review* 5 (1989) 1: 77-

96.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/07494468900640551>.

Gaar, Gillian G. *She's a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock and Roll*. Second edition.

New York, NY: Seal Press, 2002.

George, Nelson. *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Gies, Lieve. 'Stars Behaving Badly'. *Feminist Media Studies* 11 (2011) 3: 347-361.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2010.535319>.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso

Books, 1993.

Golan, Guy. 'Inter-Media Agenda Setting Global News Coverage: Assessing the

influence of the *New York Times* on three network television evening news

programs'. *Journalism Studies* 7 (2006) 2: 323-333.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700500533643>.

Gordon, Kim. *Sonic Youth: Sensational Fix*. Köln: Walther König Verlag, 2009.

Gordon, Sammy. 'Amy Winehouse and the Importance of Crediting Black Influencers'. *34th Street*. Feb 15, 2018. Accessed Feb 18, 2020.

<https://www.34st.com/article/2018/02/amy-winehouse-music-appropriation-addiction-thinkpiece>.

Gramsci, Antonio. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1971.

Gray, Sadie. 'Winehouse faces the music as she cancels rest of tour'. *Independent*. Nov 28, 2007. Accessed Nov 29, 2018.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/winehouse-faces-the-music-as-she-cancels-rest-of-tour-760742.html>.

Green, Lucy. *Music, Gender, Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Griffin, Farah Jasmine. *In Search of Billie Holiday: If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery*. New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 2001.

Grossberg, Lawrence. *We Gotta Get Out of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1992.

Gurevitch, Michael, and Paddy Scanell. 'Canonization achieved? Stuart Halls' "encoding/decoding"'. In *Canonic Texts in Media Research – Are there any? Should there be? How about these?* Edited by Elihu Katz, John Durham Peters, Tamar Liebes, and Avril Orloff. 231-247. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003.

Hadadi, Roxana. 'Hulu's United States vs. Billie Holiday cheats its fantastic star and subject'. *Polygon*. Feb 26, 2021. Accessed Feb 18, 2022.

<https://www.polygon.com/hulu/2021/2/26/22303082/the-united-states-vs-billie-holiday-review>.

Hagstrom Miller, Karl. *Segregating Sound: Inventing Folk and Pop Music in the Age of Jim Crow*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

Hall, Stuart. 'Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse'. Paper presented at the Council of Europe Colloquy on 'Training in the Critical Reading of Televisual Language'. University of Leicester, September 1973. Accessed Feb 18, 2022. [http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2962/1/Hall%2C 1973%2C Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse.pdf](http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2962/1/Hall%2C%201973%2C%20Encoding%20and%20Decoding%20in%20the%20Television%20Discourse.pdf).

Hall, Stuart and Lawrence Grossberg. 'On postmodernism and articulation: an interview with Stuart Hall'. *Journal of Communication Enquiry* 10 (1986) 2: 45-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000204>.

Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. Second edition. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013 (1978).

Haraway, Donna. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York, NY: Routledge, 1991.

Hari, Johann. *Chasing the Scream: The Search for the Truth about Addiction*. London: Bloomsbury, 2019.

_____. 'The Hunting of Billie Holiday'. *POLITICO*. Jan 17, 2015. Accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/01/drug-war-the-hunting-of-billie-holiday-114298?o=1>.

Hawkins, Stan. 'On Male Queering in Mainstream Pop'. In *Queering the Popular Pitch*, edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga. 279-294. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Headlam, Dave. 'Appropriations of blues and gospel in popular music'. In *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, edited by Allan Moore. 158-187. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Hearsum, Paula. 'Three Faces of Musical Motherhood in Death: Amy Winehouse, Whitney Houston and Donna Summer'. In *Death and the Rock Star*, edited by Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun. 119-133. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

_____. 'A musical matter of life and death: The morality of mortality and the coverage of Amy Winehouse's death in the UK press'. *Mortality* 17 (2012) 2: 182-99.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2012.674305>.

Hebdige, Dick. *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*. London: Routledge, 1979.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 'Indie: The Institutional Politics and Aesthetics of a Popular Music Genre'. *Cultural Studies* 13 (1991) 1: 34-61.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/095023899335365>.

Hirsch, Jerrold. 'Modernity, Nostalgia, and Southern Folklore Studies: The Case of John Lomax'. *Journal of American Folklore* 105 (1992) 416: 183-207.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/541085>.

Hoffman, Claire. 'Up All Night with Amy Winehouse'. *Rolling Stone*. Jul 10, 2008.
Accessed Nov 29, 2018.
<https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/up-all-night-with-amy-winehouse-192275/>.

Holiday, Billie and William Dufty. *Lady Sings the Blues*. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1956.

hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Third edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2015 (1984).

_____. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Second edition. New York, NY: Routledge, 2014.

Hopkins, Susan. 'Trainwreck femininity and *Whitney*: monstrous feminine redux'. *Celebrity Studies* 11 (2020) 1: 153-156.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2020.1704477>.

Horowitz, Daniel. 'Rethinking Betty Friedan and the Feminine Mystique: Labor Union Radicalism and Feminism in Cold War America'. *American Quarterly* 48 (1996) 1: 1-42. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30041520>.

Horton, Donald, and R. Richard Wohl. 'Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance'. *Psychiatry* 19 (1956) 3: 215-229.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1956.11023049>.

Howe, Rupert. 'Appetite for Destruction'. *Q Magazine*. Aug 6, 2003. Accessed Nov 9, 2020. http://www.classicwhitney.com/interview/q_september2003.htm.

Iandoli, Kathy. 'We all destroyed Amy Winehouse'. *Pitchfork*. Jun 17, 2015. Accessed Nov 29, 2018.
<https://pitchfork.com/thepitch/801-we-all-destroyed-amy-winehouse/>.

Jarman-Ivens, Freya. *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Jaworski, Katrina. "'Elegantly Wasted": The celebrity deaths of Michael Hutchence and Paula Yates'. *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 22 (2008) 6:

777-791.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310802452446>.

Jensen, Joli. 'On Fandom, Celebrity, and Mediation: Posthumous Possibilities'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. xv-xxiii. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

_____. 'Posthumous Patsy Clines: Constructions of Identity in Hillbilly Heaven'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 121-141. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Jones, Meta DuEwa. *The Muse Is Music: Jazz Poetry from the Harlem Renaissance to Spoken Word*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Jones, Steve. 'Better Off Dead, or, Making it the Hard Way'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 3-16. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Joseph, LaJohn. 'For Whitney Houston (and Judy Garland before her), it's trouble plus talent that makes a gay icon'. *Independent*, Feb 11, 2013. Accessed Feb 18, 2022. <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/whitney-houston-and-judy-garland-her-it-s-trouble-plus-talent-makes-gay-icon-8488763.html>.

Kamberelis, George, and Greg Dimitriadis. 'Collectively Remembering Tupac: The Narrative Mediation of Current Events, Cultural Histories, and Social Identities'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 143-170. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Kandall, Stephen R., and Jennifer Petrillo. *Substance and Shadow: Women and Addiction in the United States*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996.

Karlyn, Kathleen Rowe. *Unruly Girls, Unrepenting Mothers: Redefining Feminism on Screen*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011.

Kerman, Joseph. 'How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get Out'. *Critical Inquiry* 7 (1980) 2: 311-331.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343130>.

Khan, Omar. 'The Colour of Money: How racial inequalities obstruct a fair and resilient economy'. *Runnymede Report*, April 2020. Accessed February 7, 2021.

<https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/2020%20reports/The%20Colour%20of%20Money%20Report.pdf>.

Koestenbaum, Wayne. *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire*. N.p., DaCapo Press: 2001 (1993).

Kooijman, Jaap. 'The true voice of Whitney Houston: Commodification, authenticity, and African American superstardom'. *Celebrity Studies* 5 (2014) 3: 305-320.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2014.911110>.

Kristeva, Julia. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*.

Translated by Thomas Gora and Alice Jardine. Columbia: Columbia University Press, 1980 (1969).

Laing, Dave. 'Rock anxieties and new music networks'. In *Back to Reality? Social Experience and Cultural Studies*, edited by Angela McRobbie. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997. 116-132.

_____. *Buddy Holly*. London: Studio Vista, 1971.

Lang, Gladys Engel, and Kurt Lang. 'Recognition and Renown: The Survival of Artistic Reputation'. *American Journal of Sociology* 94 (1988) 1: 79-109.

<https://doi.org/10.1086/228952>.

- Leach, Elizabeth Eva. 'Vicars of "Wannabe": Authenticity and the Spice Girls'. *Popular Music* 20 (2001) 1: 143-167.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143001001386>.
- Lees, Nicholas. 'The Brandt Line after forty years: The more North-South relations change, the more they stay the same?' *Review of International Studies* 47 (2021) 1: 85-106.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026021052000039X>.
- Lenard, Patti Tamara and Peter Balint. 'What is (the wrong of) cultural appropriation?' *Ethnicities* 20 (2020) 2: 331-352.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796819866498>.
- Leonard, Marion. *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power*. Aldershot: Routledge, 2007.
- Lieb, Kristin. '2018 is the Year of the Queer Woman Pop Star'. *BuzzFeed News*. Sep 20, 2018. Accessed Nov 7, 2020.
<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/kristinlieb/queer-women-in-pop-katy-perry-hayley-kiyoko-janelle-mona>.
- Lister, Linda. 'Divafication: The deification of modern female pop stars'. *Popular Music and Society* 25 (2001) 3-4: 1-10.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007760108591796>.
- Lodge, Guy. 'Superstar: Todd Haynes's banned Karen Carpenter movie is visionary'. *Guardian*. Aug 11, 2016. Accessed Feb 21, 2022.
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/aug/11/superstar-todd-haynes-banned-karen-carpenter-movie>.
- Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Berkeley, CA: 10 Speed Press, 1984.

_____. 'An Open Letter to Mary Daly'. In *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa. 94-97. New York, NY: Kitchen Table, 1983.

Lordi, Emily J. *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013.

Lott, Eric. 'Perfect is Dead: Karen Carpenter, Theodor Adorno, and the Radio; or, If Hooks Could Kill'. *Criticism* 50 (Spring 2008) 2: 219-234.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23128741>.

_____. *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lynskey, Dorian. *33 Revolutions per Minute: A History of Protest Songs*. London: Faber and Faber, 2012 (2010).

Mackey, Nathaniel. *Paracritical Hinge: Essay, Talks, Notes, Interviews*. Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press, 2018.

Marcus, Greil. *Dead Elvis: A Chronicle of a Cultural Obsession*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Margolick, David. *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights*. Edinburgh: Canongate, 2002 (2000).

Marwick, Alice, and danah boyd. 'To See and Be Seen: Celebrity Practice on Twitter'. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies* 17 (2011) 2: 139-158.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1354856510394539>.

'Mass Incarceration'. *Equal Justice Initiative*. N.d. Accessed Jan 14, 2022.
<https://eji.org/mass-incarceration>.

- Mayhew, Emma. 'Women in Popular Music and the Construction of "Authenticity"'. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies* 4 (1999) 1: 63-81. Accessed Oct 5, 2021.
<http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1048578>.
- Mazzarella, Sharon R. "'The voice of a generation'? Media coverage of the suicide of Kurt Cobain'. *Popular Music and Society* 19 (1995) 2: 49-68.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03007769508591591>.
- McGuinness, Andy, and Katie Overy. 'Music, consciousness and the brain: Music as shared experience of an embodied present'. In *Music and Consciousness: Philosophical, Psychological and Cultural Perspectives*. 245-262, edited by David Clarke and Eric Clarke. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- McKee, Heidi A., and James E. Porter. 'The Ethics of Archival Research'. *College Composition and Communication* 64 (2021) 1: 59-81.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/23264917>.
- McKay, George. 'Skinny blues: Karen Carpenter, anorexia nervosa and popular music'. *Popular Music* 37 (2018) 1: 1-21.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S026114301700054X>.
- McLaren, Lauren, Hajo Boomgaarden, and Rens Vliegenthart, 'News Coverage and Public Concern about Immigration in Britain'. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 30 (2018) 2: 173-193.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edw033>.
- McLean, Craig. 'Amy Winehouse interview'. *List*. February 12, 2007. Accessed Nov 29, 2018.
<https://www.list.co.uk/article/1352-amy-winehouse-interview/>.
- Melnick, Jeffrey. *A Right to Sing the Blues: African Americans, Jews, and American Popular Song*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

- Middleton, Richard. *Voicing the Popular: On the Subjects of Popular Music*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.
- Miller, Taylor Cole. 'Social Sorrow: Tweeting the Mourning of Whitney Houston'. In *Death and the Rock Star*, edited by Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun. 87-99. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.
- Moore, Allan. 'Authenticity as Authentication'. *Popular Music* 21 (2002) 2: 209-223. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261143002002131>.
- Morris, Wesley. 'Why is Everyone Always Stealing Black Music?' *New York Times*. Aug 14 2019. Accessed Feb 3 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/music-black-culture-appropriation.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=DDD34A8FD0E09D6216C77942C2CA53CB&gwt=regi&assetType=REGIWALL>.
- Morrison, Matthew D. 'Race, Blacksound, and the (Re)Making of Musicological Discourse'. *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72 (2019) 3: 781-823. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2019.72.3.781>.
- _____. 'Iggy (Azalea) pop: Is cultural appropriation inappropriate?' *Oxford University Press Blog*. Feb 26, 2015. Accessed Nov 4, 2020. <https://blog.oup.com/2015/02/iggy-azalea-music-cultural-appropriation/>.
- Moss, Kirby. *The Color of Class: Poor Whites and the Paradox of Privilege*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.
- Negra, Diane, and Su Holmes. 'Introduction'. *Genders* 48 (2008): paras 1-24. Accessed Feb 18, 2022.

<https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998->

[2013/2008/12/01/introduction-special-issue-going-cheap-female-celebrity-reality-tabloid-and-scandal](https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2008/12/01/introduction-special-issue-going-cheap-female-celebrity-reality-tabloid-and-scandal).

Negus, Keith. 'Authorship and the popular song'. *Music and Letters* 92 (November 2011) 4: 607-629.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41418775>.

Oksanen, Atte. 'Female rock stars and addiction in autobiographies'. *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* 30 (2013) 1-2: 123-40.

<https://doi.org/10.2478/nsad-2013-0009>.

Olwage, Grant. 'The Class and Colour of Tone: An Essay on the Social History of Vocal Timbre'. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13 (2004) 2: 203-226.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1741191042000286167>.

Otter Bickerdike, Jennifer. *Fandom, Image and Authenticity: Joy Devotion and the Second Lives of Kurt Cobain and Ian Curtis*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Ottinger, Jennie. 'Mouth to Mouth: Amy Winehouse and Appropriation'. Talk given at *Contemporary Jewish Museum*, Nov 2015.

https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312.

_____. *Mouth to Mouth: Pieces from an Animation about Cultural Appropriation*, 2015, oil on canvas. Contemporary Jewish Museum. Nov 2015.

https://www.thecjm.org/learn_resources/312.

Penfold-Mounce, Ruth. *Death, the Dead and Popular Culture*. Bingley: Emerald Publishing, 2018.

Perry, Steve. 'The Politics of Crossover'. In *Facing the Music: Essays on Pop, Rock and Culture*, edited by Simon Frith. 51-87. New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1988.

- Pickering, Michael. 'The Dogma of Authenticity in the Experience of Popular Music'. In *The Art of Listening*, edited by Graham McGregor and R. S. White. 201-218. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- Pillai, Poonam. 'Rereading Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model'. *Communication Theory* 2 (1992) 3: 221-233.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.1992.tb00040.x>.
- Polaschek, Bronwyn. 'The dissonant personas of a female celebrity: Amy and the public self of Amy Winehouse'. *Celebrity Studies* 9 (2018) 1: 17-33.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2017.1321490>.
- Rafael, Vicente. *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000.
- Reisigl, Martin. "'Narrative!' I can't hear that anymore. A linguistic critique of an overstretched umbrella term in cultural and social science studies, discussed with the example of the discourse on climate change'. *Critical Discourse Studies* 18 (2021) 3: 368-386.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2020.1822897>.
- Reynolds, Simon, and Joy Press. *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Serpent's Tail, 1995.
- Rojek, Chris. *Fame Attack: The Inflation of Celebrity and its Consequences*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.
- Rose, Steve. 'Is Hollywood still in love with the suffering "gay icon"?'. *Guardian*. Sep 23, 2019. Accessed Aug 21, 2020.
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/sep/23/judy-garland-biopic-movie-renee-zellweger>.

Rothenbuhler, Eric W. 'The Strange Career of Robert Johnson's Records'. In *Afterlife as Afterimage: Understanding Posthumous Fame*, edited by Steve Jones and Joli Jensen. 209-234. New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing, 2005.

Routledge, Clay, Arndt, Jamie, Wildschut, Tim, Sedikides, Constantine, Hart, Claire M., Juhl, Jacob, Vingerhoets, J. J. M, and Wolf Schlotz. 'The Past Makes the Present Meaningful: Nostalgia as an Existential Resource' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101 (September 2011) 3: 638-652.
<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/psp/101/3/638/>.

Rubidge, Sarah. 'Does authenticity matter? The case for and against authenticity in the performing arts'. In *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader*, edited by Patrick Campbell. 219-233. Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1996.

Rudent, Catherine. 'Against *The Grain of the Voice*: Studying Voice in Songs'. Translated by Jack Sims. *Volume! The French journal of popular music studies* 16 (2020) 2: paras 1-44. Accessed Feb 18, 2022.
<https://booksandideas.net/Against-the-Grain-of-the-Voice.html>.

Saukko, Paula. 'Rereading Media and Eating Disorders: Karen Carpenter, Princess Diana, and the Healthy Female Self'. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23 (2006) 2: 152-169.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180600714539>.

Schippers, Mimi. 'Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony'. *Theory and Society* 36 (2007) 1: 85-102.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4501776>.

_____. *Rockin' out of the Box: Gender Maneuvring in Hard Rock*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002.

- Schlesinger, Philip. 'Is there a crisis in British journalism?' *Media, Culture and Society* 28 (2006) 2: 299-307.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443706061691>.
- Schmidt, Randy L. *Little Girl Blue: The Life of Karen Carpenter*. Chicago, IL: Chicago Review Press, 2010.
- Schwartz, Margaret. *Dead Matter: The Meaning of Iconic Corpses*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015.
- Shapiro, Harry. *Waiting for the Man: The Story of Drugs and Popular Music*. New York, NY: Quartet Books, 1988.
- Shelton, Marla. 'Whitney Houston is Every Woman? Cultural Politics and the Pop Star'. *Camera Obscura* 12 (1995) 3: 134-153.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/02705346-12-3> 36-134.
- Shneidman, Edwin. *Deaths of Man*. New York, NY: Quadrangle, 1973.
- Shuker, Roy. *Popular Music Culture: The Key Concepts*. Third edition. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Shumway, David R. 'Rock 'n' Roll Soundtracks and the Production of Nostalgia'. *Cinema Journal* 38 (1999) 2: 36-51.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1225623>.
- Sieber, Joan E. 'The Ethics and Politics of Sensitive Research'. In *Researching Sensitive Topics*, edited by Claire M. Renzetti and Raymond M. Lee, 14-26. London: Sage, 1993.
- Silverman, Kaja. *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988.

Skeggs, Bev. *Formations of Class and Gender: Becoming Respectable*. London: Sage, 1997.

_____. 'The Making of Class and Gender through Visualizing Moral Subject Formation'. *Sociology* 9 (2005) 5: 965-82.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505058381>.

Smucker, Tom. 'Boring and Horrifying Whiteness: The Rise and Fall of Reaganism as Prefigured by the Career Arcs of Carpenters, Lawrence Welk, and the Beach Boys in 1973 – 74'. In *Pop When the World Falls Apart: Music in the Shadow of Doubt*, edited by Eric Weisbard, 47-61. Durham, NC: Duke University Press: 2012.

_____. 'The Carpenters: forbidden fruit'. *Village Voice*. Jun 2, 1975, 86.

Southern Poverty Law Center. 'History of the Anti-Gay Movement since 1977'. *Intelligence Report*. Apr 28, 2005. Accessed Nov 7, 2020.
<https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2005/history-anti-gay-movement-1977>.

Spencer-Hall, Alicia. 'Post-mortem Projections: Medieval Mystical Resurrection and the Return of Tupac Shakur' *Opticon* 1826 13 (2012): 56-71.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/opt.af>.

Steiner, Linda. "'Wresting with the Angels": Stuart Hall's Theory and Method'. *Howard Journal of Communications* 27 (2016) 2: 102-111.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2016.1148649>.

Stengs, Irene. 'The Afterlife of the People's Singer: Bodily Matters in a Dutch Sing-along Culture'. In *Death and the Rock Star*, edited by Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun, 17-31. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Production*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003.

‘Stop and Search’. *GOV.uk*. Feb 22, 2021. Accessed Jan 14, 2022.

<https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/crime-justice-and-the-law/policing/stop-and-search/latest>.

Stratton, Jon. *Jews, Race and Popular Music*. London: Routledge, 2009.

Strong, Catherine, and Barbara Lebrun. ‘The Great Gig in the Sky’. In *Death and the Rock Star*, edited by Catherine Strong and Barbara Lebrun. 1-14. Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

Strong, Catherine. ‘Grunge, Riot Grrrl, and the Forgetting of Women in Popular Culture’. *Journal of Popular Culture* 44 (2011) 2: 398-416.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00839.x>.

Szwed, John. *Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth*. New York, NY: Penguin, 2015.

Taruskin, Richard. *Text and Act: Essays on Music and Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Tate, Greg, ed. *Everything but the Burden: What White People are Taking from Black Culture*. New York, NY: Broadway Books, 2003.

Thornton, Sarah. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge: s Polity, 1995.

Tongson, Karen. *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2019.

Topping, Alexandra. ‘Amy Winehouse died of alcohol poisoning, second inquest confirms’. *Guardian*. Jan 8, 2013. Accessed Apr 19, 2022.

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2013/jan/08/amy-winehouse-alcohol-poisoning-inquest>.

Toynbee, Jason. 'Mainstreaming, from hegemonic centre to global networks'. In *Popular Music Studies*, edited by David Hesmondhalgh and Keith Negus. 149-163. London: Arnold, 2002.

Turner, Graeme. *Understanding Celebrity*. London: Sage, 2004.

van Dijk, Teun A. 'Principles of critical discourse analysis'. *Discourse and Society* 4 (1993) 2: 249-283.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>.

_____. *Racism and the Press: Critical Studies in Racism and Migration*. London: Routledge, 1991.

Verschueren, Jef. 'Predicaments of Criticism'. *Critique of Anthropology* 21 (2001) 1: 59-81.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0308275X0102100104>.

Wald, Gayle. 'One of the Boys? Whiteness, Gender, and Popular Music Studies'. In *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, edited by Mike Hill. 151-167. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

Wallace, Michelle. *Invisibility Blues: From Pop to Theory*. London: Verso Books, 1990.

Whiteley, Sheila. 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music'. In *Framing Celebrity: New directions in celebrity culture*, edited by Su Holmes and Sean Richmond, 329-342. Oxford: Routledge, 2006.

_____. *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity*. London: Routledge, 2000.

Whiteley, Sheila and Jennifer Rycenga. 'Introduction'. In *Queering the Popular Pitch*, edited by Sheila Whiteley and Jennifer Rycenga. xiii – xix. New York, NY: Routledge, 2006.

Whooley, Owen. 'The Final Stage: The Process of Post-Self Construction and The Politics of Death'. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Atlanta, GA. Aug 16, 2003.
http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/7/7/8/p107789/p107789-1.php.

Williamson, Milly. 'Female celebrities and the media: the gendered denigration of the 'ordinary' celebrity'. *Celebrity Studies* 1 (2010) 1: 118-120.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/19392390903519149>.

Wyatt, Justin, and Todd Haynes. 'Cinematic/Sexual Transgression: An Interview with Todd Haynes'. *Film Quarterly* 46 (Spring 1993) 3: 2-8.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1212898>.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Fifth edition. Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014 (1984).

Audio

Morris, Wesley and Nikole Hannah-Jones. 'The Birth of American Music'. *New York Times: 1619*. Podcast audio. Sep 6, 2019. Accessed Nov 4, 2020.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/06/podcasts/1619-black-american-music-appropriation.html>.

Sykes, Pandora. 'Welcome to Pieces of Britney with Pandora Sykes'. *BBC Sounds*. Podcast audio. Jun 29, 2021. Accessed Aug 3, 2021.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p09mw16r>.

Videography

Amy. Directed by Asif Kapadia. Film4, 2015. Film.

Carrie. Directed by Brian de Palma. United Artists, 1976. Film.

Janis: Little Girl Blue. Directed by Amy J. Berg. *American Masters*, PBS. May 3, 2016.
Television broadcast.

Judy. Directed by Rupert Goold. 20th Century Fox, 2019. Film.

Lady Sings the Blues. Directed by Sidney J. Furie. Motown Productions, 1972. Film.

Leaving Neverland. Directed by Dan Reed. HBO, Channel 4, Kew Media, 2019. Film.

Poison. Directed by Todd Haynes. Zeitgeist Films, 1991. Film.

Psycho. Directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures, 1960. Film.

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story. Directed by Todd Haynes. Iced Tea Productions,
1988. Film.

The Long Night of Lady Day. Directed by John Jeremy. BBC-TV Productions and TCB
Releasing, 1984. Film.

The Rose. Directed by Mark Rydell. 20th Century Fox, 1979. Film.

The United States vs. Billie Holiday. Directed by Lee Daniels. Hulu, 2021. Film.

Velvet Goldmine. Directed by Todd Haynes. Miramax Films, 1998. Film.

Whitney. Directed by Kevin Macdonald. Miramax, 2018. Film.

Whitney: Can I Be Me. Directed by Nick Broomfield. BBC, 2017. Film.

Whitney. Directed by Angela Bassett. Lifetime, 2015. Film.

Discography

American Music Club. 'Goodbye to Love'. *If I Were a Carpenter*. A&M, 1994. CD.

Amy Winehouse. 'Love is a Losing Game'. *Back to Black*. Universal Records, 2006. CD.

_____. *Frank*. Island Records, 2003. CD.

Billie Holiday. 'Strange Fruit'. *Strange Fruit*. Commodore, 1939. CD.

Bob Marley and the Wailers. *Catch a Fire*. Island Records, 1973. CD.

Carpenters. 'Little Girl Blue'. *Lovelines*. A&M Records, 1989. CD.

_____. *Now and Then*. A&M Records, 1973. CD.

_____. 'Superstar'. *Carpenters*. A&M Records, 1971. CD.

_____. 'Close to You'. *Close to You*. A&M Records, 1970. CD.

Cracker. 'Rainy Days and Mondays'. *If I Were a Carpenter*. A&M, 1994. CD.

David Bowie. 'Let's Dance'. *Let's Dance*. EMI Records, 1983. CD.

Dolly Parton. 'I Will Always Love You'. *Jolene*. RCA Victor, 1974. CD.

Fairport Convention. 'Who Knows Where the Time Goes?' *Unhalfbricking*. A&M Records, 1962. CD.

George Clinton. 'Atomic Dog'. *Computer Games*. Capitol Records, 1982. CD.

Janis Joplin. 'Cry Baby'. *Pearl*. Columbia, 1971. CD.

_____. 'Ball and Chain'. *Live in Europe 1969*. Aliveville, 1969. CD.

_____. 'Summertime'. *Live in Europe 1969*. Aliveville, 1969. CD.

_____. 'Little Girl Blue'. *I Got Dem Ol' Kozmic Blues Again Mama!* Columbia, 1969.
CD.

_____. 'Searchin''. *Cheap Thrills*. Columbia, 1968. CD.

Karen Carpenter. *Karen Carpenter*. A&M, 1996. CD.

Mark Ronson and Amy Winehouse. 'Valerie'. *Version*. RCA Records, 2007. CD.

Michael Jackson. 'Billie Jean'. *Thriller*. Epic Records, 1982. CD.

Paul Weller. 'Changingman'. *Stanley Road*. Go! Discs, 1995. CD.

Sonic Youth. 'Tunic (Song for Karen)'. *Goo*. Geffen Records, 1990. CD.

Various artists. *If I Were a Carpenter*. A&M, 1994. CD.

Whitney Houston. *I Look to You*. Arista, 2009. CD.

_____. 'I Will Always Love You'. *The Bodyguard Soundtrack*. Arista, 1992.
CD.

_____. 'The Star Spangled Banner'. *The Star Spangled Banner/America The Beautiful*. Arista, 1991. CD.

_____. 'I Wanna Dance with Somebody'. *Whitney*. Arista, 1987. CD.

_____. *Whitney Houston*. Arista, 1985. CD.

Whitney Houston and Mariah Carey. 'When You Believe'. *Prince of Egypt Soundtrack*. DreamWorks Records, 1998. CD.

Archival source materials

Arnold, Chuck. 'Triumph and Tragedy'. *New York Post*. Jul 6, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Baker, Robb. 'Janis Joplin Displays Sexy Musical Alchemy'. *Chicago Tribune*. Aug 19, 1968. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

_____. 'The Sound: Music and Radio: for young listeners'. *Chicago Tribune*. Mar 31, 1968. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

Barnes, Henry. 'The 50 best films of 2015 in the US: No 8 – Amy'. *Guardian*. Dec 9, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Beer, Tom. 'Shedding light on Lady Day'. *Tampa Tribune*. Apr 12, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Bernstein, Jacob. 'New Whitney Houston Doc Features a Family Chorus'. *New York Times*. May 18, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Biggs, Joanna. 'Why we're so confused about Amy Winehouse'. *Observer*. Jul 5, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Bornstein, Lisa. 'Yesterday Once More'. *South Bend Tribune*. Oct 27, 1996. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

Boshoff, Alison. "'Are you only interested in me for what you can get out of me?' Amy Winehouse's devastating attack on her father Mitch from beyond the grave". *Daily Mail*. May 19, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Bracewell, Michael. 'Hip to be square'. *Times*. Aug 27, 1994. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

Bradshaw, Peter. 'The United States vs Billie Holiday review – Lee Daniels' misguided biopic'. *Guardian*. Feb 19, 2021. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 15, 2021.

_____. 'Asif Kapadia's Amy Winehouse film is a tragic masterpiece'. *Guardian*. May 16, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Brady, Tara and Asif Kapadia. 'Amy and the key changes'. *Irish Times*. Jun 26, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Breit, Harvey. 'Books of the Times'. *New York Times*. Jul 21, 1956. Retrieved from ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers May 5, 2020.

Brockes, Emma. 'Robyn Crawford on her love for Whitney Houston'. *Guardian*. Nov 16, 2019. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

Bromwich, Kathryn and Nick Shymansky. "'She'd be so sweet and funny, but there were warning signs'". *Observer*. Jun 15, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Bungey, John. 'Billie Holiday: The Centennial Collection'. *Times*. Apr 18, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Cairns, Dan. 'Winehouse, women and song'. *Sunday Times*. Oct 5, 2003. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

Calkin, Jessamy and Nick Shymansky. 'Amy Winehouse: Behind the Controversial Documentary'. *Daily Telegraph*. Jun 13, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Cannon, Geoffrey. 'Crumbling Rock Cakes'. *Guardian*. Dec 17, 1968. Retrieved from *ProQuest: Guardian 1821-2003 and Observer 1791-2003* Feb 10, 2020.

Catlin, Roger. 'Look Who's Paying Tribute to the Carpenters'. *Columbian*. Sep 18, 1994. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

Chavez, Eric. "'Crack is whack but Whitney Houston is back'. *Georgia State University Signal*. Sep 16, 2009. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

Chicago Tribune. 'Karen Carpenter, 32, romantic singing star'. Editorial. Feb 5, 1983. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

_____. 'Coroner Says Drug Overdose Killed Janis'. Editorial. Oct 6, 1970. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 12, 2020.

Choice, Harriet and Carmen McRae. 'Sit up and dig Carmen McRae'. *Chicago Tribune*. Feb 20, 1972. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* May 13, 2020.

Clark, Jessica. "'Janis: Little Girl Blue" depicts a new illustration of the iconic Janis Joplin'. *Columbia Spectator*. Dec 10, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

Close, Ajay. 'The taboo broken by thigh in the sky'. *Herald Glasgow*. Aug 31, 1996. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 'I'm Not Black, I'm Kanye'. *Atlantic*. May 7, 2018. Accessed Nov 9, 2020. <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/05/im-not-black-im-kanye/559763/>.

Coleman, Andy. 'M2 Rock and Pop: Bright future for a new voice'. *Birmingham Post*. Oct 17, 2003. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

- Coleman, Ray. 'Too good to be through'. *Sunday Times*. Sep 11, 1994. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.
- Colter Walls, Seth. 'Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review'. *Guardian*. Apr 3, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.
- Craig, Jeananne. 'Amy Winehouse documentary'. *Belfast Telegraph*. Jun 30, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.
- Daily Telegraph*. 'Whitney Houston'. Editorial. Feb 12, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.
- _____. 'Amy Winehouse: Obituary'. Editorial. Jul 25, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.
- Daily Express*. 'The weekend starts here'. Editorial. Oct 17, 2003. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.
- Dargie, Rebecca. 'New Tribute to Joplin's Legacy'. *Inner West Courier*. Apr 4, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.
- Darling, Cary. 'Album Review'. *Orange County Register*. Sep 11, 1994. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.
- de Lisle, Tim. 'Blur's genius stays focused'. *Mail on Sunday*. Oct 29, 2006. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.
- de Vries, Hilary. 'Whitney's New Roles'. *St Petersburg Times*. Nov 24, 1992. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.
- Deeb, Gary. 'Police Story debut unmasks real cops'. *Chicago Tribune*. Apr 10, 1973. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

- Dickinson, Chris. 'Not even close to Karen at her best'. *St Louis Post-Dispatch*. Oct 24, 1996. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.
- Dunbar, Polly and Paul Martin. 'Whitney, Bobby, drugs and death'. *MailOnline*. Feb 22, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.
- Ebert, Roger. 'A masterpiece of tact'. *Hamilton Spectator*. Nov 3, 2000. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.
- Foster, Antonio Maria. 'Every line of cocaine means a little part of Africa dies'. *Observer*. Mar 9, 2008.
- Frere-Jones, Sasha. 'Amy's Circus'. *New Yorker*. Mar 3, 2008. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jun 3, 2020.
- Gardner, Elysa. "'Lady Day" gets another day in the sun; Billie Holiday's legacy lives, 100 years later'. *USA Today*. Apr 2, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.
- Gelly, Dave. 'Sheer unstudied elegance'. *Observer*. Apr 12, 2015. *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.
- _____. 'Triumph of the moderates'. *Observer*. Feb 13, 1983. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 9, 2020.
- Gill, Andy. 'Billie Holiday centenary'. *Independent*. Apr 17, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.
- Gire, Dann. "'Amy" celebrates the short life of Amy Winehouse'. *Chicago Daily Herald*. Jul 10, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.
- Godwyn, Nick. 'The real Amy Winehouse by her first manager'. *Times*. Jul 30, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Goodwin, Christopher. 'Didn't She Almost Have It All?' *Sunday Times*. Apr 15, 2012.
Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

Gold, Kerry and Jan Kudelka. 'Music: Fan of Janis Joplin gets to sing her songs in
"opera"'. *Vancouver Sun*. Jun 9, 2005. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jan 9,
2020.

Goldman, Albert. 'Why Do Whites Sing Black?' *New York Times*. Dec 14, 1969.
Retrieved from *American Historical Newspapers* Feb 11, 2020.

Greenblatt, Leah. 'Whitney reveals little in new album'. *CNN*. Aug 27, 2009. Retrieved
from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

Guardian. 'Pass Notes, no 53, Whitney Houston'. Editorial. Dec 23, 1992. Retrieved
from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.

Hamilton Spectator. '5 Things we learned about Whitney Houston from Robyn
Crawford's new book'. Editorial. Nov 13, 2019. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance
UK* Apr 1, 2020.

Hannaham, James. 'Living the blues – and loving it'. *Ottawa Citizen*. Jan 3, 2008.
Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jun 3, 2020.

Heckman, Don. 'Janis Joplin 1943 – 1970'. *New York Times*. Oct 11, 1970. Retrieved
from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 12, 2020.

Henry, Phillip. '6 Reasons Whitney Houston Is an Inspiration and Icon to the LGBTQ
Community'. *Billboard*. Jul 11, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30,
2020.

Hentoff, Nat. 'The real Lady Day'. *New York Times*. Dec 24, 1972. Retrieved from
ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers May 13, 2020.

Hoerburger, Rob. 'Karen Carpenter's Second Life'. *New York Times Magazine*. Oct 6, 1996. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.

Holden, Stephen. 'Something's Lost and Something's Gained'. *New York Times*. Feb 13, 2000. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

_____. 'Review: In "Janis: Little Girl Blue," Exploring Joplin's Demons'. *New York Times*. Nov 27, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

Hunter-Tilney, Ludovic. 'Amy Winehouse, Koko, London'. *Financial Times*. Nov 16, 2006. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

Ide, Wendy. 'Old-school glamour brings the A-list to Venice'. *Times*. Sep 7, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Johnson, Phil. 'Discs Etc'. *Independent on Sunday*. Oct 26, 2003. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 19, 2020.

Jones, Rhian. 'The fandom that made me: Amy Winehouse: the spiteful way she was treated still fills me with rage'. *Guardian*. Apr 12, 2021. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

Jones, Lesley-Ann. 'Suffering has given Whitney real soul'. *Daily Express*. Oct 18, 2009. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* March 16, 2020.

Kloman, William. 'Rock: The 50's Come Back'. *New York Times*. Sep 1, 1968. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

Kroenert, Tim. 'Who killed Amy Winehouse?' *La Croix International*. Jul 2, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

- Lampert, Nicole. 'As she vows to marry her foster brother, why Whitney Houston's daughter seems bent on following her to destruction'. *MailOnline*. Oct 25, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.
- Laycock, John. 'Popular Music is International; Americana Spin on Music'. *Windsor Star Ontario*. Dec 30, 2000. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.
- Lester, Paul. 'Whitney and Amy: worlds-apart artists who wound up in the same place'. *Guardian*. Jul 28, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.
- Levine, Alexandra. 'The Amy Winehouse We Never Knew'. *Forward*. Jul 9, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.
- Longino, Miriam. 'Home Entertainment: the latest in music, videos and books'. *Atlanta Journal*. Dec 12, 1996. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jul 13, 2020.
- Longley, Martin. 'It's still a difficult life for a lady singing the blues'. *Birmingham Post*. Jun 7, 2000. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.
- Lowry, Brian. "'Whitney' brings heavy hand to Whitney Houston's troubled life'. *CNN*. Jun 29, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.
- Lydon, Michael. 'The Janis Joplin philosophy: Every Moment She Is What She Feels'. *New York Times*. Feb 23, 1969. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 11, 2020.
- Marre, Oliver. 'Return of the troubled diva'. *Observer*. Sep 20, 2009. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.
- Maycock, James. 'Billie Holiday and Lester Young: the intimate friendship between Lady Day and Prez'. *Guardian*. Apr 8, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

McCormick, Neil. 'Fears grow for Amy Winehouse'. *Daily Telegraph*. Aug 25, 2007.

Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

Mcnab, Geoffrey. 'Amy Winehouse documentary'. *Independent*. May 16, 2015. *Nexis*

Advance UK May 27, 2020.

Means, Sean P. 'Movie Review: "Janis: Little Girl Blue"'. *Salt Lake Tribune*. Dec 10,

2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

Mengel, Noel. 'Review of the Week'. *Courier Mail Australia*. Apr 18, 2015. Retrieved

from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Millington, Ruby. 'Janis' Cautionary Tale'. *Daily Express*. Oct 28, 2005. Retrieved from

Nexis Advance UK Jan 9, 2020.

Morris, Wesley. "'Whitney,' a Pop Music Tragedy, is Sad, Strange and Dismaying". *New*

York Times, Jul 5, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Moylan, Brian. 'Lifetime's Whitney biopic is the same old cheap and cheesy fare'. *Guardian*.

Jan 16, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 23, 2020.

Mumbi Moody, Nekesa. 'Whitney's Back'. *The Record*. Sep 3, 2009. Retrieved from

Nexis Advance UK Mar 16, 2020.

Murphy, Sport. 'The Whit Parade – Houston, Here's Hoping We No Longer Have a

Problem'. *New York Post*. Aug 30, 2009. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

NME. 'United Nations attack Amy Winehouse'. Editorial. Nov 19, 2007. Retrieved from

Nexis Advance UK May 28, 2020.

O'Nealos, Ben W. 'Butter'. Letter to the *New York Times*. Feb 15, 1970. Retrieved from

ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers Apr 14, 2020.

Parker, Stewart. 'Spaceman Hendrix'. *Irish Times*. Nov 16, 1970. Retrieved from *ProQuest: Irish Times 1859 onwards* Feb 12, 2020.

Petridis, Alexis. 'Whitney Houston: squandered talent of a record-breaking singer who had it all'. *Guardian*. Feb 12, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

_____. 'A losing game'. *Guardian*. Jul 25, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Philadelphia Inquirer. 'Documentary Amy charts the rise and fall of Amy Winehouse'. Editorial. Jul 5, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Powers, Ann. 'Whitney returns'. *Telegraph Journal New Brunswick*. Aug 28, 2009. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 16, 2020.

Pukas, Anna. 'Rebecca Sings Billie'. *Scottish Express*. Apr 6, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Purves, Libby. 'How we tell Amy Winehouse's story matters'. *Times*. Jul 26, 2021. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

Ratliff, Ben. 'Moving Beyond a Singer's Tragedy'. *New York Times*. Apr 3, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Renner, Michael J. 'Packed House Hears Moving Tribute to Billie Holiday'. *St Louis Post-Dispatch*. Feb 7, 2000. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 15, 2020.

Romney, Jonathan. 'Venice film festival - plenty of punch to disturb the peace'. *Observer*. Nov 3, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 5, 2020.

Rose, Steve. ““Not black enough”: the identity crisis that haunted Whitney Houston’. *Guardian*. Jul 7, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Rosenfeld, Megan. ““Young America at its Very Best””. *Washington Post*. May 6, 1973. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

Ross, Peter. ‘A year of living dangerously’. *Sunday Herald*. Nov 11, 2007. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

_____. ‘Untamed melody’. *Sunday Herald*. Jan 7, 2007. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

Rother, Larry. ‘Neil Sedaka is Back’. *Washington Post*. Aug 11, 1975. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Jul 9, 2020.

Rugieri, Melissa. ‘Son Volt’s Latest Cements its Status’. *Richmond Times Dispatch*. Nov 12, 1998. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Nov 18, 2019.

Sabbage, Lisa. ‘Rock’s Mixed Up Heroine’. *Sunday Mail Queensland*. Oct 8, 1995. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 13, 2020.

Samuels, Allison. ‘Whitney’s Private Hell’. *Newsweek*. May 7, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

Scott, A. O. ““The United States vs. Billie Holiday” Review: Singing for Her Life’. *New York Times*. Apr 5, 2021. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 15, 2021.

Segal, Victoria. ‘Amy Winehouse’. *Times*. Oct 28, 2006. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

Simpson, Eva. ‘I Will Always Love You’. *Times*. Feb 12, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

Simpson, Mark. 'Whitney had it all'. *Independent on Sunday*. Sep 15, 2002. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 21, 2020.

Sinclair, David. 'Amy Winehouse'. *Times*. Nov 16, 2006. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 25, 2020.

Sisario, Ben. 'Troubled singer found dead'. *New York Times*. Jul 25, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Smith, Damon. 'Tragedy of a Diva'. *Manchester Evening News*. Jul 6, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Solomon, Kate. 'How we keep failing Amy Winehouse'. *Independent*. Mar 4, 2021. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Aug 30, 2021.

Spencer, Neil. 'Billie Holiday: The Musician and the Myth review'. *Observer*. May 5, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Stewart, Allison. 'Riding the whirlwind with thrilling, doomed Whitney Houston'. *Washington Post*. Dec 1, 2019. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

Straits Times. 'Billie Holiday celebrated as trailblazer'. Editorial. Apr 4, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 16, 2020.

Sullivan, Caroline. 'Obituary: Amy Winehouse'. *Guardian*. Jul 25, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Telegraph Herald Dubuque. 'Houston's new album has her old soul'. Editorial. Dec 20, 1998. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Nov 18, 2019.

Tensley, Brandon. 'Whitney Houston and the Persistent Perils of the Mainstream'. *Atlantic*. Jul 29, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Thorncroft, Anthony. 'Albert Hall: Janis Joplin'. *Financial Times*. Apr 22, 1969. Retrieved from *Financial Times Historical Archive, 1888-2010* Feb 11, 2020.

Thow, Penny and Horace Boyer. 'Tassie voices tap into SOUL'. *Sunday Tasmanian*. Jun 26, 2005. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Jan 9, 2020.

Turan, Kenneth. 'A rising talent's tragic descent'. *Los Angeles Times*. Jul 3, 2015. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Verrico, Lisa. 'One Demon Too Many'. *Sunday Times*. Jul 31, 2011. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 26, 2020.

Wallis, Tiffany. 'Whitney Houston's secret lesbian lover watched in horror as she wed Bobby Brown'. *Mirror*. Nov 11, 2019. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 1, 2020.

Weekly Blitz. 'Drugs and ego finally ends the life of Whitney Houston'. Editorial. Feb 13, 2012. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 17, 2020.

West, Hollie I. 'Blacks and Whites and the Blues'. *Washington Post*. Jun 22, 1969. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 11, 2020.

_____. 'Black Tune'. *Washington Post*. Mar 13, 1969. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Feb 11, 2020.

_____. 'Janis Joplin Sells with Screeches, Sex'. *Washington Post*. Oct 22, 1968. Retrieved from *ProQuest: American Historical Newspapers* Feb 10, 2020.

Whittington, Paul. 'One tragic moment in time'. *Irish Independent*. Jul 6, 2018. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Mar 30, 2020.

Wiltz, Teresa. '100-Proof Voice'. *Washington Post*. Feb 7, 2007. Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 28, 2020.

Wiseman, Eva. 'What if Amy Winehouse had been left alone?' *Observer*. May 17, 2015.

Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* May 27, 2020.

Zimmerman, David. "'Love': Better plaintive or passionate?" *USA Today*. Dec 9, 1992.

Retrieved from *Nexis Advance UK* Apr 21, 2020.