Ruth Finnegan makes the same point about the difference between oral and written poetry. Because oral poetry is performed in particular ritualized ways, part of its meaning and effect is taken from the performing context, from the "live" emotional atmosphere, the immediate pleasures of identification and suspense which are, in a sense, *tangible* (oral poetry is almost inevitably therefore flat and monotonous when written down and read). The performance, in other words (as with a song), is a necessary aspect of its "poetic" quality. Oral poetry doesn't need the devices written poetry must use to hold the reader's attention; that is the job of the poet herself, *as performer.*[63]

Good lyrics by definition, then, lack the elements that make for good lyric poetry. Take them out of their performed context, and they either seem to have no musical qualities at all, or else to have such obvious ones as to be silly (this goes as much for Lorenz Hart and Cole Porter as for Bob Dylan and Elvis Costello, as much for Curtis Mayfield and Smokey Robinson as for Hank Williams and Tom T. Hall). And this is most obvious (to return to Greil Marcus) in those songs in which the pleasure—the exhilaration—comes from the singer's failure to integrate musical and semantic meaning. The best pop songs, in short, are those that can be heard as a *struggle* between verbal and musical rhetoric, between the singer and the song.

9

The Voice

Let us imagine for this double function, localized in one and the same site, a single transgression, which would be generated by a simultaneous use of speech and kissing: *to kiss while embracing, to embrace while speaking.* It would appear that such a pleasure exists, since lovers incessantly "drink in speech upon the lips of the beloved," etc. What they delight in is, in the erotic encounter, the play of meaning which opens and breaks off: the function *which is disturbed:* in a word: *the stammered body.*

Roland Barthes[1]

We came to listen to that voice of difference likely to bring us *what we can't have* and to divert us from the monotony of sameness.

Trinh T. Minh-ha[2]

"Yeah," Scott said, "a singer like Ella says, 'My man's left me,' and you think the guy went down the street for a loaf of bread or something. But when Lady says, 'My man's gone' or 'My man's left me,' man, you can see the guy going down the street. His bags are packed, and he ain't never coming back. I mean like *never.*"

Tony Scott on Billie Holiday[3]

Look at a song's lyrics on the page: whose "voice" is there? Who's talking? The answer seems to start with the pronouns, the "shifters," not just the "I," the apparent speaker, but the "you" and "we" and "she" which reveal various things about the speaker. Even without an explicit "I," that is, we have an implicit one, someone who's doing the addressing: "*you've* got a lot of nerve, to say that *you're* my friend." The "voice" in the printed lyrics is thus articulated by the text itself, by a process that is both self-expressive and self-revealing, both declared openly and implied by the narrative.[4]

But even from the reader's point of view there's more to the voice than this. The printed lyric is already a double act, both the communicative process it describes or enacts—the "I" of the lyric speaking to the "you" of the

lyric—and the communicative process it entails, writing and reading. As readers do we necessarily become the "you" of the writer's "I"? Do we take onto ourselves her love or contempt? Do we have to take a place in her story? The answer is obviously no; or, at least, there are certainly other options. We can refuse to become involved at all, read the lyric as an overheard conversation between other people, take it to be reported speech, put quotation marks around it. Or we can read it as if speaking it, become the "I" ourselves. (I think it would be impossible to read Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street" as if we were the "you" at issue—and this is a song positively *obsessed* with the word. The pleasure of these lines is as a means of sounding our *own* feelings of contempt and hauteur.)

How we read lyrics is not a completely random or idiosyncratic choice. The lyricist sets up the situation—through her use of language, her construction of character—in a way that, in part, determines the response we make, the nature of our engagement. But once we say that, we admit that there's another "voice" here, the voice of the lyricist, the author, the person putting the words in the "I's" mouth, putting the protagonists into their lyrical situation. And the authorial voice can be more or less distinctive; we may recognize—respond to—that voice (Cole Porter, Elvis Costello, Morrissey, P. J. Harvey) even when reading a lyric. "Voice" in this sense describes a sense of personality that doesn't involve shifters at all, but is familiar as the special way a person has with words: we immediately know who's speaking.

Now stop reading the lyrics, and listen to the song. Whose voice do we hear now? Again there's an obvious answer: the singer's, stupid! And what I argue in the rest of this chapter is that this is, in fact, the stupid answer. We hear the singer's voice, of course, but how that voice relates to the voices described above is the interesting question. To sing a lyric doesn't simplify the question of who is speaking to whom; it makes it more complicated.

In *The Composer's Voice,* Edward Cone asks whose voice we hear when we listen to a Schubert setting of a poem by Goethe. We hear a singer, Thomas Allen say, with a distinctive physical voice; we hear the protagonist of the song, the "I" of the narrative; we hear the poem's author, Goethe, in the distinctive organization of the words and their argument; and we hear Schubert, *in whose voice* the whole thing is composed.[5] And this last definition of voice, as the stylistic identity of the composer, is undoubtedly the dominant definition of "voice" in classical music criticism: a Schubert song is a Schubert song, regardless of whose words he has set to music and which singer is singing them. Schubert's "voice" thus refers to a personal quality—a quality of his personality—apparent in all his musical work.[6]

Even in this phrasing, though, a new question is raised. What is the

relationship between Schubert's characteristics *as a composer* (his distinctive use of musical language which can be traced across different works, enabling us to speak of his musical "identity" and "development") and his characteristics *as a person?* This is, of course, to raise the long-debated question (long debated in literary criticism, at any rate) of the relationship between someone's life and their work. This issue tends to be put aside in music criticism because of the belief that music is a more directly emotional form of expression than literature, and is therefore more directly (or unconsciously) revealing of the composer's character. One of Anthony Storr's casual comments can thus be taken as typical: "The listener doesn't even have to be able to read music to recognize Haydn's robustness and humour, combined with his capacity for deep feeling."[7] Is music really so transparently expressive of personality? Is a voice?

The same questions can be addressed to popular music. What is the relationship between the "voice" we hear in a song and the author or composer of that song? Between the voice and the singer? This relationship has, of course, different complications in different genres, but two general issues arise immediately. First there is, as in classical music, the problem of biography: what is the relationship of life and art? On the whole, pop fans are less simple-minded than classical music critics about this. While one can certainly find Hollywood biopix of pop stars (Oliver Stone's *The Doors,* say) to match its biopix of classical composers—the life pouring out in the sounds—this tells us more about Hollywood (and the attempt to turn Jim Morrison into a Real Artist) than it does about pop music.

The up-front star system means that pop fans are well aware of the ways in which pop performers are inventions (and the pop biographer's task is usually therefore to expose the "real" Bob Dylan or Madonna who *isn't* in their music). And in pop, biography is used less to explain composition (the writing of the song) than expression (its performance): it is in real, material, singing voices that the "real" person is to be heard, not in scored stylistic or formulaic devices. The pop musician as interpreter (Billie Holiday, say) is therefore more likely to be understood in biographical terms than the pop musician as composer (Mark Knopfler, say), and when musicians are both, it is the performing rather than the composing voice that is taken to be the key to character. As Robert O'Meally asks about Billie Holiday, "She was the greatest jazz singer of all time. With Louis Armstrong, she invented modern jazz singing. Why do these accounts [all the books about her], which tell us so much about her drug problems, no-good men, and supposedly autobiographical sad songs, tell us so little about Billie Holiday, artist?"[8]

And the answer is because as listeners we assume that we can hear

someone's life in their voice—a life that's there despite and not because of the singer's craft, a voice that says who they really are, an art that only exists because of what they've suffered. What makes Billie Holiday an artist from this perspective is that she was able to give *that which she couldn't help expressing* aesthetic shape and grace.[9] Compare Gregory Sandow on Frank Sinatra:

> Even before Kitty Kelley's unauthorized biography it was hardly a secret . . . that Sinatra hasn't always been the nicest of guys. So it's a commonplace of Sinatra criticism to separate Sinatra the artist from Sinatra the man. But I've always thought that his character slips through in his performance . . . And in fact it slips through precisely because of his art. Because he *is* an artist, he can't help telling a kind of truth; he can't help reaching towards the root of everything he's felt. He makes his living singing love songs; like any great popular singer, he can expand even a single sigh in those love songs into something vast. But he's also got his own story to tell, a story that goes far beyond what any love song could express: it's a story a little bit about triumph, partly about a lust for power, often about loss, and very much about humiliation and rage.[10]

The first general point to make about the pop voice, then, is that we hear singers as *personally* expressive (even, perhaps especially, when they are not singing "their own" songs) in a way that a classical singer, even a dramatic and "tragic" star like Maria Callas, is not. This is partly a matter of sound convention. As Libby Holman once put it, "My singing is like Flamenco. Sometimes, it's purposefully hideous. I try to convey anguish, anger, tragedy, passion. When you're expressing emotions like these, you cannot have a pure tone."[11]

In classical music, by contrast, the sound of the voice is determined by the score; the expression of anguish, anger, tragedy, and passion is a matter of musical organization. As Umberto Fiore writes, "In this context, the voice is in fact an instrument: bass, baritone, tenor, soprano and so forth. Individual styles can only *improve* these vocal masks, not really transgress them . . . the creation of a person, of a character, is substantially up to the music as such; if truth is there it is a *musical* truth."[12]

But if we hear the pop singer singing "her self," she is also singing a song, and so a second question arises: what is the relationship between the voice as a carrier of sounds, the singing voice, making "gestures," and the voice as a carrier of words, the speaking voice, making "utterances"? The issue is not meaning (words) versus absence of meaning (music), but the relationship

between two different sorts of meaning-making, the tensions and conflicts between them. There's a question here of power: who is to be the master, words or music? And what makes the voice so interesting is that it makes meaning in these two ways simultaneously. We have, therefore, to approach the voice under four headings: as *a musical instrument;* as *a body;* as *a person;* and as *a character.*

I'll begin with the voice as a musical instrument. A voice obviously has a sound; it can be described in musical terms like any other instrument, as something with a certain pitch, a certain register, a certain timbral quality, and so forth. Voices can be used, like any other instrument, to make a noise of the right sort at the right time. Both these terms (right sort, right time) are apparent in the most instrumental use of the voice, as "backup." Here the singers' sound is more important than their words, which are either nonsensical or become so through repetition; and repetition is itself the key to how such voices work, as percussive instruments, marking out the regular time around which the lead singer can be quite irregular in matters of pitch and timing, quite inarticulate in terms of words or utterances.[13]

Even in this case, though, the voices can't be purely sound effects; at the very least they also indicate gender, and therefore gender relations (the aggressive-submissive attitude of the Raelettes to Ray Charles; the butch male choral support for Neil Tennant on the Pet Shop Boys' "Go West"), and it is notable that while rock conventionally uses other male voices, other members of the band, to sing close harmonies, backup singers are almost always female—and remarkably often black female at that.[14] This raises questions about the voice as body to which I'll return; but in talking about the voice as musical instrument I'm not just talking about sound, I'm also talking about skill and technique: neither backup nor lead singers simply stand on stage or in the studio and open their mouths. For the last sixty years or so, popular singers have had a musical instrument besides their voices: the electric microphone. The microphone made it possible for singers to make musical sounds—soft sounds, close sounds—that had not really been heard before in terms of public performance (just as the film closeup allowed one to see the bodies and faces of strangers in ways one would normally only see loved ones). The microphone allowed us to hear people in ways that normally implied intimacy—the whisper, the caress, the murmur. O'Meally notes the importance of the mike for the development of Billie Holiday's singing style, "as she moved from table to table in speakeasies . . . Whether in clubs or on recording dates, she continued to deliver her lyrics as if only for one or two listeners whom she addressed face to face."[15]

The appearance of the female torch singer and the male crooner had a

number of consequences both for musical sexuality (crooners were initially heard as "effeminate" and unmanly, for example; the BBC even banned them for a time) and for what one might call musical seduction (radio advertisers took immediate note of "the performer's capacity to make each member of the audience perceive the song as an intimate, individual communication," and Rudy Vallee quickly became "one of the biggest radio and advertising successes").[16] As Bing Crosby, probably the greatest musical entrepreneur of the twentieth century (or at least the one with the best understanding of the implications of technology) realized, crooning made a singer the perfect salesman of his own song.[17]

This wasn't a matter of singers just going up to a microphone and opening their mouths, either. Mike technique had to be learned. Take the case of Frank Sinatra:

> As a young singer, he consciously perfected his handling of the microphone. "Many singers never learned to use one," he wrote later. "They never understood, and still don't, that a microphone is their instrument." A microphone must be deployed sparingly, he said, with the singer moving in and out of range of the mouth and suppressing excessive sibilants and noisy intakes of air. But Sinatra's understanding of the microphone went deeper than this merely mechanical level. He knew better than almost anyone else just what Henry Pleasants has maintained: that the microphone changes the very way that modern singers sing. It was his mastery of this instrument, the way he let its existence help shape his vocal production and singing style, that did much to make Sinatra the preeminent popular singer of our time.[18]

One effect of microphone use is to draw attention to the technique of singers *as singers* in ways that are not, I think, so obvious in classical music or opera, as they move with and around the instrument, as volume control takes on conversational nuances and vice versa.[19] Another is to draw attention to the *place* of the voice in music, to the arrangement of sounds behind and around it, as the microphone allows the voice to dominate other instruments whatever else is going on.[20] Consider these three descriptions of the popular musical voice.

Gregory Sandow on Alex Stordahl's arrangements for Frank Sinatra:

> I didn't know if I'd ever heard music at once so rapt and so shy. I searched for images. Could the arrangements be like waiters in a restaurant? They took on shape only when they emerged briefly into view to fill pauses in Sinatra's phrasing; they might have been clearing plates away, making room on the table for the next course to be served. Or better still, were they like a wife? That made sense. Stordahl's arrangements, I decided, were like an adoring wife who says nothing in public but works patiently at home, cooking, mending, tending a spotless refuge for her man . . . but it might be more accurate to say that they're like a perfect dance partner, or, better still, like a woman lost in a dream because she's dancing with a perfect man.
>
> Violins introduce "Embraceable You," and I hear her open her arms to surrender. "Embrace me," he sings; she lets him guide her, and, after an all but imperceptible breath, nestles more closely in his embrace. Now he sings ". . . my sweet embraceable you," and in response she whispers, almost to herself, "Oh YES, Frank." "Embrace me," he goes on, and she anticipates his step, moving with him almost before he knows where he himself will go. Then she hears him pause for an instant as he sings "my silk . . . and laceable you"; she waits, suspended, secure that when he resumes he'll know exactly what to do. "I'm in love with you, I am," he croons, and when from far in the distance she hears him add "and verily so," she closes her eyes and dances almost in place, hardly moving in his arms.[21]

Aidan Day on Bob Dylan:

> Typically, the voice engages the line of the melody but its simultaneous jarring, atonal separation from the music, together with the relentless subordination of musical elements to the exigencies of verbal order, opens a space which registers a distance and unease involving both singer and listener. The singing voice at once solicits and rebuffs. The gratifications it offers are uncomfortable ones. It is a pattern of invitation and rejection in which the audience—alienated from easy absorption into the music and denied relaxation—is required to attend closely to the transactions between voice and words. While the voice impinges distinctively on the listener, it simultaneously seeks to refuse an unthinking capitulation to itself and to the sense of what it is singing. It is a pattern which places special demands upon an audience, expecting it to participate actively—and to risk itself—in the play of meaning.[22]

And Glenn Gould on Barbra Streisand:

> With Streisand . . . one becomes engaged by process, by a seemingly limitless array of available options . . . Like [Elizabeth] Schwarzkopf, Streisand is one of the great italicizers; no phrase is left solely to its own devices, and the range and diversity of her expressive gift is such that one is simply unable to chart an a priori stylistic course on her behalf. Much of the *Affekt* of intimacy—indeed, the sensation of eavesdropping on a private moment not yet wholly committed to its eventual public profile—is a direct result of our inability to anticipate her intentions.[23]

Although the voices described here are only ever heard, only exist, as musical instruments, as sounds in arrangements of sounds, each of these writers treats the voice as something which *has a relationship*—with an orchestra for Sinatra, with an audience for Dylan, with the music itself, the melody, for Streisand; the voice, that is to say, is described as if it existed—could be heard—apart from the sounds that it does make, apart from what we do hear. The implication is that all singers thus put "their own shape" on the music, and it is the meaning of "their own" that interests me.

What these critics hear, to put this more plainly, is a *willed sound*, a sound that is this way because it has been chosen so, could have been something else. As Edward Cone suggests, a voice can never really be heard as a wordless instrument; even when we listen to a singer in a language we do not understand, a singer making wordless sounds, scat singing, we still hear those sounds as words we do not understand, or as sounds made by someone who has *chosen* to be inarticulate.[24] "She accompanied herself on the piano," we observe; not "she accompanied herself on vocals." And the matching term, *unaccompanied*, which used to appear on popular concert bills, raises a broader question still: when singing, do you accompany the music, or does the music accompany you?

This helps explain, I think, the special status of the voice as a concept in both musical and literary analysis. On the one hand, a musician's "voice" need not be restricted to the voice in a physical sense: when jazz performers are said to "speak" with their instruments, it is this same quality of willed sound which is being described—which is why it is trickier to claim that classical musicians, constrained in some respects by the score, have individual "voices" (rather than styles): even Glenn Gould didn't really "speak" on his piano (even if he sang along with it). On the other hand, to hear or read a "voice" in a text is to assign *intention* to what we hear or read. "Authorless" texts are those—like newspaper headlines or advertising jingles—which however carefully crafted don't bear this imprint of individual articulation.

Even when treating the voice as an instrument, in short, we come up against the fact that it stands for the person more directly than any other musical device. Expression with the voice is taken to be more direct than expression on guitar or drum set, more revealing—which is why when drums and guitars are heard as directly expressive they are then heard as "voices." And this argument has legal sanction. Lawyers in cases of musical theft assume that a voice is a personal property, that it can be "stolen" in a way that other instrumental noises cannot (James Brown's vocal swoop is recognizably his immediately; a guitarist has to prove that a melodic riff, a composition rather than a sound, is unique). The most interesting legal rulings in this context concern soundalikes, cases in which the voices used ("Bette Midler," "Tom Waits") *weren't* actually theirs, and yet because they were recognizably "the same" could nevertheless be adjudged to invade the stars' "privacy," to steal their "personality." To recognize a voice, the courts ruled, is to recognize a person.[25]

Consider now the next element of this process, *the voice as body.* The starting point here is straightforward. The voice is a sound produced physically, by the movement of muscles and breath in the chest and throat and mouth; to listen to a voice is to listen to a physical event, to the sound of a body. This is, of course, true for the sound of other instruments too, but whereas what's involved there is the relationship between the body and something else—a string or reed or piano key or drum set—the voice draws our attention to something happening to the body itself; which is why we don't think of the microphone as a musical instrument: we don't expect voices to need anything outside the body in order to be heard. And this is clearly one reason why the voice seems particularly expressive of the body; it gives the listener access to it without mediation.

The effects of "the body in the singing voice" have been explored most famously by Roland Barthes, in his essay on the "grain" of the voice, where he argues that different timbral qualities have differential bodily implications. This point is usually taken up in rock criticism as a celebration of "the materiality of the body speaking its mother tongue," in terms of the "voluptuous pleasure of its signifier-sounds," but it is just as important to take note of the other side of Barthes's argument, his suggestion that there is such a thing as an "ungrained" voice, a voice that conceals its own means of physical production. This might, for example, be one way of describing those backup singers, further drawing attention to their peculiarity: here we have three

smart, fleshly women, singing "grainlessly," while a physically awkward male star waxes *bodily.*[26]

In fact, though, there are further distinctions to be made here. We certainly do hear voices as physically produced: we assign them qualities of throatiness or nasality, and, more specifically, we listen by performing, by reproducing (even if only silently, tentatively) those muscular movements for ourselves, "sympathizing" with a singer by pushing the words up against the top of our mouths when she does. A "grained" voice might, then, simply describe a voice with which, for whatever reasons, we have physical sympathy: "I am sitting in the Met at Leontyne Price's recital in 1985 and Price's vibrations are *inside my body,* dressing it up with the accouterments of interiority."[27]

The voice as direct expression of the body, that is to say, is as important for the way we listen as for the way we interpret what we hear: we can sing along, reconstruct in fantasy our own sung versions of songs, in ways we can't even fantasize instrumental technique—however hard we may try with our air guitars—because with singing, *we feel we know what to do.* We have bodies too, throats and stomachs and lungs. And even if we can't get the breathing right, the pitch, the note durations (which is why our performances only sound good to us), we still feel we understand what the singer is doing in physical principle (this is another reason why the voice seems so directly expressive an instrument: it doesn't take thought to know how that vocal noise was made).

This relates to a second point, that the voice *is* the sound of the body in a direct sense. Certain physical experiences, particularly extreme feelings, are given vocal sounds beyond our conscious control—the sounds of pain, lust, ecstasy, fear, what one might call inarticulate articulacy: the sounds, for example, of tears and laughter; the sounds made by soul singers around and between their notes, vocal noises that seem expressive of their deepest feelings because we hear them as if they've escaped from a body that the mind—language—can no longer control.[28]

Jonathan Swift put his own sardonic gloss on this three hundred years ago:

> Now the art of canting consists in skilfully adapting the voice to whatever words the spirit delivers, that each may strike the ears of the audience with its most significant cadence. The force or energy of this eloquence is not to be found, as among ancient orators, in the disposition of words to a sentence, or the turning of long periods; but, agreeably to the modern refinements in music, is taken up wholly in dwelling and dilating upon syllables and letters. Thus, it is frequent for a single vowel to draw sighs from a multitude, and for a whole assembly of saints to sob to the music of one solitary liquid. But these are trifles, when even sounds inarticulate are observed to produce as forcible effects. A master workman shall blow his nose so powerfully as to pierce the hearts of his people, who were disposed to receive the excrements of his brain with the same reverence as the issue of it. Hawking, spitting, and belching, the defects of other men's rhetoric, are the flowers, and figures, and ornaments of his. For the spirit being the same in all, it is of no import through what vehicle it is conveyed.[29]

One way in which we hear the body in the voice, to put this more positively, is in the sheer physical pleasure of singing itself, in the enjoyment a singer takes in particular movements of muscles, whether as a sense of oneness between mind and body, will and action (a singer may experience something of the joy of an athlete) or through the exploration of physical sensations and muscular powers one didn't know one had (and the listener, like the sports spectator, enjoys the experience partly by proxy, but also aesthetically, with awe at the sheer grace of, say, Aaron Neville not exactly singing "Tell It Like It Is," but *holding* its notes, turning them over for our admiration).[30]

One effect of such pleasure is that for many singers what they are singing, a word, is valued for its physical possibilities, what it allows the mouth or throat to do. The singer finds herself driven by the physical logic of the sound of the words rather than by the semantic meaning of the verse, and so creates a sense of spontaneity: the singing feels real rather than rehearsed; the singer is responding (like the listener) to the musical event of which they are part, being possessed by the music rather than possessing it. The most obvious device here (listen to Otis Redding live, for instance) is repetition, a syllable being savored, sung again, sung with different consonants, tossed up against different harmonies; but singers may slow things down as well—the young Elvis Presley, for example, seemed to bask (like one of Swift's cantors) in the sheer voluptuousness of his own vocal noise.[31]

Hovering around all of these approaches to the voice as body is the question (Barthes's question) of music and sexuality: what makes a voice *sexy?* What gives a voice its erotic charge? How does the attraction of a singing voice relate to sexual attraction? Gender is obviously one issue here. We've learned to hear voices as male and female (in terms of a biologically based but not determining low/high register, for example), and the singing voice

carries these codings with it (which means that a performance artist like Laurie Anderson confuses the-body-in-the-voice no end by using a vocoder to give herself a "masculine" pitch, while Diamanda Galas threatens biological certainties with the sheer range of her vocals).[32]

What, then, is the significance of mainstream rock's generic preference for high-pitched male voices like Robert Plant's, for the articulation of a "hard" rock sound as a man straining to reach higher? In the spring of 1994 Canada's Crash Test Dummies had a worldwide hit with "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm," and no one doubted that a major reason for its success was the novelty of Brad Roberts's bass voice, his swollen vowels, the noise rumbling back down in his throat. This was manly singing, authoritative and a bit potbellied. And what made "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm" stand out was not that this sound is unusual as such (lots of men must sing in this deep-voiced way) but that it was unusual in today's radio soundscape. Roberts's voice is, by current pop standards, a freak.[33]

In other music contexts the high male voice has been regarded as freakish. Wayne Koestenbaum argues from his operatic perspective that the falsetto is "among the greatest of singing shames." "Long before anyone knew what a homosexual was," he writes, "entire cultures knew how to mock men who sang unconventionally high."[34] And Gary Giddins suggests that

> in American pop song and jazz, the baritone has ruled since the mid '20s, when Bing Crosby sang his first solos with Paul Whiteman and was celebrated for his virility and naturalness. The tenors he displaced were considered effete or affected—unnatural. The very few pop tenors who have appeared in recent decades were treated as novelties and worse: often they were adolescents (Wayne Newton, a castrato-manqué) or lunatic throwbacks (Tiny Tim and his ukulele).[35]

It's easy enough to spot the "unnatural" and "effeminate" rock use of the falsetto too: Frankie Valli's delirious high-pitched recollection of his father's advice in "Walk Like a Man"; Jimmy Somerville's appearance as a cherub in Sally Potter's *Orlando*. But the point is that such readings are matters of convention, not biology. A falsetto is, after all, a man's voice (there's no such thing as female falsetto); and the Crosby who, according to Giddins, "was celebrated for his virility and naturalness" was also the crooner the BBC sought to ban for "going against nature" and Cardinal O'Connell denounced for being "degenerate" and "effeminate."[36]

"Natural" voices, masculine and feminine, are defined culturally and must be understood structurally, as sounds heard against other sounds, and in rock

history low, not high, voices have seemed structurally odder, a Captain Beefheart more idiosyncratic than a Jon Anderson. There are some obvious reasons for this. The high voice is heard as the young voice, and rock is a youth form—Frankie Lymon and Michael Jackson remain the teen male models. And one of the lasting effects of doo-wop was to break the male voice up into its component parts such that the combination of *all* its sounds, from low to high, defined masculinity. This remains the norm of male rock group singing, the boys in the band harmonizing above the lead, oohing and aahing just like a bunch of girls (but, of course, not heard like girls at all).

On the other hand, there have been few falsetto rappers so far, and if the youth and doo-wop roots of rock accustomed us to the sound of the high-pitched male voice, it was in a specific expressive context: as the sound of seduction, of intimacy, of the private man. For Britain's soul-inflected singers in particular (Mick Hucknell out of Jackie Wilson and Smokey Robinson) a high voice means not effeminacy (man as woman) but *a ladies' man*, and we now take it for granted that a male voice will move up a pitch to register more intense feeling, that the more strained the note, the more sincere the singer.

What seems odd about this is the relationship of body and voice and sex. It's as if in rock convention (*pace* Roland Barthes and the Barthians) the sexiest male voice is the least bodily—the heaving bosom of the Neapolitan baritone now seems "male" in a decidedly unsexy way (and Demis Roussos's high-pitched tremor thus comes across far more lasciviously than Pavarotti's big-chested tenor). But then Elvis Presley, probably as sexy a male pop singer as there has ever been, for a long time sought (via Dean Martin) to be an Italian balladeer; and what is apparent from his early records is that Presley was, in fact, his own doo-wop act, his bass no more unnatural than his falsetto. I'm perpetually seduced by his voice, and start to wonder: as a man-fan, what am I being seduced by? What am I being seduced for?

There's a simple point here: we hear voices as male or female and listen to what they say accordingly—according to our own sexual pleasures and preferences (which is why gay and lesbian singers can subvert pop standards by *not* changing the words: Ian Matthews bubbling that "I met him on a Monday and my heart stood still"; Mathilde Santing realizing that "I've grown accustomed to her face").[37] The possibilities for confusion here between "natural" and "conventional" voices of desire are well realized in X-Ray Spex's "Oh Bondage Up Yours!"[38] This is one of the most important tracks from the heyday of U.K. punk; its lyric refers both to the sexual bondage items worn by punks for shock value and to a generalized feminist anger. But the politics of the song lies in its voice—which is drawn to one's attention by the

spoken intro: this is a "little girl" determined to be heard. And part of our "hearing" is negative, relates to what the voice is not. It is not "feminine"; it is not sweet or controlled or restrained. Such rawness also serves to register the track's punk authenticity—there is no need to assume that this sound reflects the limits of Poly Styrene's own voice; its "unmusicality" is crafted. It is necessary for the song's generic impact. There is, in short, a clear *collusion* here with the listener. The song addresses an "other"—"Up Yours!"—but on our behalf. We can only identify with the singer, with the voice, with the aggression. And if the politics here is a sexual politics, a gender politics, a politics of female identity and desire, then male listeners too are being offered the exhilaration of female de-bondage.

X-Ray Spex deliberately challenged the taken-for-granted reading of "male" and "female" voices both biologically—in terms of what girls do "naturally" sound like—and ideologically—in terms of what girls should naturally sound like. But there was a further question in their music too (or at least in their way of performing their music): does a voice have to be embodied? Must it be gendered? Can a singer *change sex?*

Sean Cubitt has made the point that the simultaneous emergence around the turn of the century of the telephone, the gramophone, and the radio meant that people became accustomed, for the first time ever, to hearing a voice without a body (previously such an experience would have meant the supernatural, the voice of God or the devil).[39]

But, of course, in practice we don't hear telephone or radio or recorded voices like this at all: we assign them bodies, we imagine their physical production. And this is not just a matter of sex and gender, but involves the other basic social attributes as well: age, race, ethnicity, class—everything that is necessary to put together a person to go with a voice. And the point to stress here is that when it comes to the singing voice *all* such readings have as much to do with conventional as "natural" expression, with the ways in which, in particular genres, singing voices are coded not just as female, but also as young, black, middle class, and so forth. In fact, the popular musician's hardest problem has been to develop conventional sounds for the *disembodied* voice—whether the ethereal voice (which is, nevertheless, female—the Cocteau Twins' Elizabeth Fraser) or the heavenly choir (ditto—Morricone's I Cantori Moderni d'Alessandroni); whether the computer voice (which is, nevertheless, male—Kraftwerk) or the collective voice of religious submission (ditto—the Stanley Brothers).[40]

This last strategy is the most interesting (and most successful) because it suggests that to disembody a voice is to rob it of individuality, and this leads directly to the question of vocal identity, to the *voice as a person*. How does

a voice signify a person? What is the relationship of someone's vocal sound and their being? As I've already noted, the voice is usually taken to be the person (to imitate their voice is a way of becoming that person—hence the art of the impressionist), and the voice is certainly an important way in which we recognize people we already know (on the telephone, for example). But it is also a key factor in the way in which we assess and react to people we don't know, in the way we decide what sort of person they are, whether we like or dislike, trust or mistrust them. This is one reason why we often think we "know" a singer as part of what we mean by "liking" their voice (and why, similarly, we may feel we "know" the author of a book we like: we hear in it a particular sort of voice).

But having said this, I must add some qualifications. First, a voice is easy to change. As a matter of personal identity it is easier to change, indeed, than one's face (or one's body movements). And this is not just a matter of "acting" in the formal sense. People's voices change over time (as they adapt to the sounds of surrounding voices, to accents, and so forth; the shifting quality of people's voices in class terms, as they are upwardly or downwardly socially mobile, has often been noticed in Britain), and, more to the point, people's voices change according to circumstances—at home or in school, in the office or in bed, with friends or strangers (just listen to how people adapt their voice on the telephone, according to who is at the other end).

The voice, in short, may or may not be a key to someone's identity, but it is certainly a key to the ways in which we change identities, pretend to be something we're not, deceive people, lie. We use the voice, that is, not just to assess a person, but also, even more systematically, to assess that person's sincerity: the voice and how it is used (as well as words and how they are used) become a measure of someone's truthfulness.

In popular music, two points about this are striking. First, "truth" is a matter of sound conventions, which vary from genre to genre. What becomes clear in David Brackett's detailed comparison of Billie Holiday's and Bing Crosby's versions of "I'll Be Seeing You," for example, is that it is almost impossible to hear both of them as sincere: the assumptions that lie behind a reading of Holiday's voice as "witheringly" sad entail our hearing Crosby's voice as "shallow." If Holiday sings "for real," then Crosby, as Brackett puts it, gives "the impression of someone playing a role in a film"; while someone hearing Crosby as reassuringly direct and friendly could only hear Holiday as mannered. How we hear a musical voice, in other words, is tied into how we hear music.[41]

Second, one of pop's pleasures has always been singers taking on other people's voices, and I don't refer here simply to parody or pastiche but also

to what Bernard Gendron describes as caricature, the taking on of another voice not as homage or mockery or pretense, but in order to draw attention to its specific characteristics (in the same way that a good comic impressionist doesn't just imitate someone's voice but uses its individual shape to reveal something about its owner). This is most obvious in the white use of black voices in rock and roll history, from Jerry Lee Lewis's "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On," which, as Gendron says, "presents itself as white-boy-wildly-singing-and-playing-black," to Mick Jagger's "I'm a King Bee," which, we might say, presents itself as white-boy-lasciviously-slurring-and-playing-black-sex. No listener could have thought that either Lewis or Jagger was black; every listener realized that they wanted to be.[42]

Which leads me to my second general point about vocal deception: if a voice can be made to change to deceive other people, it can also be used to deceive ourselves. Our "internal" experience of the voice, that is to say, the way we hear ourselves, may not at all resemble how it sounds "externally," to other people (which is why most people are genuinely shocked—and appalled—when they first hear themselves on tape). "Putting on voices" is not something we only do as part of a specific public performance (in a *karaoke* bar, say), or in a specific act of deception; it is, rather, a normal part of our *imaginative* activity. And, as Jonathan Rée has suggested, it may in fact be difficult to know "one's own voice" amidst the babble of the different voices in which we talk to ourselves: "You glimpse the possibility that it is quite arbitrary to try to mark off certain of your vocal performances and nominate them as one voice, the voice that really belongs to you: do you really possess an ownmost, innermost voice which has the power to clamp quotation marks round the others and shrug them off as 'funny'?"[43]

This question seems pertinent too for our experience of hearing voices, of listening to song. The musical pleasure lies in the play we can make of both being addressed, responding to a voice as it speaks to us (caressingly, assertively, plaintively), and addressing, taking on the voice as our own, not just physically, as I've already discussed—singing along, moving our throat and chest muscles appropriately—but also emotionally and psychologically, taking on (in fantasy) *the vocal personality* too.

This is the context in which the voice as character becomes significant. In taking on a singer's vocal personality we are, in a sense, putting on a vocal costume, enacting the role that they are playing for ourselves. But a singer's act in this respect is complex. There is, first of all, the character presented as the protagonist of the song, its singer and narrator, the implied person controlling the plot, with an attitude and tone of voice; but there may also be a "quoted" character, the person whom the song is about (and singers, like

lecturers, have their own mannered ways of indicating quote marks). On top of this there is the character of the singer as star, what we know about them, or are led to believe about them through their packaging and publicity, and then, further, an understanding of the singer as a person, what we like to imagine they are really like, what is revealed, *in the end*, by their voice.

Such a multiplicity of voices can be heard in *all* pop forms, whatever the generic differences in how they are registered—whether by Tom T. Hall or Johnny Rotten always "being themselves," by Dory Previn being "The Lady with the Braids" (complete with nervous laughter), or by Frank Sinatra being himself being a late-night melancholic in "One for my Baby"; whether, to be more dramatic, in Patti Smith's rock and roll chronicle, "Horses," in the Chi-Lites' strip cartoon, "Have You Seen Her," or in Meat Loaf's big brother act, "Objects in the Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are."[44]

What we take for granted, listening to all these songs, is that they involve *layers* of interpretation, and that in pop it is therefore all but impossible to disentangle vocal realism, on the one hand, from vocal irony, on the other. How does one read, for example, Randy Newman's concert performance of "Lonely at the Top"? Here we have not just a cult singer/songwriter pretending to be a superstar (listen to the audience laugh with him) but also a highly successful writer/composer pretending to be a failure (listen to him laugh at his audience). Or take Michelle Shocked's "Anchorage," the meaning of which, as Dai Griffiths argues, depends on "whether you hear in Anchorage, a place in Alaska, the natural voice of the letter writer, or in 'Anchorage,' a song by Michelle Shocked, the crafted voice of the songwriter." And the pleasure of this lies in the fact that we actually hear *both Anchorage and "Anchorage" at once.*[45]

This returns us to the point from which I started: all songs are narratives; genre conventions determine how such narratives work; words are used to define a voice and vice versa.[46] In one respect, then, a pop star is like a film star, taking on many parts but retaining an essential "personality" that is common to all of them and is the basis of their popular appeal. For the pop star the "real me" is a promise that lies in the way we hear the voice, just as for a film star the "real" person is to be found in the secret of their look. This naturally leads to the issue of performance, but first I want to address two final matters relating to the voice itself: the question of interpretation, and the use in pop music of voices speaking/singing to each other.

In his discussion of the classical song, Edward Cone, as we've seen, distinguishes a song's composer, performer, and protagonist. A number of analytic questions follow from this. For example, does a performer need to know what she's singing about? If she sings the notes correctly and expres-

sively, according to classical convention, as instructed by the composer in the score, will this *in itself* have the character effect the composer intended?[47] Cone proposes an analytic distinction: a protagonist's character is determined by the composer (by the way the music is constructed) but interpreted by the performer, and the question becomes what the relationship is of these two processes: what does an interpreter *do?* Cone also suggests that in responding to this question for themselves, listeners effectively make a choice: either to focus on the music, the piece performed, the character as composed, or on the performance, the performer, the character as interpreted. And he implies that one of the key differences between the art and the pop aesthetic can be found here: the classical concert performance is designed to draw attention to the work; the pop performance is designed to draw attention to the performer.[48]

Does this distinction stand up to pop scrutiny? I would argue, rather, that the pop performer draws attention to performance itself, to the *relationship* between performer and work. Take the case of the torch song, the "elegy to unrequited love," which is, perhaps, the clearest example of the pop singer's interpretive art. John Moore has suggested that the torch singer is best heard as an emotional expert—not an expert on emotions as such (the assumption of the form was that such emotions were universal) but an expert on their expression. Although the torch singers presented particular feelings describing particular situations (romantic illusions and disillusion), our pleasure in the songs lies not in the drama of the event, but in the way the singers explore the nuances of the feeling; torch singing is for both singer and listener an essentially narcissistic art. Torch song lyrics were therefore just signs of the feelings that the singer was to explore through the way they were sung. The music set up a "sense of sadness," the words a "verbal space" within which a voice could tell a story; and the singer applied herself—her critical, musical faculties—to the pleasures and difficulties of interpreting feelings, atmosphere, verse.[49]

Torch singing, in short, was a highly disciplined skill; it was certainly not about "direct" emotional expression or self-abandon. It involved reflection on feeling, not the feelings themselves—Billie Holiday, writes Martin Williams, "had the ability of a great actress to keep a personal distance from both her material and her performance of it"—and part of the sexual charge of the torch song came from the fact that not only were these women singers, as the lyrical protagonists, almost always reflecting on the behavior of men, they were also, as interpreters, reflecting on the words of men. These songs, then (and perhaps this is Cone's point), clearly "belong" to their singers, not their writers. Interpretation in this context does not mean realizing what the

composer (or, rather, his music) meant, but using the music to show what interpretation means. Billie Holiday's voice, writes Robert O'Meally, whatever the song she sang, "was always, *always* the heroine."[50]

"Is there actually such a thing as the love song," asks Edward Cone, "outside the conventions of the love song itself?" And the answer is no, with the proviso that conventions are only the beginning of musical expression, not its end, and thus different singers (Ruth Etting and Helen Morgan, Billie Holiday and Bryan Ferry) can take the same words, the same tune, the same situation ("Body and Soul," "These Foolish Things") and use them to provide quite different accounts of love itself, its permanence and transience, its sweetness and humiliation. Voices, not songs, hold the key to our pop pleasures; musicologists may analyze the art of the Gershwins or Cole Porter, but we hear Bryan Ferry or Peggy Lee.[51]

My final question concerns vocal difference: what is the relationship *between* voices in popular song? After all, since the mid-sixties the group (rather than the solo singer) has dominated Anglo-American popular music (at least in terms of male voices), and if such groups more often than not have a "lead" singer we rarely hear his voice completely unaccompanied. We are, that is, accustomed to the idea of a "group voice"—the appeal of both the Beatles and the Beach Boys rested on their (quite different) blend of male voices; while, to take a different genre example, the male vocal trio (on the model of the Impressions) was central to the development of reggae in the 1960s and 1970s.

Such use of voices (rather than voice) can be pushed in two directions. In male group tradition, whether traced from gospel, barbershop, doo-wop (or their intermingling), the emphasis has been, in Keir Keightley's words, on singing as "social co-operation, the submission of individuality to the service of a larger corporate structure," and the "rational" organization of male voices as *sounds*—Lennon and McCartney thus sang "as one" (and it was only later, when we and they wanted to take these songs seriously as art, not pop, that anyone could hear Beatles numbers as "a Lennon song," "a McCartney verse").[52]

In female group tradition, by contrast (and I am deliberately exaggerating this contrast here; in practice male and female groups are not so distinct), different voices are used differently, in a conversational way (which in another trajectory, out of insult ritual, also leads to rap). The voices on tracks like the Shangri-Las' "Leader of the Pack" or the Angels' "My Boyfriend's Back" function as each other's audience; the chorus, dramatically, comments on the story and the action, encouraging the lead singer, disbelieving her, egging her on. Here "corporate identity" is indicated less by harmony singing than by

the sharing out of the lead voice itself, and there is a direct continuity between the Shirelles' 1958 "I Met Him on a Sunday" and Salt-n-Pepa's 1991 "Let's Talk About Sex."[53]

As a label, "girl groups" (which may include groups of boys) describes a form which is, by its nature, *dramatic:* girl group records feature—focus on—vocal rhetoric and its effects. And, though less obviously, so does the pop duet (a form which has been somewhat devalued by the current fashion of reviving old stars' careers by getting them to sing along with new stars to no dramatic effect at all). In country music, for example, the man/woman duet is usually conflictual; the male and female voices are registered separately, present their different points of view, with the chorus harmonies suggesting just a temporary truce (the classic pairing here was Conway Twitty and Loretta Lynn). In soul the duet was usually used as a way of intensifying feeling, as a means of seductive talk, male and female voices moving in and to musical and sexual union (listen, for example, to Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell).[54]

In rock the most effective duets work not so much with realist effects (a man and woman quarreling or making up) as with star quality and across genre lines. Sinead O'Connor, for example, has been used to brilliant effect as a voice *querying* what's being said by a rapper, on the one hand (in her song with M. C. Lyte, "I Want (Your Hands on Me)"), and by a country singer, on the other (on Willie Nelson's version of Peter Gabriel's "Don't Give Up")—and I defy anyone to listen to her first entry on the latter track without a shiver of recognition that *this* person (with all we know about her) should be telling Willie Nelson (with all we know about him), should be telling him, so surely, so sweetly, to survive.[55]

10

Performance

One minute into this performance and she's not wearing her heart on her sleeve: all of her internal organs are draped over her body like a hideous new skin. Blood seeps through her pores; stigmata break out all over, making signs no one can read. By marshalling an array of blues and soul mannerisms, she contrives an act that in certain moments—and you can hear them coming—ceases to be any kind of act at all. The means of illusion produce the real, and the real is horrible, but so vivid you couldn't turn away to save your life, or the singer's. It's no fun: there's an instant in the last chorus of the performance when Joplin's voice goes . . . *somewhere else,* and it's simply not credible that the music then ends with an ordinary flourish people can cheer for. How did she get back?

Greil Marcus on Janis Joplin's performance of "Ball and Chain" at the Monterey International Pop Festival, 1967[1]

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on—and this seems to be the typical case—then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the "realness" of what is presented.

Erving Goffman[2]

My argument in this book is not just that in listening to popular music we are listening to a performance, but, further, that "listening" itself is a performance: to understand how musical pleasure, meaning, and evaluation work, we have to understand how, as listeners, we perform the music for

56. Ned Rorem, "Poetry and Music," in *Settling the Score*, pp. 294–295. Rorem's emphases.
57. There's obviously an analogy here with the adaptation of books for film and television: the screened reading often seems wrong to us; the filmed version seems to deprive us of interpretive freedom (while adding "intensity," just like the musical adaptation of a poem).
58. Rorem, "Poetry and Music," p. 294. And see Jonathan Rée, "Funny Voices: Stories, Punctuation and Personal Identity," *New Literary History* 21 (1990). Rée notes that novelists have few resources to determine how a character's speech will be read/performed compared with those of a composer, who can determine pitch, voice type, metronome setting, and so forth (p. 1047), but, nonetheless, writers do use language, sentence structure, and punctuation to make a reading a reading aloud (p. 1049), and if, in Barbara Herrnstein Smith's words, "poems are pictures of utterances," then, Rée suggests, novels may be thought of as "pictures of oral storytelling" (p. 1056).
59. Quoted in Furia, *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley*, p. 39.
60. Or as Daniel Webb put it in 1769: "Strong passions, the warm effusions of the soul, were never destined to creep through monotonous parallels; they call for a more liberal rhythmus; for movements, not balanced by rule, but measured by sentiment, and flowing in ever new yet musical proportions." Quoted in Winn, *Unsuspected Eloquence*, p. 256. And see Frye, *Sound and Poetry*, p. xiii; and, for many illuminating thoughts on music, poetry, meter, and rhythm, C. Day Lewis, *The Lyric Impulse* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), and Charles O. Hartman, *Jazz Text: Voice and Improvisation in Poetry, Jazz and Song* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

    Winn points out that poets have consistently misunderstood what it means to be "musical." For example: "The Romantic poets loosened their syntax in the name of a more 'musical' poetry, a stylistic change which made their poetry *less*, not more, like the music of their contemporaries, the Viennese classical composers, arguably the most syntactical music in Western history" (pp. 269–270).
61. Quoted in Hartman, *Jazz Text*, p. 169. My emphasis. Robert Pring-Mill shows how Spanish-American "committed poetry" (which is, given its political ends, "unequivocally univocal in its purpose—with even its intentional ambiguities and ironies contributing to an 'intended meaning' aimed at an 'intended audience'") depends for its political effects on popular song *forms*, which give its arguments the force of aesthetic necessity. See *"Gracias a la Vida": The Power and Poetry of Song* (London: Queen Mary and Westfield College), The Kate Elder Lecture, 1990. Quote taken from p. 12.
62. Attridge, "Rhythm in English Poetry," pp. 1022–23. And note Claud Brown's comment (with reference to the specific rhythmic qualities of African-American English) that "spoken soul has a way of coming out metered without the intention of the speaker to invoke it." "The Language of Soul," in Richard Resh, ed., *Black America* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1969), p. 244.
63. Finnegan, *Oral Poetry*, p. 126. And for the problems of this for the literary history of the lyric, see María Rosa Menocal's richly suggestive *Shards of Love: Exile and the Origins of the Lyric* (Durham, N.C., and London: Duke University Press, 1994), especially chapter 11, a lucid discussion of, among other things, Eric Clapton's "Layla."

9. The Voice

1. Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* [1975] (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), p. 141. His emphases.
2. Quoted in Ellie M. Hisama, "Postcolonialism on the Make: The Music of John Mellancamp, David Bowie and John Zorn," *Popular Music* 12(2) (1993): 99. Her emphasis.
3. Quoted in Robert O'Meally, *Lady Day: The Many Faces of Billie Holiday* (New York: Arcade, 1991), p. 52.
4. The song line is from Bob Dylan's "Positively 4th Street," 7" single, CBS, 1965. For the use of shifters see Alan Durant, *Conditions of Music* (London: Macmillan, 1984), pp. 201–206.
5. I could add a further complication here: what is going on when a composer writes *in someone else's voice?* Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, for instance, originated in "a domestic evening" when the composer was messing around with a piece, "playing it in the different ways his friends might have done had they thought of it." As Elgar later explained: "I've written the variations each one to represent the mood of the 'party'—I've liked to imagine the 'party' writing the var[iation] him (or her) self and have written what I think they wd have written—if they were asses enough to compose—it's a quaint idea and the result is amusing to those behind the scene and won't affect the hearer who 'nose nuffin.'" Elgar was here using music not exactly to describe his friends but, in a sense, to be them—and this act of *impersonation* suggests that he, like Cone, did in the end think of music as being the composer's voice. See Francis Sparshott, "Portraits in Music—a Case Study: Elgar's 'Enigma' Variations," in Michael Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 234.
6. Edward T. Cone, *The Composer's Voice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), chap.1. But see also Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991): "To Cone's monologic and controlling 'composer's voice,' I prefer an aural vision of music animated by multiple, decentered voices localized in several invisible bodies" (p. 13). For Abbate, the "voices" in music "manifest themselves . . . as different *kinds* or modes of music that inhabit a single work. They are not uncovered by analyses that assume all music in a given work is stylistically or technically identical, originating from a single source in 'the Composer'" (p. 12; her emphasis). I return to this argument later in the chapter.
7. Anthony Storr, *Music and the Mind* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), p. 117. Storr also tells us that "Wagner's personality was charismatic and so is his music" (p. 120).
8. O'Meally, *Lady Day*, p. 97.
9. As David Brackett notes, "It is difficult to determine whether our response [to her voice] is based on what we know about Holiday's life, or on a socially mediated construction of affect conveyed by certain musical gestures." Either way, to repeat O'Meally's point, few entries on her "in even the most scholarly jazz history books" fail to refer to "her struggles with drugs and personal relationships." See David Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 62.
10. Gregory Sandow, "Tough Love," *Village Voice*, January 13, 1987, p. 71.

11. Quoted in John Moore, "'The Hieroglyphics of Love': The Torch Singers and Interpretation," *Popular Music* 8(1) (1989): 39.
12. Umberto Fiore, "New Music, Popular Music, and Opera in Italy," unpublished paper, n.d., p. 4. His emphasis.

    An opera buff like Wayne Koestenbaum might challenge this distinction. He has no doubts, for example, about Callas's individuality: "No note she sings remains the same; she changes voice *inside* the note, as if to say: 'Try to catch me, to name me, to confine me in your brutal classifications'" (his emphasis). But even for Koestenbaum the opera singer's "self" only emerges at moments of musical crisis: "at the moment of vulnerability and breakdown, the diva proves that the seamless singing has been masquerade, and now her cracked and decayed, raucous and undisguised self is coming out." Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat* (London: GMP, 1993), pp. 146, 127. In pop, "cracked and decayed" voices are always available.

    It could also be argued that as Maria Callas became more obviously "personally expressive," so she became more of a pop than an opera singer (an effect of her marketing as a recording star). See Réal La Rochelle's illuminating *Callas: La Diva et le Vinyle* (Montréal: Les éditions Triptyque, 1987).

    The problem of "how emotional expressivity is induced in song performance" when "the pitch parameter is restricted by the score" has interested psychologists too. How do we hear one performance as more "expressive" than another when the same notes have been sung? The point here seems to be that the singer's skill is "the ability to portray by acoustical means the particular emotional ambience embedded by the composer in the song," and not to bring their own, personal means of emotional expression to it (thus "dressing a song in an inappropriate ambience"). If classical singers do nevertheless use familiar rhetorical gestures ("expressive" singing is, in acoustic terms, more "agitated" than "unexpressive" singing), these are, in a sense, personally empty: the emotional meaning is in the music itself. We don't hear the singer as angry, anguished, and so forth, but the music. For an interesting discussion of these issues see Johan Sundberg, Jenny Iwarsson, and Håkon Hagegård, "A Singer's Expression of Emotions," paper presented to the Vocal Fold Physiology Conference, Korume, Japan, April 1994.
13. I'm describing here the use of voices in rock's mainstream gospel-derived tradition. Ray Charles and the Raelettes were undoubtedly the key influence (listen, for example, to "I'm Moving On" on *The Genius Sings the Blues,* London-Atlantic, 1961); Van Morrison is probably the best rock exponent (live, at least), taking advantage of his consequent "freedom from utterance" to use his voice as if it were a saxophone.
14. As was parodied by Lou Reed in "Walk on the Wild Side." There are male backup traditions too: not just the male voice choir used by the Pet Shop Boys, but also in black and white gospel—Elvis Presley used the Jordonnaires throughout his career, and even the vocally democratic doo-wop increasingly featured lead/backup male voices as it reached the pop charts (Dion and the Belmonts, for example; Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers). Gladys Knight's Pips, on the other hand, always came across as a simple gender role reversal. In country music the dominant gender convention is of the star male lead voice being tracked by an anonymous female backing voice, with the man all the way, but always just off center, a sweetener and a restraint—listen, for example, to how Emmylou Harris traces the desire behind Gram Parsons' voice on his "solo" LPs, *GP* (Reprise, 1973) and *Grievous Angel* (Reprise, 1974).
15. O'Meally, *Lady Day,* pp. 31–32.
16. For the BBC see my "Art *vs* Technology: The Strange Case of Popular Music," *Media Culture and Society* 8(3) (1986): 263. For advertising see Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 109.
17. "Significantly enough," as Bernard Gendron writes, "Crosby's singing style actually evoked the ire of spokespersons for moral purity, with Boston's Cardinal O'Connell referring to it as 'immoral and imbecile slush,' 'a degenerate low-down sort of interpretation of love,' and 'a sensuous effeminate luxurious sort of paganism.'" See Gendron's "Rock and Roll Mythology: Race and Sex in 'Whole Lotta Shakin' Going On,'" Working Paper 7 (Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, Center for Twentieth Century Studies, 1985), p. 4.
18. John Rockwell, *Sinatra* (New York: Random House, 1984), pp. 51–52.
19. This generalization is perhaps too sweeping (Glenn Gould, for example, compares Barbra Streisand to Elizabeth Schwarzkopf in this respect), and there are clearly styles of classical singing—coloratura, for example—in which the performer draws attention to her vocal technique (and to not much else). But then that is probably the reason why Cecilia Bartoli is the only classical soprano I adore.
20. One of the most obvious distinctions between pre- and post-microphone singing relates to this: in the original big bands the voice is featured as just a (minor) instrument, the words sung briefly, after one long instrumental workout and before another. By the end of the big band era, the instrumental break had become the punctuation, a fill between the second vocal chorus and the third vocal verse.
21. Sandow, "Tough Love," pp. 71, 73.
22. Aidan Day, *Jokerman* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 2.
23. Glenn Gould, "Streisand as Schwarzkopf," in *The Glenn Gould Reader,* pp. 309–310. Compare Gary Giddins on Ella Fitzgerald: "even when she recorded Tin Pan Alley muck, she could empower certain notes with a shivery reflex, *disassociating* the singer from the song yet giving the song a kick all the same." "Joy of Ella," *Village Voice,* April 27, 1993, p. 90. My emphasis.
24. Cone, *The Composer's Voice,* p. 78.
25. See Jane M. Gaines, "Bette Midler and the Piracy of Identity," in Simon Frith, ed., *Music and Copyright* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993).
26. Quotes from Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *The Responsibility of Forms* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 276, 270, 271.
27. Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat,* p. 43. Barthes's essay does, in fact, read more like a heartfelt and elaborate defense of his taste (for Panzéra; against Fischer-Dieskau) than as a particularly convincing account of different vocal techniques as such.
28. This relates, I suppose, to a Lacanian psychoanalytic view of musical pleasure, though I do not find Lacan's own words on music particularly illuminating. See, for example, his "De l'objet musical dans le champ de la psychoanalyse" [1974], *scilicet* 617 (1976). From the perspective of a kind of Lacanian socio-linguistics, Barbara Bradby and Brian Torode argue that: "the lyrics of the modern popular song permit a man to fantasise addressing a woman as love-object in terms of rocking a crying baby to hush

it. This use of lullaby language exploits the words of the absent mother in order to silence the present lover." "Song-Work," paper presented at the British Sociological Association Conference, Manchester, 1982. And see their "Pity Peggy Sue," *Popular Music* 4 (1984), and, in the same issue, Sean Cubitt, "'Maybelline': Meaning and the Listening Subject"—"the real object of desire flees before us like Maybelline's Cadillac" (p. 222).

29. Jonathan Swift, "A Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit" [1704], in *A Tale of the Tub and Other Satires* (London: J. M. Dent [Everyman], 1909), pp. 180–181.
30. Aaron Neville's "Tell It Like It Is" was originally released as a single in 1966. A live version (recorded at Tipitina's, New Orleans, in 1982) is included on the Neville Brothers' *Neville-ization,* Black Top/Demon Records, 1984.
31. For Otis Redding, listen to *Live in Europe,* Atlantic LP, 1972. Elvis Presley's pleasure in his own voice is best captured on *Elvis: The First Live Recordings* (RCA, 1984), live recordings from the Lousiana Hayride in 1955–56, and *Essential Elvis Presley,* vols. 1–3 (RCA, 1986, 1989, 1990), studio outtakes from his early RCA and Hollywood days. It is here (singers responding to themselves) rather than with backup singers (responding to a leader) that we get, paradoxically, the musical version of Erving Goffman's "response cries," the noises people make in conversation in response to someone else. Goffman suggests that such cries "do not mark a flooding of emotion outward, but a flooding of relevance in," but in musical terms the voice suggests both such movements simultaneously. See Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), p. 121.
32. We don't always get a singer's sex "right," though in my experience this is *not* usually an effect of pitch (the Laurie Anderson effect)—women's low voices and men's high voices are still heard as women's and men's voices; see the discussion of falsetto that follows in this chapter. The misjudgment seems, rather, to relate to genre expectation—the only singer I've known people systematically to misread is Jimmy Scott, and this seems to have more to do with his (torch singing) style than with his (not particularly high) pitch—listen, for example, to *Dream* (Sire, 1994).
33. Crash Test Dummies, "Mmm Mmm Mmm Mmm" (RCA, 1993).
34. Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat,* p. 165. He also suggests that "cultural folklore convinces us that we can tell someone is gay by voice alone" (p. 14).
35. Giddins, "Joy of Ella," p. 90.
36. Deborah Cameron has pointed out to me that there is actually a dispute among phoneticians concerning the "female falsetto"—how else would we describe what Minnie Riperton does with her voice on her 1974 Epic hit, "Lovin' You," for instance? And for a stimulating discussion of the special erotic appeal of the *low* female voice see Terry Castle, "In Praise of Brigitte Fassbaender (A Musical Emanation)" in her *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).
37. Ian Matthews, "Da Doo Ron Ron," Philips 7" single, 1972; Mathilde Santing, "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," on *Mathilde Santing* 10" LP, Idiot, 1982.
38. X-Ray Spex, "Oh Bondage Up Yours!", Virgin single, 1977.
39. Sean Cubitt, "Note on the Popular Song," unpublished, 1983. Koestenbaum suggests that film musical ghosts (Marni Nixon singing for Audrey Hepburn in *My Fair Lady* and for Deborah Kerr in *The King and I*) are further examples of "singing without a body, singing from an erased place in the universe." *The Queen's Throat,* p. 11. And Wendy Wolf reminds me that part of the appeal of the pop video is that it re-embodies the pop voice.
40. Record references: Cocteau Twins, "Aikea Guinea," 12" EP, 4AD 1985; Ennio Morricone, *Once Upon a Time in the West,* Soundtrack LP, RCA 1969; Kraftwerk, "The Robots," on *The Man Machine* LP, Capitol 1978; the Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys, *The Columbia Sessions, 1949–50,* Rounder LP, 1980.
41. See Brackett, *Interpreting Popular Music,* chap. 2, for a detailed discussion of Crosby's and Holiday's contrasting "musical codes," and for critical responses to them. And compare Bernard Gendron's account of the white pop "dilution" of black rock 'n' roll songs in the 1950s: Gendron, "Rock and Roll Mythology," pp. 6–7.

    I am reminded in this context of the wonderful moment when Martin Hatch, who had till then, as a good ethnomusicologist, sat equably through all the music I'd played during a course at Cornell on the "good and bad in popular culture," leapt out of his seat on hearing Bryan Ferry's version of "These Foolish Things" (one of my favorite ever tracks) and exclaimed: "*Now* I believe in bad music!"
42. Gendron, "Rock and Roll Mythology," p. 7. Gendron suggests that we can also hear black performers like Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Ray Charles caricaturing their own styles: "According to rock and roll mythology, they went from singing less black (like Nat King Cole or the Mills Brothers) to singing more black. In my judgement, it would be better to say that they adopted a more caricaturized version of singing black wildly, thus paving the way for soul music and the British invasion" (p. 10).

    For a more general discussion of race and musical caricature, see Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Record references here are Jerry Lee Lewis, "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" (Sun, 1957), and the Rolling Stones, "I'm a King Bee," on *The Rolling Stones* (Decca, 1964). There's no doubt too that white rock 'n' roll fans enjoyed the danger of sounding "black" in the safety of their own heads. The (much less obvious) phenomenon of black singers sounding "white" has hardly been studied.
43. Jonathan Rée, "Funny Voices: Stories, Punctuation and Personal Identity," *New Literary History* 21 (1990): 1053.
44. Record references are to Dory Previn, "Lady with the Braid," on *Mythical Kings and Iguanas* (UA, 1971); Frank Sinatra, "One for My Baby," on *Frank Sinatra Sings for Only the Lonely* (Capitol, 1958); Patti Smith, "Land," on *Horses,* Arista LP, 1975; the Chi-Lites, "Have You Seen Her" (Brunswick, 1971); Meat Loaf, "Objects in the Rear View Mirror May Appear Closer Than They Are," on *Bat out of Hell II* (Virgin, 1993).
45. Dai Griffiths, "Talking About Popular Song: in Praise of 'Anchorage,'" in Rossana Dalmonte and Mario Baroni, eds., *Secondo Convegno Europeo di Analisi Musicale* (Trento: Universita degli Studi di Trento, 1992), p. 356. Record references: Randy Newman, "Lonely at the Top," on *Randy Newman/Live* (Reprise, 1971), and Michelle Shocked, "Anchorage," on *Short Sharp Shocked* (Cooking Vinyl, 1988).
46. Carolyn Abbate suggests that in classical music "narrative" should be taken to describe a specific musical *act,* "a unique moment of performing narrative within a surrounding music" (*Unsung Voices,* p. 19). I've been suggesting here that in pop the voice always does this act, but that is not necessarily the case, and Abbate's argument could

certainly be applied to pop's instrumental-narrative moments, whether they're performed by an improvising player like, say, Keith Richards, or by a calculating producer, like, say, Phil Spector.

47. Is it better, for example, for an opera to be sung in the language in which it was composed, which "sounds" right but may not be linguistically comprehensible to either singers or audience; or to translate the libretto into, say, English, which means that Anglophones now know what is being sung but the vocal *sounds* are no longer those in which the opera was originally composed? I would always opt for the first approach, but then words have always been the least of my musical pleasures.
48. Cone, *The Composer's Voice,* p. 119–121. For further consideration of this issue, with reference to instrumental interpretation, see Jerrold Levinson, "Performative *vs* Critical Interpretation in Music," in Krausz, *The Interpretation of Music.*
49. See John Moore, "'The Hieroglyphics of Love.'" I take the concept of "verbal space" from Griffiths, "Talking About Popular Song," p. 353. For technical discussion of interpretive singing see Will Friedwald, *Jazz Singing: America's Great Voices from Bessie Smith to Bebop and Beyond* (New York: Scribners, 1990). For the torch singer's art listen to Chris Connor's "All About Ronnie" (1954), on *Out of this World* (Affinity, 1984), or Jerry Southern's "I Thought of You Last Night" (1952), on *When I Fall in Love* (MCA, 1984).
50. O'Meally, *Lady Day,* p. 198. His emphasis. Martin Williams is quoted on p. 43.
51. Cone, *The Composer's Voice,* p. 53. Record references: Billie Holiday, "These Foolish Things" (1936), on *The Billie Holiday Story Volume 1* (CBS, n.d.); Bryan Ferry, "These Foolish Things," on *These Foolish Things* (Island, 1973).
52. Keightley's discussion concerns the Beach Boys—see "The History and Exegesis of Pop," p. 128.
53. The Shangri-Las, "Leader of the Pack," Red Bird single, 1964; the Angels, "My Boyfriend's Back," Smash single, 1963; the Shirelles, "I Met Him on a Sunday," Tiara/Decca single, 1958; Salt-n-Pepa, "Let's Talk About Sex," Next Plateau single, 1991.
54. Record references: Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty, *Lead Me On* (MCA, 1971); Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell, *Greatest Hits* (Motown, 1970).
55. Records cited: Sinead O'Connor and M. C. Lyte, "I Want (Your Hands On Me)," Ensign 12" single, 1988; Willie Nelson, "Don't Give Up," on *Across the Borderline,* Columbia LP, 1993. For discussion of the former see Katrina Irving, "'I Want Your Hands On Me': Building Equivalences Through Rap Music," *Popular Music* 12(2) (1993): 117–120.

10. Performance

1. Greil Marcus, "Days Between Stations," *Interview,* October 1993.
2. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* [1959] (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 28.
3. For the distinction between "textual" and "contextual" performance theories see Graham F. Thompson's very useful "Approaches to 'Performance,'" *Screen* 26(5) (1985): 81.
4. Nick Kaye, *Postmodernism and Performance* (London: Macmillan, 1994), p. 144.
5. See Thompson, "Approaches to 'Performance,'" p. 88. I'm also obviously indebted in what follows to the work of Erving Goffman—for an exemplary study see his lecture on "The Lecture" in *Forms of Talk.*
6. Noël Carroll, "Performance," *Formations* 3 (1986).
7. As Erving Goffman famously put it, "All the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify." *The Presentation of Self,* pp. 77–78.
8. John Kassan, for example, suggests that embarrassment (or its avoidance) became the key to public behavior in the nineteenth-century American city, because of the unstable context of honor, shame, and reputation. See John F. Kassan, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), pp. 114–115.
9. See Sally Banes's excellent study of this period, *Greenwich Village 1963: Avant-Garde Performance and the Effervescent Body* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1993).
10. See Richard Bauman, "Verbal Art as Performance," *American Anthropologist* 77 (1975).
11. Which makes it different from a literary text. It may be true, as I discuss in Chapter 12, that books too only come into being when read, but they can and are studied as if they were always already structured, so to speak.
12. George Beiswanger, "Doing and Viewing Dances: A Perspective for the Study of Criticism," in George Beiswanger, Wilfried A. Hofman, and David Michael Levin, "Three Essays in Dance Aesthetics," *Dance Perspectives* 55 (Autumn 1973): 8.
13. Björk, "There's More To Life Than This," on *Debut,* Bapsi/One Little Indian LP, 1993.
14. Anne Lederman argues persuasively that folk musicians' use of a "deliberately dramatic, *staged* presentation" of their music on tour or in the recording studio enables them to assume that their "ordinary" (though equally rule-bound) performances in "informal" settings, or in their own communities, just come naturally. See "'Barrett's Privateers': Performance and Participation in the Folk Revival," in Neil V. Rosenberg, ed., *Transforming Tradition* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1993). Charles Keil makes a similar point about polka bands' performing norms in "People's Music Comparatively," *Dialectical Anthropology* 10 (1985).
15. Peter Bailey, "Conspiracies of Meaning: Music Hall and the Knowingness of Popular Culture," *Past and Present* 144 (1994).
16. Bailey relates the music hall use of linguistic humor to the nineteenth-century disciplining of working-class talk in general, by factory, office, and school, and to the legal policing of music hall speech, in particular.
17. Within street conversation Abrahams thus distinguishes the casual *running it down* from the "aggressive, witty performance talk" of *signifying.* Within signifying one can distinguish *talking smart* ("serious, clever, conflict talk") from *talking shit* (non-serious, all-join-in contest talk). Talking smart (which can be further divided into the "overtly aggressive" *putting down* and the "covertly aggressive" *putting on*) "arises within conversational context yet is judged in performance (stylistic) terms." Talking shit (which can be further divided into "nondirective" *playing* and "directive" *sounding*) is "performance interaction, yet built on a model of conversational back-and-forth." And we can further add to this picture the variations of women's talk *talking tough* and *talking sweet.* See Roger D. Abrahams, *Talking Black* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1976), Figure 1, p. 46, and, for the general argument here, pp. 5–89. Zora Neale Hurston, who long ago observed that "drama" defined the "Negro expressive