

# ROMANTICISM TODAY: THE SINGER/SONGWRITER-PARADIGM

## Lecture 7: Female Voices

- 1) From the Ranks of the Freaks: Aimee Mann
- 2) What I Need Is a Good Defense: Fiona Apple
- 3) Bring 'Em All Back to Life: Feist
- 4) Past & Present: PJ Harvey

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The folk music revival in the 1960s saw several singer songwriters come to prominence: Joan Baez, Phil Ochs, and especially, Bob Dylan. Singer songwriters were a particularly strong 'movement' in the 1970s, including Neil Young, James Taylor, Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne and Joan Armatrading; all still performing/recording. In the 1980s, the appellation singer songwriter was applied to, among others, Bruce Springsteen, Prince, and Elvis Costello; and in the 1990s to Tori Amos, Suzanne Vega, Tanita Tikaram, Tracy Chapman, and Toni Childs. This recent female predominance led some observers to equate the 'form' with women performers, due to its emphasis on lyrics and performance rather than the indulgences with male-dominated styles of rock music.

(Shuker 2001, 103)

### 1) From the Ranks of the Freaks: Aimee Mann

#### Aimee Mann, "Save Me"

*Magnolia* (O.S.T, 1999) / *Bachelor No. 2 or, The Last Remains of the Dodo* (2000)

You look like a perfect fit  
For a girl in need of a tourniquet

But can you - save me  
Come on and - save me  
If you could - save me  
From the ranks of the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone

'Cause I can tell you know what it's like  
The long farewell of the hunger strike

But can you save me  
Come on and save me  
If you could save me  
From the ranks of the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone

You struck me down like radium  
Like Peter Pan or Superman

You will come to save me  
C'mon and save me  
If you could save me  
From the ranks of the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone  
'Cept the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone  
But the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone

C'mon and save me  
Why don't you save me  
If you could save me  
From the ranks of the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone  
Except the freaks  
Who suspect they could never love anyone  
Except the freaks who could never love anyone

### **Aimee Mann, "Freeway"**

*@#%&\*! Smilers (2008)*

You've got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway  
The road to Orange Country leaves an awful lot of leeway  
Where everyone's a doctor or a specialist in retail  
They'll sell you all the speed you want if you can take the blackmail

You know it  
I know it  
Why don't you  
Just show it

You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway

You've got a lot of money but you cannot keep your bills paid  
The sacrifice is worth it just to hang around the arcade  
You found yourself a prophet but you left him on the boardwalk  
Another chocolate Easter bunny, hollowed out by your talk

You know it  
I know it  
Why don't you  
Just show it

You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway

And everything I do is wrong  
But at least I'm hanging on  
You got a lot of money that you can't afford  
You got a lot of money that you can't afford  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford the freeway  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford  
You got a lot of money but you can't afford

## 2) What I Need Is a Good Defense: Fiona Apple

### "Criminal"

*Tidal* (1996)

I've been a bad bad girl  
I've been careless with a delicate man  
And it's a sad sad world  
When a girl will break a boy just because she can

Don't you tell me to deny it  
I've done wrong and I want to suffer for my sins  
I've come to you 'cause I need guidance to be true  
And I just don't know where I can begin

What I need is a good defense  
'Cause I'm feelin' like a criminal  
And I need to be redeemed  
To the one I've sinned against  
Because he's all I ever knew of love

Heaven help me for the way I am  
Save me from these evil deeds before I get them done  
I know tomorrow brings the consequence at hand  
But I keep livin' this day like the next will never come

Oh help me but don't tell me to deny it  
I've got to cleanse myself of all these lies till I'm good enough for him  
I've got a lot to lose and I'm bettin' high so I'm beggin' you  
Before it ends just tell me where to begin

What I need...

Let me know the way  
Before there's hell to pay  
Give me room to lay the law and let me go  
I've got to make a play  
To make my lover stay  
So what would an angel say the devil wants to know

What I need ...

***When the Pawn Hits the Conflicts He Thinks like a King  
What He Knows Throws the Blows When He Goes to the Fight  
And He'll Win the Whole Thing 'fore He Enters the Ring  
There's No Body to Batter When Your Mind Is Your Might  
So When You Go Solo, You Hold Your Own Hand  
And Remember That Depth Is the Greatest of Heights  
And If You Know Where You Stand, Then You Know Where to Land  
And If You Fall It Won't Matter, Cuz You'll Know That You're Right***

(1999)

### **Fiona Apple, "Extraordinary Machine"**

*Extraordinary Machine* (2005)

I certainly haven't been shopping for any new shoes  
And  
I certainly haven't been spreading myself around  
I still only travel by foot and by foot, it's a slow climb,  
But I'm good at being uncomfortable, so  
I can't stop changing all the time

I notice that my opponent is always on the go  
And  
Won't go slow, so as not to focus, and I notice  
He'll hitch a ride with any guide, as long as  
They go fast from whence he came  
But he's no good at being uncomfortable, so  
He can't stop staying exactly the same

If there was a better way to go then it would find me  
I can't help it, the road just rolls out behind me  
Be kind to me, or treat me mean  
I'll make the most of it, I'm an extraordinary machine

I seem to you to seek a new disaster every  
Day  
You deem me due to clean my view and be at peace and lay  
I mean to prove I mean to move in my own way, and say,  
I've been getting along for long before you came into the play

I am the baby of the family, it happens,  
So  
Everybody cares and wears the sheeps' clothes while they chaperone  
Curious, you looking down your nose at me, while you appease  
Courteous, to try and help - but let me set your mind at ease

If there was a better way to go then it would find me  
I can't help it, the road just rolls out behind me  
Be kind to me, or treat me mean  
I'll make the most of it, I'm an extraordinary machine

Do I so worry you, you need to hurry to my side?  
It's very kind  
But it's to no avail and I don't want the bail  
I promise you, everything will be just fine

If there was a better way to go then it would find me  
I can't help it, the road just rolls out behind me  
Be kind to me, or treat me mean  
I'll make the most of it, I'm an extraordinary machine

### **Fiona Apple, "Window"**

*Extraordinary Machine* (2005)

I was staring out the window  
The whole time he was talking to me  
It was a filthy pane of glass  
I couldn't get a clear view  
And as he went on and on  
It wasn't the outside world I could see  
Just the filthy pane that I was looking through

So I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
Better that I break the window  
Than him or her or me

I was never focused on just one thing  
My eyes got fixed when my mind got soft  
It may look like I'm concentrated on  
A very clear view  
But I'm as good as asleep

I bet you didn't know  
It takes a lot of it away  
If you do

I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
Better that I break the window  
Than him or her or me

I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
It was in my way  
Better that I break the window  
Than forget what I had to say  
Or miss what I should see

Because the fact being that  
Whatever's in front of me  
Is covering my view  
So I can't see what I'm seeing in fact  
I only see what I'm looking through

So again I done the right thing  
I was never worried about that  
The answer's always been in clear view  
But even when the window was cleaned  
I still can't see for the fact  
That when it's clean it's so clear I can't tell what I'm looking through

So I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
It was in my way  
Better that I break the window  
Than him or her or me

I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
Better that I break the window  
Than miss what I should see

I had to break the window  
It just had to be  
It was in my way  
Better that I break the window  
Than forget what I had to say  
Or miss what I should see  
Or break him her or me  
Especially me

***The Idler Wheel Is Wiser than the Driver of the Screw  
And Whipping Cords Will Serve You More than Ropes Will Ever Do (2012)***

**Fiona Apple, "Every Single Night"**

*The Idler Wheel ... (2012)*

Every single night  
I endure the flight  
Of little wings of white-flamed  
Butterflies in my brain  
These ideas of mine  
Percolate the mind  
Trickle down the spine  
Swarm the belly, swelling to a blaze  
That's where the pain comes in  
Like a second skeleton  
Trying to fit beneath the skin  
I can't fit the feelings in  
Every single night's alright with my brain

What'd I say to her  
Why'd I say it to her  
What does she think of me  
That I'm not what I ought to be  
That I'm what I try not to be  
It's got to be somebody else's fault  
I can't get caught  
If what I am is what I am, cause I does what I does  
Then brother, get back, cause my breast's gonna bust open  
The rib is the shell and the heart is the yolk and  
I just made a meal for us both to choke on  
Every single night's a fight with my brain

I just want to feel everything  
I just want to feel everything  
I just want to feel everything

So I'm gonna try to be still now  
Gonna renounce the mill a little while and  
If we had a double-king-sized bed  
We could move in it and I'd soon forget  
That what I am is what I am cause I does what I does  
And maybe I'd relax, let my breast just bust open  
My heart's made of parts of all that surround me  
And that's why the devil just can't get around me  
Every single night's alright, every single night's a fight  
And every single fight's alright with my brain

I just want to feel everything  
I just want to feel everything  
I just want to feel everything  
I just want to feel everything

## Fiona Apple, "Hot Knife"

*The Idler Wheel ...* (2012)

If I'm butter, if I'm butter,  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife,  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise.

If I'm butter, if I'm butter,  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife,  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise.

He excites me  
Must be like a genesis of rhythm  
I get feisty  
Whenever I'm with him

If I'm butter, if I'm butter,  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife,  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise.

I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife,  
I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter.  
If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that  
He's never gonna need another, never need another.

If I'm butter, if I'm butter (I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife)  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife (I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter)  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen (If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that)  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise (He's never gonna need another, never need another)

If I'm butter, if I'm butter (I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife)  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife (I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter)  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen (If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that)  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise (He's never gonna need another, never need another)

He excites me  
Must be like the genesis of rhythm  
I get feisty  
Whenever I'm with him.

If I'm butter, if I'm butter (I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife)  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife (I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter)  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen (If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that)  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise (He's never gonna need another, never need another)

If I'm butter, if I'm butter (I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife)  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife (I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter)  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen (If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that)  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise (He's never gonna need another, never need another)

I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife,  
I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter.  
If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that  
He's never gonna need another, never need another.

I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife, (And you can, and you can)  
I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter. (And you can relax around me)  
If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that (And you can, and you can)  
He's never gonna need another, never need another. (And you can relax around me)

He excites me  
Must be like the genesis of rhythm  
I get feisty  
Whenever I'm with him.

[7x]

If I'm butter, if I'm butter (I'm a hot knife, I'm a hot knife) (Maybe he could teach me something) (And you can, and you can)  
If I'm butter, then he's a hot knife (I'm a hot knife, he's a pat of butter) (Maybe I could teach him, too) (You can relax around me)  
He makes my heart a cinemascope screen (If I get a chance, I'm gonna show him that) (Even just a reach is a triumph) (And you can,...)  
Showing the dancing bird of paradise (He's never gonna need another, never need another) (And now I've even got a hold on you) (You ...)

### 3) Bring 'Em All Back to Life: Feist

#### Feist, "Graveyard"

*Metals* (2011)

The graveyard, the graveyard all full of light  
The only age, the beating heart is empty of life  
Dirt and grass, a shadow heart; the moon sails past  
Blood as ice is an empty crisis, lonely it lies

Whoa-ah-ah-ah ah-ah, bring 'em all back to life [x4]

Roots and lies, roots and lies, our family tree is old  
From there we climb the golden hill, calmly will eternity  
I held your heart, a giant wand; all tell of sorrow  
And history begins to be blue and brown eyes

Whoa-ah-ah-ah ah-ah, bring 'em all back to life [x8]

### 4) Past & Present: PJ Harvey

#### The Past:

#### PJ Harvey, *Let England Shake* + 12 Short Films by Seamus Murphy (2011)

Francis Ford Coppola can lay claim to the war movie. Ernest Hemingway the war novel. Now Polly Jean Harvey, a 41-year-old from Dorset, has claimed the war album.

(Mike Williams, *New Musical Express* review)

Harvey: [I]t grew from my research, looking at officially appointed war artists and war poets, and thinking "where are the officially appointed war songwriters?"

(qtd. in Reinfandt 2012)

## **PJ Harvey, "On Battleship Hill"**

*Let England Shake* (2011)

The scent of Thyme carried on the wind,  
Stings your face into remembering  
Cruel nature has won again.

On Battleship Hill's caved in trenches,  
A hateful feeling still lingers,  
Even now, 80 years later.  
Cruel nature  
Cruel, cruel nature.

The land returns to how it has always been,  
Thyme carried on the wind.  
Jagged mountains, jutting out,  
Crag like teeth in a rotten mouth.

On Battleship Hill I hear the wind,  
Say "Cruel nature has won again."

### **The Present:**

**PJ Harvey & Seamus Murphy, *The Hollow of the Hand* (2015)**

**PJ Harvey, *The Hope Six Demolition Project* (2016)**

[D]ie Engländerin PJ Harvey [hatte sich] seit den frühen neunziger Jahren eigentlich damit beschäftigt, ihre eigenen dunklen Seiten auszuleuchten. Mit dünner Stimme sang sie zur verzerrten E-Gitarre über die multiple Zumutung, eine Frau zu sein. So intensiv, dass sie damit zu einer integren Ikone des Postpunk wurde. Erst mit dem epochalen *Let England Shake* änderte sie ihre Perspektive: Sie nahm die psychosozialen Hypotheken einer westlichen Nation in den Blick. Jetzt geht sie noch einen Schritt weiter und globalisiert ihre Kritik.

Aufgenommen hat Harvey das Album im Somerset House in London – und sich dabei ebenfalls beobachten lassen. Zuschauer durften dem kreativen Prozess für jeweils 45 Minuten jenseits einer Glasscheibe beiwohnen. Selten wurden die Produktionsbedingungen des Pop so offen ausgestellt. Maximale Transparenz wird hier zur Konsequenz eines journalistischen Ansatzes, bei dem Details der Wirklichkeit zu tragenden Bauteilen der Kunst werden.

(Frank 2016)

Song	Setting	Poem(s)
"The Community of Hope"	Washington DC	"Sight-Seeing, South of the River"
"The Ministry of Defence"	Afghanistan	
"A Line in the Sand"	Kabul	
"Chain of Keys"	Kosovo	"Zagorka"/"Chain of Keys"
"River Anacostia"	Washington DC	"Anacostia"
"Near the Memorials to Vietnam and Lincoln"	Washington DC	"Throwing Nothing"
"The Orange Monkey"	Afghanistan	"The Orange Monkey"
"Medicinals"	Washington DC	"Medicinals"
"The Ministry of Social Affairs"	Afghanistan	"The Beggars"
"The Wheel"	Kosovo	"Where It Begins"
"Dollar, Dollar"	Kabul	"The Glass"/"At the Airbase"

When Harvey does apparently break her unflinching reportage, it's in the high, unstable, etherised voice on the refugee camp lament 'A Line in the Sand': "What we did / Why we did it / I make no excuse / We got things wrong / But I believe we also did some good". It's hard to know how to take this in the context of such desperately bleak picture. No wonder that her record of the graffiti scrawled on The Ministry of Defence feels less ambivalent: "This is how the world will end." To watch, to bear witness, to report back – that is the impetus behind these vivid songs. The geopolitical web might be too tangled for anyone to unpick, but by focusing on the details, strong, clear and compassionate, Harvey once again means the world.

(Segal 2016)

## PJ Harvey, "A Line in the Sand"

### *The Hope Six Demolition Project*

How to stop the murdering?  
By now we should have learned  
If we don't then we're a sham  
Bad overwhelms the good  
Bad overwhelms the good

Ooh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

What I've seen  
Yes, it's changed how  
I see humankind  
I used to think progress was made  
We could get something right  
We could get something right

Enough is enough  
A line in the sand  
Seven or eight thousand people  
Killed by hand  
They stepped off the edge  
They did not step back  
If we have not learnt  
By now  
Then we're a sham

When we first got to the camp  
Our supplies were not enough  
I saw a displaced family  
Eating a cold horse's hoof  
Oh a cold horse's hoof

Ooh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

We set up tents  
Brought in water  
Air drops were dispersed  
I saw people kill each other  
Just to get there first  
Oh just to get there first

Enough is enough  
A line in the sand  
Seven or eight thousand people  
Killed by hand  
They stepped off the edge  
They did not step back  
If we have not learnt  
By now  
Then we're a sham

What we did?  
Why we did it?  
I make no excuse  
We got things wrong  
But I believe  
We also did some good

What we did?  
Why we did it?  
I make no excuse  
I believe we have a future  
To do something good

Ooh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh oh

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