

Folk Voices, Timbre and Melancholy:

A Study of Affect in Folk Music

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Abstract

In this master's thesis I explore whether timbre can be considered a main carrier of melancholy in folk voices. In doing so, I have drawn on several psychological perspectives that affect how we experience music. Through a comparative analysis of four songs by four different artists associated with the folk genre, I have sought to understand how we experience emotional expressions in music, and why we respond as we do. By studying the voices of Joan Baez, Robert Plant, Tracy Chapman and Michael David Rosenberg, my aim has been to open up new lines of inquiry regarding timbre and music as a vibrational practice. In highlighting correspondences in how we are affected by timbre, melancholy and enculturation, and in bringing theoretical perspectives together, this thesis aspires to contribute to the field of sound studies in musicology.

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1.0 Introduction

In the book *Sensing Sound* from 2015, Nina Eidsheim writes that “sounds and their meanings are shaped by the cultural, economic and political contexts in which they are produced and heard” (p.6). This could be interpreted in the sense that all of history, both personal and in society, will affect how we understand and extract meaning from music. First of all the quote speaks to the fact that people carry with them previous experiences, and live in the world through these experiences. The term enculturation is significant for this thesis, as I will investigate how enculturation leads us to attach meaning to the different timbres we hear. Then, in order to study and analyze the different voices and their timbres, I will explore what timbre is and how it is produced. Eidsheim explains how we interpret sound when it is produced in less common ways, such as underwater or by altering the body in various ways (pp.29-31). Although she raises several intriguing questions in *Sensing Sound* about how voice and sound production can be altered, my focal point throughout this study is how and why sound affects us. Millie Taylor writes that “Sound is a physical phenomenon in space that does not only enter the ears, but that interacts with the space and communicates about it, creating an atmosphere that is both communicative and corporeal” (2006, p.290). This coincides with Eidsheim’s assertion on sound as a vibrational practice, and we can begin to understand that voice and sound is not only heard, but also felt in both the performer and in the listener. The sounds made are not simply a carefully put together composition by the artist, but reveal something about the artist in the now, the moment they start to vocalize. This extends to the listener of the music, as their emotional response says something about them in that exact moment, and perhaps about what they have experienced thus far in life. The main point I wish to draw from this research is that we express a state of bodily being through our voice, whether intentional or not.

By way of an interdisciplinary approach, I intend to explore what it is in the voice that stirs an empathic response from the audience, and if this specific sonic information we think of as timbre is in certain ways responsible for the emotional response. I have chosen melancholy as an orienting aesthetic category, which can be identified in the music featured in this study. The examples feature timbral qualities that might be associated with melancholy, and may help us to both better understand what melancholy is in the context of folk music and also further our understanding of the concept of melancholy in general. Therefore, it will be

necessary to examine melancholy and affect theory, as well as some themes within music psychology. Judith Lochhead, Eduardo Mendieta and Stephen Decatur Smith write that “.. when the affective domain is taken up, disciplinary boundaries become wonderfully porous” (2021, p.22). This observation supports my aim to investigate several areas that are closely related to affect theory, and to explore the nuances of how we experience melancholy through themes such as music psychology and timbre in folk voices. If we see timbre as a concept on its own that can affect how we experience an emotional message, we might end up with a visualization like figure 1. And perhaps by studying the timbre of an artist's voice, we could learn more about enculturation. In this thesis I am seeking to understand how we are affected by melancholy through timbre, and how enculturation can modify the timbre in the artist's voices.

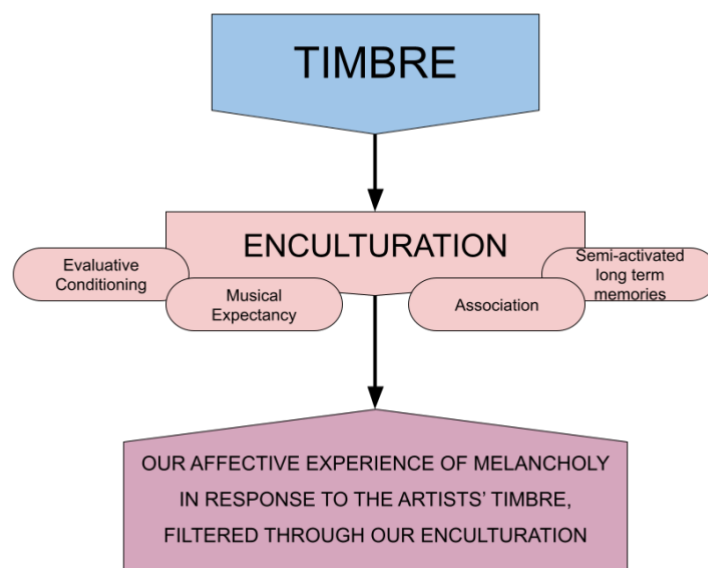


Figure 1

The reason I intend to investigate aspects of music psychology as well is to understand whether or not we might state that the emotional response stems from the music itself, or if the music has triggered something else within the situated listener that is responsible for the emotional response. These questions will be addressed through the lens of two case studies, featuring the analysis of two versions of two songs, each with two distinct expressive points of departure within related genres: ‘Babe, I’m gonna leave you’, by Joan Baez and Robert Plant (Led Zeppelin), then ‘Fast Car’, by Tracy Chapman and Michael David Rosenberg (Passenger). These examples represent different expressions within the folk music genre. One

motivation for investigating songs within the folk genre is because of the ways in which it assumes a position as a musical genre based on qualities of transparency and authenticity. Folk music has been used as a way of communicating stories and feelings, often with the notion of being in the moment and displaying emotional immediacy. Selecting songs that are different, yet related on several planes, affords me with the opportunity to investigate what the similarities are in voices across the folk music genre, as well as their differences. Aside from being connected by their storytelling prowess, these artists are commonly perceived as authentic and genuine when they sing. They have learned from the traditions of the genre, and while it is common to be inspired by existing music, the chosen songs are examples of how one can successfully interpret a song and make it your own – creating something new while keeping something recognizable. One of the aspects I will investigate in this thesis is whether there is something that makes these voices special to us that we take for granted while listening to them, perhaps connected to themes of enculturation and timbre. Are there certain traits we respond positively to or dislike? Maybe they use their voices in a specific manner in order to affect us? I have chosen my approach in an attempt to find answers to these questions, and perhaps hidden patterns will emerge that help us to understand why we are drawn to these voices and these songs.

In this study, I approach music analysis in a different manner than the standard music analysis of content, which deals with parameters such as form, harmony, text, tempo, melody and rhythm. Instead, I hope to contribute to fields of research which explore how music affects us, analyzing the undefined element that is timbre and its relation to melancholy and enculturation. While it is possible that timbre affects how we hear a great range of emotions, I have chosen melancholy as it is an emotional state that most humans can identify with or experience at one point or another. Yet, as is also the case when it comes to timbre, it remains a difficult aesthetic category to define. In summary, this thesis will investigate affect and timbre in folk voices, using melancholy as a guiding notion. By exploring affect theory, and some aspects of music psychology and enculturation, I want to contribute to the expansion of this approach to music analysis through my research. It is a challenge to explore the vast array of contrasting ways in which timbre, melancholy and enculturation interrelate. I nevertheless hope to explore some aspects of how this plays out in the hope that I might contribute new insight into the music and theoretical perspectives that may be of use in future research.

Before delving into the theoretical body of this thesis, I want to share a personal example of how the meaning of music can change on the basis of enculturation, and how the context in which we experience the music affects our perception of the music. Throughout my childhood I spent a lot of time in church, as my mom is an organ player and I used to accompany her in song every now and then. Sometimes at the end of a service I would sing an Irish blessing with the following lyrics:

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face;
the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again,
may God hold you in the palm of His hand

(author unknown).

When sung at the end of a regular Sunday service it was a sweet goodbye, a verse full of well wishes to the community for times to come. However, when I was 24 years old both my grandparents on my father's side died within a few days, and were buried the same day. I was asked to sing this song at their funeral, as it is filled with loving well wishes for the road ahead. In my grief, I felt the words bore a greater meaning whilst I sang them. From that day on the expression of the song changed for me, and became a more serious statement of love and care for others. The words did not change. The melody did not change. The context and my understanding did.

1.1 Research question, framing and relevance

Although the situation above describes feelings closer to grief and sorrow than melancholy, the point still stands. Context and enculturation can create and change the meaning of music. In the situation described, it might be said that I was encultured into a superficial relationship to the Irish folk song prior to the funeral, and performed the song with light-hearted ease. Following the funeral I became very emotionally attached to the song, as I associated the song directly with the immense sadness that followed the death of loved ones. As time has passed, my feelings towards the song have changed again, and instead of being overcome by sadness, I remember the song and situation with a sinking feeling in my stomach. A sad emptiness, or

melancholy, if you will. This unfolding of feeling gives rise to several intriguing questions concerning music and our encounters with it: How does the context of music listening affect our interpretation of the meaning of music? Why does the meaning of music differ depending on our enculturation? What impacts the listeners' experience of melancholic folk music? Although I am not able to inspect the timbre of my voice in the aforementioned Irish folk song prior to the funeral, and compare it to the timbre in my voice following the event, I still wonder if the expression of the song changed to those who listened to it. Could the timbre change based on the emotion the singer desires to express? Or rather, would the perception of the timbre change based on the emotion being expressed? In addition, will the perception of the expressed emotion change depending on which individual is listening? Perhaps timbre is only related to physical traits that do not alter along with emotional changes? Answers to these questions might provide us with an understanding as to why our enculturation should be considered when discussing how music affects us and our interpretation of meaning or emotional expressions in music. The main research question for this thesis is therefore:

Does enculturation affect the listeners' experience of melancholy in folk voices, and is timbre a quality in the music that can help us understand enculturation?

Through answering the questions above I hope to theorize about melancholy in folk music and our comprehension of it, and provide a set of thoughts concerning the value of such a theory. As stated above, I will carry out analyses of two case studies, and investigate the timbre in the artists' voices to see if there are any common denominators between them that might indicate why they are often described as "folk voices". Now, the music is something that we experience as listeners situated in a socio-cultural context, and while the analyses will be influenced by my enculturation, they are performed so that we might be able to extract some truths about timbre and enculturation that are relevant for others as well. The sonic examples used in the analyses are western anglo-american folk and popular music, and since I am Norwegian I hear certain characteristics in the music with a western ear. Still, perhaps these analyses could help theorize what it is about the music that is challenging to understand. Questions I will ask when performing the analyses are: What characterizes the timbre in the artist's voices? How does the artist intentionally or unintentionally use their voice to amplify certain elements in the songs? Do the artists use their voice similarly, or are all the versions completely different from one another? Why are these songs often considered to be folk songs, and not within another genre? And finally, is there such a thing as a specific singing

technique that is reserved for the folk genre? I will split my research question into smaller units, in order to methodically address each aspect of it. In the chapters that follow, I will seek an in depth understanding of timbre, affect and some psychological aspects that might be relevant in the analysis, to help uncover why we comprehend music in the manner we do.

2.0 Methodology and theory

In this chapter I will introduce theoretical and methodological topics that contribute to my own theorizing on the subject of enculturation, affect theory, melancholy and sound studies. In order to better understand what affect theory is, and why it is beneficial to investigate our musical experience through the lens of sound studies, I have explored literature from Nina Eidsheim. Both from the book *Sensing Sound* (2015) and *the Race of Sound* (2019), as well as literature from Ralph Linton, David Woodruff Smith and Marta Cristina Sandu. To further clarify some of the concepts for my analyses, I have turned to philosophers and scholars such as Ilit Ferber, Isabella van Elferen, Emil Kraugerud, Simon Frith, David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, as well as included definitions from an array of dictionaries, including The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, The Cambridge dictionary and the Oxford Learner's Dictionary, to mention a few. The purpose of this chapter is to provide the reader with a better understanding of sound studies and how we are affected by music in various ways, both consciously and subconsciously. That is why I have included paragraphs that explain what I mean when I use the terms empathy, evaluative conditioning, musical expectancy, atmosphere and vibrational practices.

2.1 Enculturation, phenomenology and historiography

In the book *Sensing Sound* Nina Eidsheim writes that “... to focus analytically on the listener allows us to read and interrogate the impact of a piece of music as it is experienced by a listener who is encultured in a given way” (2015, p.5). From this quote we can understand that it is through the listener we learn just how impactful a piece of music is, and that this is in no small part dependent on a listener’s past experiences. A focus on the listener also demands that we take into account how what we might call musical meaning changes over time. So where does the meaning lie? Within the music? Within the listener? Or is the meaning a product of the time in which the music is made or experienced? Or perhaps all three? And in

which case can musical experiences teach us something new about how we listen, conceive and analyze music? My focus will not be on traditional parameters of musical analysis concerned with melody, harmony and rhythm and so on, in order to determine the "content" of the music in itself. Neither will my study intend to engage in purely phenomenological approaches to the listening subject. Instead, through a critical investigation of the situated listener combined with theory on musical affect and a particular interest in the voice and timbre, my study will seek to contribute new knowledge and theory on how we listen and comprehend emotional cues in folk voices. The chosen approach has developed from my experiences with and interest in folk music traditions. In addition, my own questions that have arisen when listening to and performing folk music, as well as how the theory of scholars such as Eidsheim have resonated with my understanding of the music, have paved the way for this approach. Therefore, my study will focus on certain characteristics in the music, its traditions, history and reception, all the while considering this from the listener's perspective. Moreover, I will address the musical qualities in the examples to be investigated, affect theory, and in particular the understanding of melancholy in music, which will inform my analyses.

The examples are spread over a period of 54 years, from 1962, when Joan Baez released 'Babe I'm gonna leave you', and to 2016, when Michael David Rosenberg released his version of 'Fast Car' under the name Passenger. The long time period allows me the opportunity to investigate if the melancholic theme within the songs can stand the test of time. Furthermore, in the chosen songs we find examples of the story-telling that is often associated with the folk music genre. The songs convey stories of love, hope and sadness, which often feature as important elements in a good story. Although all the songs are within the folk genre, they are situated in different subgenres. Joan Baez could perhaps be considered most closely aligned with the traditional folk genre, in part because she relies solely on her voice and a guitar in her rendition of 'Babe, I'm gonna leave you'. Then, Tracy Chapman implements several instruments, including drums, acoustic guitar and bass in 'Fast Car', with a sound placing her in a folk pop category, more so than Baez's straightforward folk music sound. Both Led Zeppelin and Passenger make use of electrified instruments, yet they have quite contrasting sounds. Led Zeppelin are rooted in folk rock, and lean towards psychedelic rock, while Passenger has a clear pop sound compared to the other performers mentioned. All are nonetheless ingrained in the folk music tradition, however much they have evolved their own sounds from the origins of the genre. This broad gap between the performers and their renditions, offers the opportunity for an investigation where one looks at the elements that

remain equally important in the voices or music, allowing us to peel off layers within the music that are irrelevant or of less value to the analysis. Choosing renditions that are further from each other in expression, might allow the opportunity to investigate the common denominators, and understand why these feel important to us, and why these are dominant in swaying our emotional perception of the songs.

The chosen approach will enable me to investigate how we are affected by music and what our surroundings do to our music experience. Ralph Linton explains that “No matter what the method by which the individual receives the elements of culture characteristic of his society, he is sure to internalize most of them. This process is called *enculturation*” (Linton in Shimahara 1970, p.144). Furthermore, Nina Eidsheim writes that “Every listening practice and its attendant theory arises from and reinforces a particular set of values” (Eidsheim 2015, p.6). Moreover, Eidsheim elaborates on the term of enculturation in her book *The Race of Sound* (2019, p.2.), in that we are brought up with assumptions that lead us to believe that we can know, through sonic cues, who is making the sounds based on the qualities of the voice that makes them. What Linton and Eidsheim discuss is that we are encultured to comprehend music and sounds in certain manners. This means that everything we have lived through, every value we have been taught and every person we have encountered prior to listening to music, will shape the way we listen, understand and experience music and sounds. What and how we interpret and feel the music, is dependent on our past experiences, both with and without music.

My study will differ from Eidsheim and Linton in that I am specifically interested in how we experience melancholy through timbre in folk music. This briefly includes how issues of identity are experienced in the music, and also looking at the history of how folk music has been received and how artists build on expressions that might be associated with melancholy. The case studies could help us acquire a better understanding of why relying on time to assume identity could be problematic. The analyses could also provide information of how melancholy is expressed through timbre, and through other techniques that artists within the folk genre often make use of, such as vibrato and variation in dynamics. Both songs and all versions of them that are used in the case studies are rooted in the folk music tradition and exhibit melancholy, however different their expressions are. These songs allow me to investigate the timbre in the artist's voices, and the possibility to discover any nuances that might contribute to affect the listeners.

David Woodruff Smith explains that “... phenomenology is the study of “phenomena”:
appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience
things, thus the meanings things have in our experience” (Smith 2013). Here I will investigate
how we experience music, more specifically melancholy in folk music and examine why we
are drawn to the melancholy in this music. Through the discipline of phenomenology I will
explore that everyone has an individual experience of the same music. What I will see if this
is dependent only on our experience of the phenomena (the music), or if what we have
experienced before the phenomena occurs, will impact how we perceive the phenomena. This
phenomenological approach complements Eidsheim’s and Linton’s theory of enculturation.

Sociomusicology is a relatively recent field within musicology that covers “observable
behavior and musical interactions within the constraints of social structure” (Sandu 2020,
p.383). It is quite similar to ethnomusicology when it comes to researching the role of music
in society and how peoples’ musical experiences impact their social behavior. Albeit, there is
a divide between the two as sociomusicology emphasizes ethnic and national identity less
compared to ethnomusicology. Marta Cristina Sandu (2020, p.379) writes that “Music is a
language, decoded by the singer/performer who communicates in a system with certain
symbols, in order to transmit a certain message or state to those who receive it, it is a vector
that indicates the belongingness of an individual to a social group, a fact determined by his
degree of culture, the family environment, his age and development.” First of all, she explains
that the artist in some way tries to communicate a message, feeling or state of being in a
manner that is understandable to those who choose to listen. This creates a sense of belonging,
as all those gathered came there because of a shared interest or liking, which is the music.
Second, Sandu says that it is determined by the listeners degree of culture, age, family and
development. From this we can read that enculturation plays an active role in our music
listening. We listen to music determined by our surroundings, be it friends and family, or
media in all its forms. Everything around us partakes in our understanding of who we are in
the big picture. We find and relate to each other through music. In that way music can be a
safe space, somewhere to seek community and support, as music can reflect how we feel. By
investigating the case studies through the lens of sociomusicology, we might be able to
recognize elements in the sonic examples that either disproves or supports the notion of
belongingness.

Moreover, Sandu goes on to say that “The values and meanings surrounding music are distinguished by both the listeners and the performers. When listening to a piece, they reflect upon their own values and use the music to make connections between themselves and the piece. The sociology of music looks specifically at these connections and the musical experiences tied to the person and the music itself” (2020, p.383). This means that by integrating a sociomusicological perspective in the research, we could discover what creates connections between the performer and the audience. Sandu makes two new points in this quote, and one of them is that there is a communication between the audience and the artists, and that the meaning is established between them as the music unfolds. The other point Sandu brings forth is that we identify with the piece, the values and meaning in it, and thus we can identify with other people listening to the same music as ourselves. In turn this means that we become a group of people that belong together. We are no longer on our own, but part of a community, because we do not only connect to the music, but the people listening to it as well.

Interactionism is a perspective in sociology, where the analysis focal point discusses interactions between individuals or groups (Hepler 2022, Sandu 2020). Sandu goes on to write that we communicate through symbols, and that “Symbols take on different forms, and that in music it is achieved through several elements: sounds, rhythm, tone of voice, timbre, register or accent” (Sandu 2020, p.379). Here we see that Sandu highlights timbre as one of the elements that help us communicate. Although I believe that timbre plays a part in affecting the listeners, I am hesitant as to what extent this is done purposefully by the artist. This is something I will return to in chapter 2.3.2 Timbre, and then again in the analyses of my case studies.

By researching both the artists and the time of the release of the songs, I hope to uncover more information of what might lie within the lyrics, the timbre and the vocal expression of the songs. That being said, it is impossible to be certain of what the artists were thinking as they wrote, covered and recorded these songs. For all we know the artists chose to cover the songs simply because they enjoyed them, not because they were influenced by the political environment of their time or because they were going through a rough time themselves. Regardless, the artist's expression of the songs could give the listener a glimpse into their life and their way of thinking and feeling.

2.2 Empathic response and music psychology

There are two terms that are often confused as the same, and those are empathy and sympathy. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary writes that empathy is

“ **1** : the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objectively explicit manner

also : the capacity for this

2 : the imaginative projection of a subjective state into an object so that the object appears to be infused with it” (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “empathy,” read April 23, 2023).

Furthermore, the writers of Merriam-Webster dictionary go on to explain the difference between sympathy and empathy. They express that sympathy is feeling concern for someone who is going through something difficult, whereas empathy is actually participating in the feelings of the other person.

This approach is something that Simon Stern (2019, p.188) validates. He differs between empathy and sympathy in simple terms, explaining that empathy is feeling *with* another human, while sympathy is feeling *for* another human. Clarke, DeNora and Vuoskoski (2015, p.63) also support this notion, and write out the difference between the two in a similar fashion. They say that the distinction lies within “imagining how one would feel”, which is what we know as sympathy, versus “feeling with another” involuntary, which is the empathic response. Furthermore, Warrier, Toro, and Chakrabarti et al. (2018) write that “Empathy is the ability to identify other people’s thoughts, intentions, desires, and feelings, and to respond to others’ mental states with an appropriate emotion¹. It plays an important role in social interaction by facilitating both making sense of other people’s behaviour and in responding appropriately to their behaviour.” Krueger says that when we listen to music, it has the potential to shape us, and facilitates experiences and feelings that would otherwise not have occurred. He names it as “musically-scaffolded functional gain” (Krueger 2015, pp.92-93), and that music can help draw out empathic feelings in us. This could be an extension of our innate empathic response. We respond empathetically to the music and the artist, because we

are able to identify with feelings, desires and thoughts that the artist expresses. He explains that music might aid us in acquiring the “ability to attend to and interpret the sonic shape of emotionally-coloured sounds; auditory-tactile-kinesthetic sensitivity to the flexible rhythmic parameters of interactive turn-taking; and the coordination of bodily movement with affective expression and shared feeling...” (ibid). From this we can gather that music can be a tool that helps us to improve our empathic skills that helps us navigate our social experiences.

When we experience something together, it might strengthen our sense of togetherness with those who participate in our experience, as well as intensify the original feeling (Clarke, DeNora, Vuoskoski 2015, pp.62-69). It is quite peculiar and special, coming together for a concert whether in a stadium or a small pub. Most likely all, or near to all the people there, have *chosen* to be there, to listen to this person or group at that exact time. This already gives you information about the people present. We can presume that they like the same music as you, and therefore are somewhat like you. Perhaps we can draw conclusions that the people surrounding you at a concert have some of the same values, and want the same experiences as you. Hence the strengthened feeling of togetherness. Of course, none of this may be the case. After all, people can like one thing, and dislike another, based on their enculturation. Although the experience is shared, the emotions might differ. However, when we experience something together, we could have a greater understanding of someone else's feelings, because we have felt a connection in one way or another to the expression of the artist or group. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the emotions expressed in the music might be something we have experienced ourselves, which could make it easier for us to be empathetic towards others in the audience.

Moreover, there are several areas within music psychology that are closely related to affect theory, which I will elaborate on in “2.2.2 Affect theory”. Imagine that you are having a rough morning, where your body feels out of sorts and caffeine does little to relieve the discontent. In an attempt to elevate your frame of mind, you play your favorite song. It is a song you have heard a thousand times before and it has the magical ability to energize you, no matter what. Remembering other occasions when you heard the song brings a smile to your face. The song starts, and as if touched by a positive spell, you feel happy and ready to take on the day. What has happened in this scenario is called *evaluative conditioning*. The mood change in the above scenario is a response formed by hearing the chosen song several times in

relation to positive emotions (Juslin and Västfjäll 2008, pp.564-565). This type of conditioning can occur with both positive and negative stimuli. Another example of this type of conditioning is when animals are conditioned to expect pain when they hear a certain sound, so as to make them obey their trainers. Briefly explained: you hear a sound or a song paired with the same type of emotion several times, and over time the song evokes the emotion it was paired with in the first place, even without the outside stimuli. Yet, another example of this could be that a piece of music is played each time you score a goal in a soccer match. In time, the positive feeling that you receive by scoring the goal, could appear in you at other times, just by hearing the same piece of music (ibid). Although these are different concepts, this coincides with what Eidsheim explains to us regarding enculturation. We are taught either consciously or subconsciously to enjoy/dislike music. This translates to us liking or disliking particular voices or the timbral characteristics in voices.

The notion of evaluative conditioning could be considered closely related to *musical expectancy*. Musical expectancy is a process when a certain aspect of the music “violates, delays, or confirms the listener’s expectations about the continuation of the music” (Juslin and Västfjäll 2008, p.568). Juslin and Västfjäll (2008, p.568) explain that it concerns syntactic relationships within the musical structure, and is based on the rules we have learned about language syntax. We have expectations on how music is “supposed” to unfold, and therefore we have emotional reactions to all things that disrupt our expected outcome of the music (ibid). Moreover, our memories are contributing factors to musical expectancy. We store previous experiences in our long term memory, and while we are experiencing something new, we might be reminded of the sensations of the past. Bob Snyder (2001, pp.48-49) writes that the entire long term memory does not necessarily become conscious during our current experience, but one aspect might make itself apparent. For instance, maybe we remember that songs like the one we are listening to at the moment usually have a build up of four beats, before it releases into an elevated chorus. We recognize some aspects of a song, based on our musical catalog, and create an expectation from it. He also writes that “Because this imagination of the future is only semi activated, however, it does not interfere with our perception of the present: we hear it “out of the corner of our minds’ ear” (2001, pp.48-49). Meaning we are affected by our past without being completely aware of it.

Another way to understand how we come to expect certain musical traits is through association. Again, we are examining memories and how they have an impact on our musical

experience. When we associate one feature with another, a cueing mechanism is set in effect. If one memory is activated, others will either be fully activated or semi-activated. The semi-activated memories can also be called “primed” because they are likely to become activated as well (Snyder 2001, pp.69-70). For example, if I listen to the Irish folk song referred to in the introduction, memories of the funeral and other Sunday services arise. Sometimes it might be only the emotions connected to the funeral, other times full memories of the services appear. This applies the other way around as well. If I think of the funeral, I also hear or see myself singing the hymn, I see the church, the people. The memories are associated with each other and therefore activate one another. Snyder also writes that “Primed associations form the context of currently activated memory and can shape our expectations” (2001, pp.69-70).

While research of expectation of the contents of music has been performed previously, little research has been conducted about the expectations of timbre in music. However, Nina Eidsheim writes of a presentation she held, where she showed a picture of Billie Holiday and played some verses from the song *Gloomy Sunday*, watching the symposium audience enjoy the voice that seemingly was a recording of the famous singer. Towards the end of the song, she revealed who was really singing, showing a photo of 7-year old Angelina Jordan who participated in *Norske Talenter*, the Norwegian equivalent to Britain's *Got Talent* (Eidsheim 2019, p.151). The audience reactions of disbelief and surprise reveals some enculturated beliefs that they had, about who was most likely to possess such a voice. Again, this example shows us that the timbral characteristics play a crucial role when we are discussing how voices affect us. Furthermore, Juslin and Västfjäll (2008, p.569) explain that musical expectancy creates different emotional reactions determined by the listeners’ cultural background. This means that a person that has a musical background of South American traditions, will most likely react differently to a song from Mexico, than a person with a musical background rooted in European music traditions. Similar to what Eidsheim clarifies through the term enculturation, Juslin and Västfjäll (2008, p.569) explain that musical expectancy is learned, either subconsciously or consciously. We are conditioned to react in specific ways to various sounds. Eidsheim offers a very clear example of how timbre can correlate very directly with enculturation. And again, this creates a foundation for us to expect a certain type of sound or music coming from different artists. Such as we might expect a typical folk song from Joan Baez and Tracy Chapman, but perhaps something more similar to rock from Led Zeppelin, and pop from Passenger.

2.3 Affect theory

There have been different ideas throughout history as to what constitutes affect (Lochhead, Mendieta and Smith 2021, p.14), although we tend to differ between affect, emotion and feeling. While feeling and emotion usually says something about how we reflect around our perception of the world, we can be affected without consciously knowing it. In the introduction to the book *Sound and Affect: Voice, Music, World*, Lochhead, Mendieta and Smith (2021, p.18) use the term “sonic affective regimes”, referring to an array of terms that aid us in describing affective states, such as passion, feeling, emotion and sentiment. However, they go on to write that “... there is no terminological consensus: the specific meanings of feeling, emotion, and affect continue to arise from their contexts” (ibid, p.22), meaning that although we try to pinpoint what these terms mean separately, they only come to their full expression when used in or about a specific context. It is also interesting to note that there are discussions as to what these sonic affective regimes mean in musicology, and that it often is an interdisciplinary study, combining either neuropsychology, philosophy and psychology, or all of the aforementioned discourses (ibid, p.19). This thesis will be an interdisciplinary study, in which I will investigate how music affects us, body and mind.

In the book *Music in Everyday Life* (2000, pp.1-20), Tia DeNora explains that there are several ways that music affects us in our everyday life. It helps us regulate our moods and feelings, it can help us communicate and adapt to social situations, all either consciously or subconsciously. She draws out several examples of how music is used either by us or others to guide us through events, be it to set a calm mood for a transatlantic flight or to get pumped up for a karaoke night. This also applies to situations where we chose to listen to melancholic music, to enhance our emotions or to soothe them, perhaps feeling connection to the song or the artist, drawn to the sound of their voice and the resemblance of their story to our own.

Moreover, Lochhead, Mendieta and Smith (2021, pp.16-17) point out that there are several authors that view music as a vibrational practice, that we are affected by the music, through actual physical vibrations, and that these cannot be disregarded. These “sonic affective regimes” inform us that we experience music not just through our ears or minds, but in our bodies as well. In *Sensing Sound*, Nina Eidsheim (2015, pp.162-163) explains that we should review our approach to analyzing music and try to break free from the limits that are the framework of the figure of sound. Instead, we might try to understand music through practices

and performances to better understand music as a vibrational, energetic and material arena. She goes on to write that “some of the material that vibrates during a musical experience is the human body” (p.165), and by thinking this way, we might understand that we are engaged in the music on all levels. It is not only the music that vibrates, the listeners do as well. This leads me to reflect on the expression “it does not vibrate with me” or expressions similar to it. If we accept this theory, it could explain why we appreciate and engage more with some types of music than others. The music does or does not match the vibrations of the body. However, this raises some questions as to how certain emotions expressed through music affect us more than other emotions, or affect some people more than others. Does that mean that those who “vibe” more with sad or melancholic music possess more melancholic vibrations than those who do not? And also, when we listen to music in larger groups, such as concerts, will these melancholic vibrations spread through the crowd? And is this part of the reason we feel connected to each other when we experience the same event? Moreover, can the original melancholy vibes from a song transfer to the cover of said song?

Patrick Eisenlohr (2018, p.126) explains that atmospheres are similar to affect, as they could have an impact on our bodies that are not always conscious or voluntary. He goes on to write that an atmosphere consists of everything surrounding us, even other people, as they contribute to the feeling we intercept from our environment. Herman Schmitz (in Eisenlohr 2018, p.126) explains that “they always generate a multiplicity, if not an excess, of meaning that is hard to define clearly. When an atmosphere conveys “somberness” or “elation,” such a description will always be incomplete, because atmospheres, sonic or otherwise, will always suggest more than can be captured discursively, a condition made even more acute by the multisensory character of atmospheres”. From this we can understand that it is challenging to explain exactly what an atmosphere consists of, or exactly what a certain atmosphere feels like. Like timbre, atmospheres are difficult to explain with words, which in order makes it difficult to explain exactly why people react to or feel the way they do in relation to certain atmospheres. And as DeNora (2000, pp.1-20) explains, we are able to shape and guide ourselves and others in their lives, through creating atmospheres using sonic stimuli.

Eisenlohr continues to write that “The link between particular sonic movements and my respondents’ reported sensations when vocal sound moved them lies in the iconicity of the measurable dynamics of sonic phenomena and culturally embedded perceptions of sound” (Eisenlohr 2018, p.127). The measurable dynamics being the way the vocal sound was

produced, and the culturally embedded perceptions being our enculturation, have an impact on how we perceive sounds. Therefore, if the way we express ourselves matches what we want to express, it is easier to convey the message to the audience in a manner they'll understand. Also, if our expression matches the audience's expectations, it is more easily received. For example, if something is of intimate nature we might expect it to be vocalized in a soft manner with low volume. As opposed to if the message you want to convey is anger, which has often been connected to loud and rough vocals in the past (think metal, grunge and rock). This supports the notion of enculturation and that it affects how we comprehend sonic cues.

2.4 Sound Studies and Timbre

Sound studies is an interdisciplinary field examining sound concepts, technologies and practices in cultural and historical contexts (Bull 2019, pp.xvii - xviii). Through sound studies we are able to learn more about sonically based technologies, which sonic cues are used to manipulate societies, how we can use sound to enhance or conjure specific reactions in people, and much more. Although the field is considered to be new, it is already vast. Moreover, sound studies can provide us with some indication as to why we are affected by music. Millie Taylor (2006, p.289), writes that "Sound does more than exist as a background to our lives. It affects our understanding of body and space: the body's experience of space is modified by music and sound through the vibrations generated by the sound. Vocal communication creates vibrations that issue from one body to another, allowing empathetic understanding of bodily states whether through verbal or non-verbal sounds". Not only is sound and voice a means of communication through the actual words and sounds we make. It also gives off vibrations that allow us to feel and comprehend what someone else is feeling, and I would like to add: If we truly listen.

Furthermore, Taylor writes that "Both verbal sounds and the bodily tensions of the speaker communicate, but there is also a physical reaction to the vibrations and the empathetic communication. This raises the possibility that voice and sound need to be theorized, conceptualized and composed with an awareness that the sounding body in space creates an atmosphere in which the sound itself, as well as what it communicates, has an impact" (Taylor 2006, p.289). To break it down, our bodily state becomes evident through our sonic

expression, and it is therefore important that we reflect on how we communicate. For instance, if you've had a rough day at work, it might shine through in encounters you have later on the same day. The people you talk to might pick up on the impressions the day has left on you, be it that you are tired, sad or irritable, all because there is something in your voice that gives it away. A hint of an emotion, a certain atmosphere, or vibrational appearance you bring with you. This reminds me of a conversation I had with a vocal coach. She is an active practitioner and teacher of qi-gong, and has recorded training sessions for others to listen and train to. Originally she was not the one who was going to read and record the workouts. However, when Fan Xiulan, the grand master and creator of the Biyun-method, heard the original readings she said: "It needs to be recorded again by someone else. This person has pain in their body, and I can hear it in their voice." To any and all others, this pain was not detectable. Nevertheless, Fan Xiulan was correct, the person who had read the instructions did in fact have pain in their body. Fan Xuilan could hear the pain in the voice, and this example points to the fact that we are able to pick up on vocal cues that are not explicit, again if we truly listen. It might be that Xiulan is particularly prone to hear these things, as she has been a qi-gong master for over two decades. It could also explain why the rest of us might be less able to hear these natural sonic cues that lie within each individual's body and voice. At the same time I am noting that this is only one example, and one can not make assumptions about all human beings depending on one individual. A question that arises from this situation is: is it possible to hear pain in other peoples voices, even those which they try to hide? Another example of people who often pick up on sonic cues, is mothers. Many mothers seem especially prone to be able to hear, even over the phone, if something is out of sorts with their children. It might be that this extends to fathers as well, or maybe it is even a trait for empathic people in general. Perhaps it is possible to notice if a friend of yours is annoyed, happy or suffering by talking to them on the phone, by truly listening to them. But, how is it that we can pick up on this presumed sonic "body language"?

My voice is different. My voice comes from my body, it can tell you about my body. The energy of my breath, the articulation of my lips and tongue, and the vibration in my bodily resonators create sounds that are of my body. They are particular to me and this moment. The sounds I make are part of my identity. Even though I can alter the sound of my voice, it remains mine. The muscle tension in my body and particularly in my jaw alters the perceived emotion of my communication; increased tension can make vowels shorter and tighter, consonants clipped. Where I place the sound in the

various resonators in my body alters pitch, the roundness and the projection of the sound. The amount of breath taken and expelled in ratio to the amount of sound emitted alters the quality of breathiness. The pitch range can be anywhere between guttural to high with rising or falling inflections. Your reception of the sound contains an engagement with, and understanding of, my bodily state and an empathetic response to my emotional state (Taylor 2006, p.291).

Although this is a lengthy quote, it describes only briefly how some parts of the body contribute to the bodily expression of a person. But in it lies the understanding that every part of our body promotes how and who we are in that exact moment in time. If we are having a rough day, our body might be tense and we express ourselves in a manner that is perceived heavy or irritable in one way or the other. If we have been the recipients of good news, our bodily expression would be completely different. Most likely we would meet others with a smile, which in turn would make them perceive us as happy, positive and lighthearted. All because our bodies react differently to different emotions. Again, “Rather than the voice being used as a communicator of content, we can begin to think of the voice as a communicator of bodily states and as a material presence in its own right” (Taylor 2006, p.292).

Moreover, Taylor (2006, p.295) states that all sound forms a relationship between whatever is making the sound, the space it is in and the listener. The vibrations from the sound have a physical presence that is determined by the room and how it is shaped. The vibrations cause physical reactions and communicate on a psychological plane as well. In addition, the sound reacts with itself in the room, creating an acoustic atmosphere that enhances the ties of sound vibrations, and physical and empathic responses in the listeners. The empathic response is possible because of vocal sounds, which influence the listener's bodily states, directly communicated through the body and voice of the speaker (ibid). Not only are we affected by the music in a psychological sense, but also on a physical level. Taylor further explains how much sound can affect us by highlighting a quote from David Burrows (2006, p.289): “The sound, like the touch of a hand moved by a will other than my own, is not so easily ignored: I cannot shut non-existent ear lids. Sight draws me out, sound finds me here. And sound goes beyond touch, which respects the perimeter of my skin, and beyond its degree of intimacy in seeming to be going on within me as much as around me”. Here Burrows describes expertly how music infiltrates us, body and mind, with or without our permission. This quote supports

what we know about affect theory and atmospheres, and that music can and will impact us both mentally and physically whether we welcome the impact or not.

Taylor continues to explain that “Sounds, however they are produced, create vibrations which bounce off the walls, sink into the soft furnishings, create echoes and reverberations that alter the space and the sound through its interaction and give the space a sense of presence or ‘atmosphere’” (Taylor 2006, p.290). The sounds find a way into us and touch something within us, be it the discovery of a seemingly new emotion or perhaps the sound triggers a feeling that we have saved from the past. Furthermore, Taylor writes that if we think of sounds in this manner, it opens up for a possibility of an analysis which concerns voices as presence and its reception through the body (Taylor 2006, p.292). If we think of this in terms of experienced emotions in the body, especially melancholy, our perception of melancholy in music might come from melancholy that we have experienced ourselves. This brings about questions such as, have you ever felt something while listening to music that you have not felt before? Is it even possible to feel something through music that you haven’t experienced yourself? Do we simply bring out our own emotions and shape them to fit the messages conveyed to us in music?

In this thesis I refrain from analyzing the most common parameters used in my case studies when describing the music. Instead, I examine how vocal sounds can produce an empathic response in the audience. From what we have learned above, music undoubtedly has an affect on us, physically, mentally and/or emotionally. It does not matter if the music is recorded or live, there is still a physical and emotional response in the audience. Taylor writes that the most conspicuous concept about this is that the “... capacity of the sound of the voices, rather than the content of speech...” can “... communicate physical states and achieve an empathetic response which can unsettle or involve the listener...” (Taylor 2006, p.295). This quote leads me to think of all emotionally charged music that does not have words, or music that is performed in a language I do not understand. The most recent experience I had concerning an empathetic response to music without understanding the exact content, was under the NOPA seminar in January 2023. Katarina Barruk gave a speech about the sami people and the language Umesamisk, which has long been deemed a “dying language” due to the systemic oppression that the sami people have endured for centuries. She spoke to the audience about the continuing fight for the samis' right to express themselves in their own languages, and to have something as simple and valuable as a dictionary, which did not exist until 2018. Her

talk was divided into sections, each with a vocal performance in between. Although I did not understand the words in many of her songs, there was still something in her voice that stirred something in me, that made me feel something. This adds to the notion that there is something within the voice, and not necessarily the content of the speech that affects listeners and provokes empathic responses.

From the literature presented it is clear that there are several elements in music that could affect the listeners emotional state. The one that I found the most intriguing is timbre. It might be its somewhat diffuse definition, which we will inspect closer in “2.3.2 Timbre”, that evokes fascination in me, because I feel the same way about much of the music I listen to. By this I mean that sometimes it can be difficult to know exactly why I “vibe” with a song, and I believe this notion could be connected to the element of timbre to some extent. The fact that we use adjectives, metonymies and visual references to describe the timbre, goes well with the idea that music affects us on a psychological level. The visual imagery that a voice can conjure, concurs with our use of adjectives and the visual references we use to describe what we feel when we hear the music. Another possible psychological connection regarding timbre, is the triggering of episodic memory. What happens is that the listener's emotions are triggered by a specific memory. Because there are feelings connected to that memory, they arise when the memory appears. Juslin and Västfjäll write that “the physiological reaction patterns to the original events are stored in memory along with the experiential content” (2008, p.567). Now, when we recall previous situations, we might not know exactly what happened, because we fill in the blanks of memories with our default values (Snyder 2001, p .98). This means that the details of our memories fall into already established categories, things “we know to be true”. These categories and schemas are tested throughout our lives, and we update them as we go along, based on our new experiences and perceptions of reality. In turn, this means that our memories can be modified over time. Because we rely on our schemas, and our schemas change, our older memories can be modified (Snyder 2001, p .98). This might explain why it is easier to sing the Irish hymn today, than it was only one or two years after the funeral. Furthermore, it could also mean that the specific timbre of a voice can make the listener recall particular memories, where they have heard the same or a similar tone quality. We recall voices or timbres and the situations we have heard them in, and rely on the information we gathered in those situations, both mentally, physically and emotionally. Then we compare it to the new information in the present, before altering our schemas.

Furthermore, timbre could also be said to be connected to evaluative conditioning. The timbre in the voice could provoke an emotional response on the grounds that the listener has heard the specific timbre several times earlier, in settings that are either positive or negative. For instance, the voice of Ingebjørg Bratland has often been heard in calm and relaxing situations. If one listens to her voice over time in the same setting, the mere recognition of her voice and the timbre in her voice could recall a relaxing state in the listener. I believe this could be compared to a situation where a child is lulled to sleep by its mother or father. The recognisable timbre of the parents voice could evoke a sense of ease and relaxation. However, in these settings, it might be that the song(s) stay the same, and there is a question as to whether it is the timbre in the voice that brings about the emotional response, the song itself, or if it is a combination of the recognition of both song and timbre in the voice.

Bob Snyder (2001, pp.4-5) explains the term “conceptual categories”, which is several long-term memories that have been categorized as the same, or similar to each other to such an extent that they belong in the same category. He writes that these memories lay dormant until they are either consciously or subconsciously activated. What is intriguing about this is that many of the long-term memories are seemingly subconscious, and help form a context for the experience in the present moment. Snyder goes on to say that “This context takes the form of expectations, memory of the recent past, and other related knowledge that can influence the direction that current consciousness takes, even though it is not itself conscious. Memories that are a part of this ongoing context are said to be “semiactivated,” that is, they are neurologically active and can affect consciousness, but are not so active as to actually be in consciousness themselves” (Snyder 2001, pp.4-5). This notion goes hand in hand with Eidsheim, Juslin and Västfjäll when they write about evaluative conditioning and enculturation. We are constantly affected by previous experiences, and our understanding of music is colored by this.

Moreover, Snyder (2001, p.8) writes that experiences stored as long-term-memories might impact our perception of the current situation. This is because there is a direct link between the long term memories and perceptual categorization. If perception connects to long term memory before it comes into our consciousness, we might recognize something without being completely conscious about it. This could contribute to explain why we are affected by particular sounds and music without having heard it before. There might be something in the music that sounds familiar, because something similar has been stored in our subconscious long term memory. This could be part of the reason why we detect melancholy in music

without it being explicit. Also, it could be why we are affected by certain timbres, without there being any apparent reason for it.

2.5 Concepts for comparative analyses

There will be four song analyses, two that considers ‘Babe, I’m gonna leave you’ performed by Joan Baez and Robert Plant, and the other two of ‘Fast Car’, performed by Tracy Chapman and Michael Rosenberg. Rather than performing an analysis of the structure and melody of the songs, as one traditionally would when analyzing music, I will approach the song analysis in a contextual matter, the focal point being how we experience music as individuals and why we experience it the way we do. Nina Eidsheim writes that “... the analysis, interpretation, and definition of music reveal as much about ourselves (and, implicitly, about the era of which we are products) as about the music we name” (Eidsheim 2015, p.5). By performing these comparative analyses I hope to provide an answer as to why and how we experience melancholy in folk music through timbre. This will be done through exploring the concepts of timbre, melancholy, authenticity and intimacy. In addition, I will perform these analyses by examining why these songs were so readily embraced by the audience, why they were re-released with such success, and if they still hold relevance today.

The main reason these four songs were selected was because of the voices of the artists and the fact that they all are situated in the folk genre. At the same time, their voices are very different, as is the way they choose to use them. This gives me the opportunity to investigate the timbre of each individual, in order to identify any nuances between them. Besides investigating if vocal timbre can in some way be attributed to enculturation, it will be interesting to see if alteration of timbre can impact how listeners perceive the expressed emotion, or if it changes how authentic we perceive the artist to be. All four artists offer something special and unique to the audience. However, there are several connections between the artists and the chosen songs. The most apparent connection of course being that the selection comprises two recordings each of two songs. By analyzing two renditions of the same song, I aim to explore how the artists use their voices to amplify certain aspects of their expressions, including timbre, authenticity and intimacy. Moreover, the songs were chosen in the understanding that they somehow elicit a sense of melancholy. This affords us an opportunity to look closer at how the melancholic expression can be conveyed with different

approaches. It also provides an opportunity to see how the feeling of intimacy can be created with vastly different means. Choosing two songs that are essentially the same allows us to discover nuances in the expressions of melancholy.

Furthermore, the songs can be situated within the boundaries of the folk genre, although at least two of the recordings might arguably be placed in the genres of either pop or rock. But my interest is not in identifying markers in the stylistic features or musical content of the songs by which they might be located in genre or tradition. Rather my interest is in the timbre and affective spaces associated with melancholy and the different ways in which this is communicated through the music. The contrasting performances of similar musical material at different points in time and in differing contexts may provide a good basis from which to focus on qualities in the expressions which are not easily grasped. Timbre is, as I will discuss, a very fluid concept.

While analyzing these songs I will first introduce the artists and their backgrounds. This brief historical account in the analyses is to better understand their enculturation, to investigate possible reasons why they made the artistic choices we hear today. Then I will provide information of the time they released the songs and suggest why the songs have proved so popular with listeners, based on the time of the release. Lastly, I intend to investigate why these songs could be covered and released by different artists ten years apart and still hold value, both in the original recording and in with the new interpretation. The songs have been chosen because of the distinct sonic examples they offer, and as examples of how timbre can be a factor in the expression of melancholy in folk music. In addition, the songs hold information that can help me discover how artists use music to create a connection with the audience, through the ideas of authenticity and intimacy. Is the answer in the song itself, or is it the voice and timbre that carries the musical meaning? To answer these questions I intend to lean on research from Nina Eidsheim, Bob Snyder, Millie Taylor, among others.

Through the analyses I will situate the songs in the context of the time they were written and/or recorded and released. In this part of the analysis I will explore the circumstances of the artists' chosen manner of expression. It will be a short presentation of the history surrounding the making and release of the song, and some speculations as to what might have impacted the artists to make the decisions they did. In accordance with this brief historical examination, I plan to conduct a short textual analysis. I will choose some sections of the

songs that can provide information regarding timbre, melancholy and affect, in addition to its storytelling abilities. This is to reveal any connection between the textual meaning of the song and the presumed melancholy we may detect in the timbre of the artist's voices. In chapter “2.1 Enculturation, phenomenology and historiography” through “2.2.3 Sound Studies and Timbre” we have visited some of the ideas of which I base my inquiry on. In this chapter we will examine the concepts that lay the foundation for the analyses.

Prior to the music analyses, I would like to underline a couple of potential pitfalls considering my analyses. I am aware of the problematic aspect of me being the one executing the analysis myself. This will only give the reader an understanding of *my* interpretation of the songs and the context. Even so, my hope is that my analyses of these songs will resonate with the reader, and that I might contribute new theoretical perspectives that will be of value to further investigations into timbre in folk music. I will use the theory presented to draw attention to the overarching aspects of affect and our general perception of melancholy in folk music. In doing so I hope my theorizing on the subject will provide relevant and transferable knowledge that may aid others in understanding their listening experiences. Based on what we already know, we listen to and interpret music differently on account of our previous experiences.

Additionally, I have chosen a set of concepts of analysis I believe to be relevant to this particular study. My approach follows in the lines of Howard Becker (1998, p.5) in that I intend to research different concepts and apply the knowledge I attain from this research into the analyses in order to acquire a deeper understanding of the concepts themselves, and to find answers to previous questions, and perhaps formulate new ideas or questions within the field. The chosen concepts are melancholy, timbre, authenticity and intimacy. These concepts can be congruous with each other, as well as the presented theory, which in turn will inform my findings. I will strive to ask questions that can be raised to the level of research, which may require bringing new insight into the case studies in question, and also contribute to theoretical development in the field, lifting my analysis beyond simply being descriptive reflections of the music in context. Again, another pitfall is that these are my understandings of the concepts, and as I analyze the songs I am actively searching for melancholy in the songs and any reason the artists might have to express such a feeling. This means that I might ascribe this state of being to either one of the artists or one of the songs, although it is possible neither of the subjects or songs have this feature.

2.5.1 Melancholy

Melancholy is a feeling and a human experience. Many have tried to describe exactly what it is, however, there are still several different wordings about the content of melancholia. So, what exactly is melancholia? In the introduction to her book *Philosophy and Melancholy - Benjamin's Early Reflections on Theatre and Language* Ilit Ferber (2013, p.2) explains that melancholy holds several different meanings, from “the personal to the collective, from body to soul, and from pathology to inclination”. She writes that melancholy has both positive and negative attributes, such as a strike of genius, creativity and depth, as well as despondency, isolation and desolation. Throughout the ages melancholy has been understood in different manners, all based on the point of reference of the bystander. In the religious context of the middle ages, melancholy would perhaps be considered a somatic condition, brought on as a penance for your sins. It has been described as a mood, and “the consequence of demonic undertakings or witchcraft” (ibid). Moreover, Ferber (2013, p.4) writes that some saw melancholy as a desirable state of genius in the nineteenth century, before it finally was deemed a pathological condition. She points out that all the interpretations of melancholy focus on the “subjective, psychological, and somatic nature of the individual overcome by melancholy”(ibid). Furthermore, she writes that melancholy has been considered a state where one could have deep abstract thoughts, and has been connected to philosophy as well. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (s.v. “melancholy”, read 4th of January 2023) has several descriptions of what melancholy is, such as “depression of spirits: dejection”;; “a pensive mood”; “an abnormal state attributed to an excess of black bile and characterized by irascibility or depression”; “suggestive or expressive of sadness or depression of mind or spirit”. The latter describes melancholy as an adjective, and I find their example quite interesting: “sang in a *melancholy* voice” (ibid). The reason I find this fascinating is that if I asked three different people to sing in a melancholic voice, I would not be surprised if I would receive three very different interpretations of what melancholy is, yet they could still have similar explanations as to what melancholy is. This is something we will return to in chapter “3.0 Analyses”.

In this thesis I will be referring to the melancholy and melancholia as a feeling of great sadness, loss of hope and desolation. I write of it as something that occupies the mind and affects the entire body. There have been many previous studies that deal with emotion in music. In many of these studies, the researchers often investigate how people react or interpret

different emotions in music. In a study to compare two theoretical models analyzing perceived emotion through music, Eerola and Vuoskoski (2010) discovered that some participants had confused tenderness with happiness and sadness. This is interesting because it points to the fact that music can be both sad and happy at the same time, and that tenderness can be found in both of the emotional expressions. Furthermore, this supports that the expression of an emotion, such as melancholy, can be conveyed in more ways than one. In this text we will see how it can come about as vastly different from both the voices and musical expressions of Robert Plant and Joan Baez.

2.5.2 Timbre

I have suggested how timbre can be the element that triggers emotional response. But what exactly is timbre? According to Isabella van Elferen (2018, p.69) timbre is “one of the most important and one of the most elusive aspects of musical aesthetics” and she writes that “There is no adequate language to describe timbre.” This confirms my experience of the word, and although several dictionaries either define timbre as tone, tone color or quality that sets the sound of a voice or instrument apart from others in the same category (Merriam-Webster.com dictionary 2022; Dictionary.com 2022; Cambridge Dictionary 2022), it seems a concrete and specific definition is difficult to agree on. David M. Howard and Jamie A. S. Angus explain that one can separate sounds through timbre in the following way: “ (...) two sounds that are perceived as being different but that have the same perceived loudness and pitch differ by virtue of their timbre” (2017, pp.237-283), and in even simpler words, van Elferen paraphrases it and explains that it is “the difference between two tones with the same pitch and volume” (2018, p.70). Moreover, she goes on to write that one can use adjectives, visual references, metonymies or describe what the timbre makes you feel in order to explain what sort of timbre you are talking about. This means that although it is difficult to explain exactly what timbre is, it is possible to describe timbre in music, and it seems timbre could assist when identifying either different artists from each other, or different instruments playing tones with the same pitch and volume from each other. These ways of talking about timbre gives us a language to describe the feeling a certain timbre gives us.

2.5.3 Authenticity

According to the book *Musicology: The Key Concepts* (2016, p.18) by David Beard and Kenneth Gloag, we can generally understand authenticity as “some notion of truth and sincerity”. There have been discussions as to what can be considered authentic. One can discuss whether it means being true to the musical parameters within a genre, or if being authentic means performing with emotional presence. In this thesis I am using the term authenticity to investigate the emotional presence and the artists “truthfulness” in their performance. We will see how it connects to timbre and how using the voice could in some instances confuse the audience concerning gender and our encultured perspectives.

Eidsheim discloses that we should be able to identify a sound or a person from listening carefully to it. If we were to identify a person, we should only have to be attentive in our listening, and be able to provide information of mood or emotional states, where they are from or perhaps if they are trying to “falsely communicate emotions or truth statements, or even to speak as another through imitation or impersonation” (Eidsheim 2019, p.2). If we recall the example of Angelina Jordan and Billie Holiday, we might understand that there are some challenges with this statement. For the audience in Eidsheim's lecture, it was difficult to know that the person singing was in fact a 7-year old, and not in fact Billie Holiday. Considering this example, it is challenging to know if the artist is in fact being authentic and expressing an emotion that they have experienced, or even their own identity. We might be able to extract some information based solely on the sound of someone's voice, however, it might be demanding to know or identify to great extent who someone is and what exactly they are trying to express. In short, it can be difficult to know if an artist is authentic and truthful when expressing emotions by simply listening to their voice.

There are several opinions as to what makes a performer authentic. Frith writes that “... 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” (Frith 1996, p.195). Here he connected the change of pitch to sincerity, discussing that when a man used falsetto or high pitch, it was to seduce the audience or person listening. This is because the high pitched voice was considered to be used by the “private man”. Based on this quote we can understand the altering of the voice, in this particular example to high pitch, as an expression of authenticity. Moreover, this means that if we alter our voice in any way, we can come across as more or

less sincere. This might be settled by analyzing the setting and other aspects of the performance.

Furthermore, Frith (1996, p.197) points out that it is easy to change the voice, whether it is to change it according to the social setting, the surroundings or known and unknown people. Therefore, the voices can be considered keys to identities. We understand the voice not only in a manner of assessing who we are talking to, but also whether the person we are talking to is being sincere or not, or authentic or not if you will. And maybe more importantly, when we hear someone over the radio, the telephone or other recorded voices, we assign them bodies. We do not only assume the gender of the voice we hear, but through the voice, the lyrics and the expression, we conjure an image that holds everything we need in order to picture the person or persona we believe to hold the voice (Frith 1996, p.196). This reinforces what Eidsheim writes about enculturation. We even draw conclusions of the authenticity of a voice based on our previous experiences with voices that are similar to ones we have heard before.

2.5.4 Intimacy and timbre

Often when we hear the word intimate in context with music or performers, we imagine small concert scenes, a small crowd or a concert with few people on stage (Kraugerud 2020, pp.118-119). In these circumstances the distance between audience and performer is most likely shorter than it would be on a stadium concert. It could also mean that the audience is able to hear “everything” that happens on stage, something that would not be possible in a stadium concert, due to the noise of the audience. Overall we tend to connect the word intimacy to being close to someone. The Oxford learner’s dictionary supports this view of the word, and defines intimacy as “the state of having a close personal relationship with someone” (2022). When we are discussing intimacy in music, there are several aspects to consider. We can investigate what is being conveyed, analyze the words and which of them has been granted more importance from the performers than others. Or we could listen carefully to determine the artist's performance, and if they use their timbre, dynamics and vocal intensity to underline their message.

In the “sonic nakedness” that results from exposing the details of the voice, there is also an exposure of the singer’s—or the persona’s—vulnerability that in turn underlines the revealing nature of the lyrics. Through the exposure of highly personal

matters in both lyrics and sound (the details of which can only be heard at an intimate distance), the persona is clearly unguarded and open to attack. To borrow from Lauer (2016), the persona exposes a wound to another, which requires trust. Vulnerability also derives from the expansion of the intimate (the proximate voice, singing about what appears to be private matters) into the public sphere ...

(Kraugerud 2020, pp.124-125).

Here, Emil Kraugerud explains that by revealing oneself through both sound and lyrics, the artist can create an intimate relationship with the listener. Through being transparent, or exposing a wound, we allow others to enter what they might consider a more guarded or personal and private part of themselves. Moreover, we can also connect the “sonic nakedness” to what we learned earlier, considering that we can hear what another person has been through, by listening carefully to their voice. As Kraugerud says, it exposes the singers or personas' vulnerability, and by extension creates intimacy.

Kraugerud continues, and explains that we often consider sounds that are small to be intimate. Not necessarily low volume, but low in energy (Kraugerud 2020, pp.118-119). As if you had to be close to someone to really hear and understand what the words mean. This is intriguing, because one could argue that there are several intimate songs that are in fact high in velocity or volume. Is the word intimacy or to be intimate nearing a synonym to close and careful, but never only close? Does there need to be gentleness involved, in order for something to be considered intimacy? If we consider Led Zeppelin's version of ‘Babe, I’m gonna leave you’, it might not be so. Kraugerud draws forth an example of a movie trailer voice, which is big and dramatic, however it does not scream or become violent in its expression. Here he explains that this type of voice will most likely not be considered intimate because it is used in such a dramatic sense, and is often paired with loud sounds and music (ibid). Although the movie trailer voice seems closer to us than say an artist on a large stage, it is still not considered intimate. And while it is disclosed that intimacy might be considered something soft and of lower velocity and volume, Kraugerud also points out that there are different types of intensities that could be connected to the term intimacy. It is possible that something is emotionally intense without being performatively intense (ibid).

Simon Frith supports the notion that intimacy is something soft and low in velocity or volume. In *Performing Rites* (1996, p.187) he writes that “The microphone made it possible

for singer 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". Here he explains that the microphone changed how artists expressed themselves, and that they were able to reveal more details of the story and their voices. By pointing out that these traits had not been heard before in public performance, Frith further supports the impression that expressing oneself through a soft voice with low volume is afforded a private setting. By extension we might draw a line to the content of the conversation or the lyrics of the songs, and that songs that are expressed in this exact way (low velocity, soft voice), are expressing something that is private and therefore intimate.

Stan Hawkins explains that the recording techniques that have developed during the last 50 years have had a large impact on how we record and hear voices. Especially in regards to microphones, their placement and how this correlates to increased perceived intimacy (Hawkins 2009, p.123). Kraugerud confirms this as he comments on the invention of the Neumann U47 microphone, and explains how it gave listeners the opportunity to experience the "full-frequency spectrum of the voice from the recording. They could also hear the ambience of the studio or concert hall in which the performance had been recorded" (Kraugerud 2020, p.88). By using this microphone, a new intimacy was created, and the listeners were welcomed into the recording space, and brought closer to the artists. Another aspect of what creates intimacy is the content of what we share. Some feelings are easier to share with others, such as happiness, inspiration, joy and hope. Other emotions might be reserved for only a few people. Negative emotions, such as melancholy, grief, jealousy and contempt, might be emotions that are more difficult to share with people, and the fact that one shares these feelings with someone else, could imply a certain level of trust and intimacy (Graham et al. 2008, p.395).

3.0 Analyses

In this chapter I present four analyses, two of the song ‘Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You’, and two of ‘Fast Car’. The purpose of these analyses is to examine the voices of the artists, and how what we might understand as expressions of melancholy conveyed. Rather than following the classic parameters of song analyses, I have selected a few concepts that might help me in my investigation. The focal point of these analyses is to investigate how the artists use their voices as they tell the same story, through different expressions. Like Eidsheim I am interested in enculturation set in a western music context in this dissertation, which is why my song examples are in the anglo-american tradition. Prior to the analyses I have included a short introduction to each artist, as these might help in explaining why they have chosen to express themselves the way they have. Through learning more about the artists’ background and listening carefully to their voices, I hope to suggest that there is something within the voices that affects listeners and sways them into an empathetic response. However, it will not be an in depth history lesson on each of the artists.

Moreover, though these analyses are colored by my upbringing and held worldviews, they might yet be representative for a larger group of people. Since the feeling of melancholy is a common affective state that most people seem to have an understanding of, and “everyone” finds themselves emerged in this feeling at one point or another during life, the analyses should bring forth some aspects that if not all, then several other listeners, can relate to. Again, it could be that many disagree with my reflections around these voices and their ability to express melancholy. Some might even say that it is not melancholy that is being expressed at all. This is part of what makes this subject interesting. Just like the difficulties in defining the words timbre or melancholy, it is difficult to define exactly what and how each individual relates to the feeling of melancholy.

3.1 Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You

The song ‘Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You’ was written and published by Anne Bredon in 1959, a singer/songwriter in the folk scene. Later on it has been covered multiple times, and here we delve deeper into the renditions made by Joan Baez and later on, Robert Plant in Led Zeppelin. In my evaluations my intention is not to make judgements of quality nor taste, or to favor one above the other, but rather to draw attention to the ability within the artist's voices

and timbre to express melancholy. However, it could be argued that since I have listened to more folk music than rock music, I would be more familiar with the sound of Baez version and therefore more likely to enjoy her version as opposed to Led Zeppelin's version. This could in turn make my convictions regarding the timbre in their voices and their ability to express melancholy, biased in Baez's favor.

3.1.1 Joan Baez

Joan Baez was born in 1941 in New York, and is of Mexican and Irish descent. She moved frequently in her childhood due to her father's work as a physicist (Britannica 2023). Baez is a political activist, and has lent her voice to several different causes over the years. Although she did not receive much formal musical training, she taught herself ukulele and later guitar to accompany her singing. Growing up in the 40s and 50s, Baez would have observed the world and its political challenges spanning from the end of World War II, to the pressured climate of the Cold War, and then the development of the Vietnam War (History.com 2023). She had seen women work outside the home during the war, then return to domestic duties again as the men returned from war. Not only did the war change those who fought, but the ones that stayed back were given different tasks than those assigned earlier. Both men and women worked production during the war, and according to the National World War II Museum (2023), unemployment nearly disappeared. And although the end of the war was a celebratory event, many of the people who stayed in the U.S were used to contributing to society in a different manner than before. To go back to what they had known prior to the war might have seemed impossible, and one can imagine there was a lot of exasperation and negative mental shifts that developed between when the war was over. The U.S even had campaigns to "help" people get back into the same old pattern as before (McEuen 2016). We can imagine that perhaps especially the women who had worked outside the home during the war wanted to keep the same personal and financial freedom as they had gained during the war years (McDermott 2022). In addition to these global events, Baez in an interview with John Wilson (2014, 4:02") expresses that she witnessed many events during her childhood that many other children did not see, such as poverty and the devastating lives people in the Middle East led. She says that these situations resonated with what she wanted to express and fight for. Here we can see the connection between Baez's upbringing and her role as a political activist, which may correlate with enculturation. Observing and participating in major events at a young age might have had a great influence on her choice to fight for others who did not have

the same voice as she. In the same interview she continued to say that “the voice was a gift, ... and the second gift was to wanna use it the way I did” (Baez 2014, 4’32”). Moreover, in another interview Baez says that her main virtues are “melody, the voice, the words and the direct communication” (Baez 2021, 01’49”). From this we can read that she was intentional when using her voice, throughout her whole career. This could perhaps emphasize her authenticity, and that makes the audience empathize with her and the message she conveys. We as the audience believe what she is singing, we believe in the pain we hear behind the words, because we know Baez to be a voice for those who do not have one.

While her involvement in activism could have had several different incentives, Baez has stated that she was musically inspired by various folk artists, such as Pete Seeger, Odetta and Harry Belafonte (Lawrence and Parker 2023). Aside from being affiliated with the folk music genre, one feature all these artists have in common is their use of vibrato. And it seems as if their use of it is intentional and to enhance the message they are trying to convey. Although the use of vibrato might not be considered a trait particularly bound to the folk music genre, it seems many have made good use of it throughout time, including Joan Baez.

Even though Baez says that she is not “an official folk singer” (Baez 2021, 01’49”) she is for many considered “the queen of folk” (Stephens 2023). In 1962, Joan Baez released the cover of the folksong ‘Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You’. In this rendition we hear Baez accompanying her singing on the acoustic guitar, like Anne Bredon did in the original. Although the two versions have the same, stripped down acoustic base (voice and guitar), they are very different in expression. The nakedness of the song could contribute to, or even strengthen the message in Baez 'version, because as we know from Kraugerud and Frith, the details are amplified through the microphone, and we are able to hear the nuances in her voice, her timbre and how she uses the dynamics of her voice. We can hear the ambience of the concert hall as well, and know there is a sizable audience from the applause in the beginning and end, that somehow manages to remain near soundless as she performs the song.

Although the voice and the guitar play the same melody over and over again as the lyrics unfold, Baez draws the attention of the listener into the song through the way she uses her voice. She changes the velocity, and by applying more or less volume, she varies the way in which she draws in the audience. When she sings in a more quiet fashion, we have to “raise our ears” and lean in closer to hear what she is trying to tell us. In the expression of this song,

Joan Baez uses a tender voice in her falsetto register with a very well managed vibrato. When it comes to timbre, she has a crystalline quality that pierces through the music, in a soft manner. It seems she uses the vibrato intentionally to enhance or underline the message she is trying to convey, and it is known that skilled singers use vibrato to underline a certain expression (CVTRResearch 2023). She varies between a strong expression of her voice and a soft susurrant. The last sentence in each verse slowly dies off. By alternating between a powerful, steady expression, to a soft whisper that fades and disappears, Baez creates a connection with the audience. The whisper and fading voice can be compared to the quiet resignation when someone has given up, be it an argument, the final words in a romantic relationship or perhaps in life itself. Melancholic moments like these are often private affairs, and by using her voice in this way, Baez creates a sense of intimacy with the audience. An excellent example of how well Baez uses her own dynamics in combination with the amplification from the microphone to affect the listeners, is from 2'47" - 2'54". These seconds hold her last words in the song, and we can hear very clearly how she uses the tenderness in her timbre to enhance the melancholy in the song. Through Kraugeruds explanation of microphone use, we can understand that these small sounds help create an intimacy between Baez and the audience. The microphone brings us as listeners closer to the artists. If this was a conversation between two people, one might want to lean in closer to hear better what was being said, which physically alters the distance between two humans. While listening to this recording of Baez, I experience a similar pull, wishing to lean into the conversation, the song, the secrets she offers to share with me. It might be said that the affective value of these maneuvers are successful.

The text communicates the story of someone that has to leave, without genuinely wanting to. This leads me to the conclusion that the protagonist in the song is either not in control of their own body or perhaps terminally ill. The "old highway" calling her to travel alone out "westward" might be imagery that speaks to the fact that she has to face death alone, as the direction west has been connected to death and decay (Shelley 2023). This idea is supported by the lyrics "You know I'd really like to stay here" and "my feet keep goin' down that highway", indicating that this is not necessarily something that the protagonist wants, yet has to do. In the last verse this is further endorsed as she uses the word "ramble", which according to Vocabulary.com (s.v. "Ramble," read on the 26th of March 2023) could mean to "move about aimlessly or without any destination". If a person "really wants to stay", it seems odd that they would leave to go nowhere. All of these textual findings support the notion of

melancholy and despondency. The use of dynamics in her voice here is used to underline the grief or sadness in the song, and hearing that her voice almost disappears, yet lingers for several seconds, could speak of the unwillingness to leave, either a lover or life. She is hanging on to what is left for as long as possible.

When listening to this rendition of ‘Babe, I’m gonna leave you’, my immediate response is to categorize it as melancholic. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly why this is the case. If we accept the theory from Lochhead, Mendieta, Smith, Eidsheim and Eisenlohr, where we consider music as a vibrational practice, we might understand that it is the timbre of her voice and the controlled softness through the phrases that speaks or vibrates in a frequency that my body registers as melancholic. However, if we were to see this from the perspective of Juslin, Västfjäll and Snyder, we might be more inclined to accept that my perception of any melancholic values in the song is triggered by melancholic memories that are semi-activated in my subconsciousness. What I believe is that we can merge these views. We might not be able to register when a memory is semi-activated, but we might be able to feel that something is different in our perception of the music we hear. What is it that makes us feel different? The timbre? The intensity of the voice? The volume? Whatever it is, it is something that is almost as diffuse as the definition of the term timbre and melancholy, that alters how we feel when we listen to music. And it might be that this diffuse, in-between-words alteration that occurs, is the adaptation or reception of vibrations. That we can register emotional varieties in vibrations in voices, in our own body.

3.1.2 Robert Plant

Robert Plant was born in 1948, into a relatively wealthy family in Worcestershire in England (Thefamouspeople 2023), and defied his father to pursue a career in music. From his early years he liked blues music, and was drawn to Elvis Presley in particular. After leaving his childhood home when he was 16 years old, he played the blues in the English Midland blues scene in several other lesser known bands through the middle of the 1960s. Around this time his fascination and interest in blues grew, and he became a fan of Willie Dixon and Robert Johnson. During these years he held other jobs as well, to support his music career. Towards the end of the 1960s he became the lead singer in the world renowned band, Led Zeppelin. Although Led Zeppelin has a rather clear image of belonging to rock’n’roll, we might still be able to hear the blues in Plant’s voice. While blues is considered its own genre, folk and blues

have the same roots, and oftentimes we can find traces of blues in folk, and vice versa. Perhaps the blues in Plant's voice is part of what emerges as melancholy in Led Zeppelin's rendition of 'Babe, I'm gonna leave you' from 1969, which is the second song I will analyze for this thesis.

Robert Plant and James Patrick Page added more and rewrote Anne Bredons lyrics for this version of the song. These lyrics alter the story that I hear. The notion of doing something you do not want to do is still present, but in a different manner. In the way Plant expresses that he has to leave, it seems as if he is talking either to a lover or possibly to an addiction, covering it with the words "babe" and "woman". Although he never mentions the "old highway" from Anne Bredons original lyrics, he still makes use of the word "ramble", the concept of going nowhere. Also, he can hear "it calling me the way it used to do, I can hear it calling me back home"(1'44" - 1'56"). Perhaps this could strengthen the idea that he is singing about addiction, and that the calling he hears might be withdrawals. If we think of the storyline as such, then the feeling of hopelessness and sadness about leaving people he cares about, not because he wants to, but because he can not help it, is prominent. The story Plant tells through both the lyrics and his voice is quite different from Baez. From what I can hear, he has an ambivalent relationship to the person or the addiction that he is singing to. From "Babe, I'm gonna leave you" to "I'll never ever, ever, ever, ever, ever leave you, babe", "I've got to quit you", "it feels good to have you back again" and towards the end "I've got to go away". There are several of these back and forth phrases, which strengthens my belief of this being a song about addiction, rather than death, as in Baez's rendition. Furthermore, Plant's authenticity while expressing his, or the protagonist's, relationship with drugs, rises as we know that Plant himself had a "big affair with drugs" (Plant 2014). This uncertainty, the alternating opinions on what to do next that is expressed in the song, might strike up a feeling of empathy in the audience. I believe this is because we feel with the protagonist, we might even want to help him because his indecisiveness reminds us of our own. Perhaps we have encountered situations that are similar, where we are unable to choose between the thing that is good for us and the thing that we want. A lover, a friend, maybe even substance abuse.

The feelings shown in his vocals, vocals which are very different from Baez', and his enculturation through the blues and rock'n'roll genre is unmistakably clear. He manages the dynamics as masterly as Baez, from talking, to singing, and straight out shouting. He makes use of a considerably higher amount of paralinguistic cues (Teaching English 2023) than

Baez, specifically considering the changes in pitch and tone of voice, as well as prominent breathing or use of interjections. Although Plant starts out the song quite carefully, close to a whisper, almost pleading “babe, baby, baby, I’m gonna leave you”, he quickly changes his expression to one that is more direct, stronger, and to the point as the verse unfolds. In these very strong and direct parts of the song, you can hear his early influences, from Robert Johnson and Willie Dixon. Plant's timbre is crisp and raspy, yet there is a softness present as well. His timbre is distinguishable and we are able to separate his voice from others, even though he is screaming at the top of his lungs for large portions of the song. At 1’51” seconds in we hear the first scream, where it could sound like Plant is struck by panic and pain. Maybe this is where the protagonist in the song, whether that is Plant himself or a made up character, realizes that they have to leave, despite their own wishes. Just like Baez, the use of vibrato in this song enhances the emotional aspect, as if his voice is trembling because he is close to crying. We find the use of vibrato in the songs of his childhood heroes as well, perhaps especially Robert Johnson and Elvis Presley.

Similar to Baez, Robert Plant uses the stillness in his song to draw the audience in, although he operates in what seems to be a much louder plane. Yet it might be the rawness of his performance that creates intimacy with the listeners. The way he seems to pour his soul out, first in the instrumental part from 2’22”, then later at 3’26”, could be recognized as intimate. Although it might seem far-fetched to define screaming as intimate, it seems his way of expression is a loud, yet softly pleading. This could create intimacy, although it is not as tender as Baez's version. When Plant screams, it seems he is almost begging for liberation or understanding in a way, from his addiction, to his lover, to us in the audience. In this song, Plant uses the microphone in different ways to manage the sound and in turn his relationship to the listeners. He brings us closer to him, then further away. This way he plays with the notion of leaving, which he expresses throughout the song, as well as the notion of intimacy. The microphone used in this recording allows us to hear the ambience that Kraugerud writes about, and the closer Plant is to the microphone, the closer we feel to him. An example of this is found at 3’26” - 3’39”, where he alternates between the soft expression, and the shouting, soul-baring way of singing. This manner of using his voice could affect the audience merely because of the sheer rawness he presents. The push and pull of his voice could be part of what creates its unique atmosphere, which in turn is making us “vibe” with it. It could be that the vibrations from his timbre match some melancholic, panic stricken and hopeless vibrations in us, or perhaps it speaks to our own indecisiveness. Earlier I wrote that atmospheres are

everything that surrounds us, something Plant emphasizes in an interview from 1975, when he states that it is irrelevant whether the band plays a stadium or smaller venues, as long as they are able to create an atmosphere (Plant 2018, 1'53"). It might be that Plant understands the importance of the emotional vibrations sent from the people on stage, and that he has to "meet the audience where they are". Perhaps this is why he says that the venue does not matter, the atmosphere does. If we think of this through the lens of Eidsheim's theory on vibrational practices, we understand that the emotionally charged vibes that Plant and Led Zeppelin expressed through this recording, has the potential to find its mate within those who listen to it today. Perhaps this is one of the contributing factors as to why some artists and bands affect people, long after they have stopped performing live. This is fascinating as it points to the possibility that we are able to "freeze" emotional expressions in time. If we are able to hear the emotional vibrations in a recording, it means that we are able to listen in on stored emotions. This gives ground to justify what my previous vocal teachers experienced with Fan Xiulan and the Qi-gong recordings. This suggests that if we listen carefully to the timbre in any person's voice, we could be able to hear any melancholy that lives in an individual's body, even if the melancholy is buried in the individual's subconsciousness.

3.2. Fast car

Below are two analyses, the original of Tracy Chapman's 'Fast Car' from 1988 and a cover by Michael David Rosenberg, released in 2016 under the name Passenger. A few alterations have been made in Rosenberg's rendition of the song, which I will disclose to some detail. Nevertheless, as I inform in the methodology I will not go into too much detail about the instrumentation, although I see fit to mention a few elements that I believe make an impact on the listener and the conveying of the message of melancholy and evoking empathy. Moreover, some of the alterations have changed the sound, giving the cover a sound that is closer to the pop genre than folk. I grew up listening to Chapman's 'Fast Car', and coming from a small town, I always felt like I could relate to the lyrics. I was a little scared that I might end up repeating history, following in my parents footsteps. This view changed quickly as I grew beyond my teenage years, seeing that my parents were strong, independent and wonderful people. Now at the age of 32, I find myself moving to a smaller town in Northern Norway, and can perhaps feel the pull to be close to nature and a small community, as opposed to the busy city life. Considering my original, encultured starting point, I understand that I might be

biased towards Chapman's original version, as that is the version I heard and adored first. However, as I am aware of this when I perform the analyses, I will do my best to keep a neutral perspective. Perhaps I will be able to investigate Chapman's voice through the critical lens I once used when Rosenberg released his version of the song.

3.2.1 Tracy Chapman

Tracy Chapman was born in Cleveland Ohio in 1964, and was raised by her mother (Smooth Radio 2022). Chapman received a scholarship for a private boarding school, and escaped her hometown. At that time there were race riots in Cleveland, because the courts had ordered desegregation in the public schools. People would try to stop the buses, and Chapman said that they would often not go to school because of the volatility (Chapman 2021, 2'16"). She has expressed that it was hard because of the differences between the pupils, even though they tried their best, there was still division. She came from the working class, had a tough upbringing, and lived in a tough neighborhood, while the others came from a world of privilege. Later on she attended Tufts University in Massachusetts, studying African studies and anthropology (Biography 2019). At college Chapman wrote songs and performed in Boston at the local WMFO radio station. And it was here that she made a demo tape that led to her record deal, where David Kershenbaum, who had produced for Joan Baez as well, produced her first album (DavidKershenbaum.com 2023). It is in this first album we find 'Fast Car'. In addition to being an active musician over the years, Tracy Chapman is also known as a political activist. In an interview Chapman says music was a natural means for her to express herself, from an early age (Chapman 2021, 1'03"). She traveled the world with an Amnesty International concert, with many big artists, and even though they played the same set each night, the music translated across cities and countries and cultures. Chapman said that "no matter the venue, is that if people bother to listen, you have their focused attention" (2021, 5'32"). This connects to what Robert Plant said when he mentioned that as long as you are able to create an atmosphere, it does not matter how big or small the venue is. It might be a reach to connect these to statements, however, they seem within the same area. Perhaps they translate to if people listen carefully to the songs, they will be drawn into the story and affected by the emotions expressed. 'Fast Car' was released in 1988, and considering that the United States had been through two recessions (Plunkert 1990) earlier in the 80s, one can imagine that this song struck a chord in the population. Both the lyrics and the expression in Chapman's voice could evoke empathy from the listeners with grounds in this cultural event.

In 'Fast Car' the lyrics are written out as one end of a conversation. Chapman tells the story of someone who wants to escape their reality, but keeps being drawn back by the felt responsibility. The way the song is written conjures images that most people can relate to, such as "working at a convenience store" and "your arm felt nice wrapped around my shoulder". Images like these could trigger our episodic memory, and in turn emotions we have connected to those memories. Furthermore, the protagonist dreams of escaping the life that was painted out by her parents. Chapman conveys the story from a child's perspective, observing their parents, and how the marriage falls apart because of alcohol abuse and poverty. Further on, the main character meets someone, and together they dream of a life that is different from the one their parents are living. To use the fast car as a means to run away from the story that would normally play out in their community. However, due to the lack of money the protagonist has to take a job, and slowly the dream vanishes with the speed of the song. Story repeats itself, just like the figure played on the guitar in the verses. The story in itself is inherently sorrowful and brimful of misery, with glimpses of bittersweet hope. This supports the notion of the song being melancholic. The end of the last full verse ends with "take your fast car and keep on driving", which can be perceived as an encouragement to the protagonist's partner to leave. The partner has become too similar to the father of the protagonist, spending more time at the bars, drinking, than with their partner and kids. The protagonist also concludes with being stuck in a life they didn't want. In the last half verse, it seems as though Chapman turns to the audience as she sings:

You got a fast car
Is it fast enough so you can fly away?
You gotta make a decision
Leave tonight or live and die this way

(Tracy Chapman 1988).

I interpret this as an encouragement to take control of our own lives. Not necessarily in a literal matter, but perhaps this story could be used as an incentive to make the listener spring to action.

Tracy Chapman's voice has a clear, yet soft quality in this song. Earlier her voice has been described as "a husky contralto", and that "the timbre of it is rare to find. It instantly disarms

you” (Moulin 2006). She sometimes uses glottal attacks that could be compared to when someone is trying to talk while choking up. It also sounds like she applies her chest voice throughout the song, in her mid to deep register. The timbre of Chapman’s voice is quite similar to that of Joan Armatrading, who is the artist behind songs like ‘Like Fire’(1976), ‘Wishing’(1978) and ‘The Weakness in me’(1981). Armatrading's voice, like Chapman’s, has a clear, deep timbre, and they both sing with what sounds like a relaxed larynx, which gives off the impression of spaciousness in the voice.

The appearance of her voice as being deep, has made several people confused about her gender (TheTopTens 2023), which speaks to us perceiving deep voices as masculine, while high pitched voices might be understood as more feminine. Although this might be a discussion for another thesis, I am still drawn to briefly bring up the question of which sounds are inherently masculine, and which ones are feminine? Throughout music history we find voices ranging from high in pitch to low, to breathy in timbre, cloudy and to piercing and clear. Stan Hawkins (2009, pp.120-159) discusses several male voices and specific songs in his book *The British Pop Dandy*, all of which stand in contrast in pitch and timbre to that of Tracy Chapman. While these men often operate in high pitch, falsetto and at times at what could be considered straining heights, Chapman seems grounded within a comfortable part of her mid-register. There is no denying that she has the possibility to sing quite low pitched, but why is this considered masculine when in contrast the following is presumed: If a man sings in a high pitched voice he is understood to have a more genuine emotional expression (Hawkins 2009, p.130). To be fair, I have not encountered any articles that question Chapman’s authenticity or if she is genuine in her emotional expression. But the question still remains: Which timbres do we assign masculine bodies versus which do we assign feminine bodies? Also, why do we imagine certain bodies for specific timbres? According to Frith and Eidsheim, this seems to circle back to our enculturation.

Furthermore, Chapman ends each sentence with a small vibrato, which could affect the listeners even more, swaying us into an empathic response. Chapman seems relaxed in her performance and when she increases her intensity in the choruses, it is only slightly. She keeps the tone at a conversational level, so that when she expresses her emotions in the choruses, it feels genuine, like a friend trying to make you understand how they are feeling. Here she creates intimacy, and this way of singing could draw the audience further into the story. Perhaps there is something in the timbre of Chapman’s voice that disarms us as we

listen. A perceived honesty that usually occurs between two persons who are close, having a confiding conversation. This is the atmosphere we reside in while listening to Chapman's 'Fast Car'. It might be that the timbre in combination with the relatable story is what makes us vibe with the song, which makes us empathize with her expressed melancholy. In addition to this, the plot in the song is relatable, and it is not unlikely that it will engage a broad audience: trying to escape a life where the odds have seemingly been stacked against you. These two in combination, the story being relatable and the manner of which she conveys it, could be contributing to the listener having an empathic response. In the verse quoted above, it seems her voice is close to breaking as she sings "You've got a fast car" (4'26" - 4'28"), and it almost seems as if she is pleading for the listeners to consider their own lives. In these sentences it could be interpreted that she is intentionally turning to the listeners to stir up emotion.

While this song might have a greater impact on those who can relate quite literally to the story, which is being stuck in a generational cycle of alcohol abuse and poverty, the emotional message is still transferable to others who are experiencing similar scenarios. The feeling of being stuck in a situation you "can't" change, could be found in various communities. Whether it is those who are trapped by poverty, or those who cannot escape the life that is expected from their family, the uncertainty and melancholy remains the same. When we reflect on the lyrics in 'Fast Car', we can interpret them as the protagonist giving up their own dreams to accommodate others. Either father or partner, both who have made their own choices that led them to where they were. Some people have to make harder decisions than others through life, which is something Chapman points out, while talking about high school and her classmates: "they came from a world of privilege", which means that many kids and youths do not have to worry about affording food, rent or covering other basic needs, while some must. The fact that Chapman had a rougher background than many of her classmates also gives this song and her performance of it the element of authenticity. Perhaps she has lived through some of the lyrics, or witnessed first hand someone who has. This might add to the expression and how we are affected by her voice. As Kershnerbaum said, the timbre of her voice disarms the listener, and when we are left without defenses, we might as well lean in and listen. It could be that the "disarming" that occurs when we listen to Chapman's voice is rooted in our perception of the folk genre, and we are reminded of other artists we have heard that are within the folk genre. The positive emotions we might feel towards the other artists and their songs can transfer to some extent to Chapman and how we perceive her timbre in

‘Fast Car’. Although the songs are not the same, we might be able to find traces of something that is similar, and by association we deem ‘Fast Car’ and Chapman to be of similar importance to us, as other artists we might be fond of that are situated in the folk genre. Since songs within the folk genre are generally considered to be genuine and authentic, the association to the folk genre can influence us to think of Chapman as genuine and authentic.

Moreover, many songs in the folk genre could arguably be said to contain a political message, like in ‘Masters of War’ by Bob Dylan, ‘Strange Fruit’ by Billie Holiday, or ‘Fortunate Son’ by Creedence Clearwater Revival. ‘Fast Car’ could be said to reflect how life has been, and perhaps is, for many people in the United States, and by extension be seen as a political song that protests the limited options for people to escape poverty. The feeling of being seen and fought for, could also trigger an empathic response in the audience, and make us feel more connected to Chapman.

Also, this “disarming” might trigger our empathic response when we hear Chapman sing, because we identify with the emotional expression that lies within the timbre of her voice. This could in turn make us feel connected to her, not only because of the message she is expressing, but in a more bodily sense as well. If we were to accept the theory of music as a vibrational practice we could acknowledge that when we listen to ‘Fast Car’, we tune in to the emotional vibrations in Chapman's voice. While listening carefully, we are able to relate to her, because the emotional vibrations we hear in her voice connect to the same emotions within us, which in this case is arguably melancholy.

3.2.2 Michael David Rosenberg

Michael David Rosenberg was born on the 17th of May in 1984, and he grew up in Brighton. He started making music at 13 and pursued a music career from the age of 16. He left for Australia when he was in his early twenties to work as a busker, and for a long time he was living hand to mouth and sleeping on his friends' couches (Rosenberg 2018 B, 11'54”).

Although Rosenberg had released several records, dating back to 2007, he did not have his big breakthrough until 2012 with the song ‘Let Her Go’. He kept on releasing music, and in 2017 he released the song ‘A Kindly Reminder’, which is a protest song directed at Donald Trump. In an interview he said that he felt a responsibility to speak up concerning what was happening in the U.S at the time, and that the song ‘A Kindly Reminder’ started off as a joke

backstage, but it grew into something more serious (Rosenberg 2017, 15'06"). Seeing as he had relatives in the U.S. he felt a connection to the country, and from this we can imagine that he was concerned for their wellbeing. Later in 2017 Rosenberg released an album called 'Sunday Night Sessions', where we find the cover of 'Fast Car', among other big hits such as 'Hotel California', 'A Change is Gonna Come' and 'Ain't No Sunshine'. While 'Fast Car' might not be considered a protest song directly, it is definitively a critique of society and how poverty can create misfortunate situations that could be passed on for generations.

In an interview from 2018 Rosenberg says that he grew up listening to American folk music, and that he was inspired by artists like James Taylor, Paul Simon, Joni Mitchell and the likes (Rosenberg 2018 A, 3'54"). On his Youtube channel under his video of 'Fast Car' he writes "I remember listening to Tracy Chapman as a teenager and feeling overwhelmingly inspired to pick up a guitar and learn how to tell stories in a similar way" (Rosenberg 2017). He also expresses that he is concerned with the lyrics more so than everything else in the music, and that for a long time he played alone and acoustic. When talking about his hit single "Let It Go" (2012) and how it was made, he says that even though the melody came first, there was a certain atmosphere to the song (Rosenberg 2018 B, 20'30"). From this I understand that Rosenberg is concerned about creating a feeling that the listeners can relate to when he is writing his songs. He wants to affect us through the stories he tells in his songs. And perhaps we can hear this in his voice in his rendition of 'Fast Car'. Although the sound leans towards the popular music specter concerning instrumentation and how the song is dynamically built, it is still a folk song. Elements such as the acoustic guitar and organ substantiate this. He has changed some of the lyrics, but it is mainly the same as in Chapman's original. The underlying melancholic message of shattered hope ("I had a feeling I belonged, that I could be someone", with emphasis on "had"), still comes through, although Rosenberg has eliminated the "incentive" that I mentioned in Tracy Chapman's version. Instead he repeats the chorus lines of wanting to belong and be "someone" with more intensity. And though Rosenberg does not convey the whole story as we know it from the original, of history repeating itself, we still have a sense of being stuck because of this repetition of the chorus. He tells the story of someone looking back on their life, to a time they felt free and able to do anything. The lyrics "Do you remember" in combination with "I had a feeling I could be someone" suggests that the protagonist is looking back with melancholy at the lost chance to live another type of life, and therefore melancholy is still an underlying message.

Rosenberg's grandparents were Jewish refugees during World War II, and they fled from Germany, and stayed in a French refugee camp throughout the war, before they traveled to the U.S.A. Rosenberg's father left New Jersey and traveled the world before ending up in England with Rosenberg's mother, where they settled down (Rosenberg 2018 A, 1'31"). Knowing that Rosenberg has relatives in the U.S.A., and his critique made towards Trump and his presidency, it is not unlikely that we can detect some of the frustration in his voice in 'Fast Car'. Now, being a foreigner observing another country through their politics, I find it hard to comment objectively, and my interest is not in whether one view is better than another. However, my intention is to try to explain why this song received such a warm welcome when Rosenberg released it in 2017. I believe it is because it conveys a feeling of hopelessness and melancholy, which we can imagine were feelings many people felt when it became evident that Trump had won the election. Without comparing it to any of the recessions in the U.S.A., the feeling of hopelessness could still surface in a situation like this, both for citizens of the U.S.A., but also the rest of the world as we are all connected. I remember how astounded my peers and I were when we learned the news in 2016, and how we had hoped for something we believed to be better. The feelings from the original version of 'Fast Car' were still valid. Through his cover version Rosenberg again raised the notion of wanting to escape an unwanted future, showing the world that the message was still relevant. And via his connection to the country and his relatives, his performance gains authenticity as we as an audience can empathize with his concern for his loved ones.

The timbre of Rosenberg's voice when he sings is very distinct, and it stands out from his talking voice. When he sings it sounds as if he is using more air than when he talks, which might be due to a high larynx placement. This is the opposite of what opera singers do, as they lower their larynx to be able to create an operatic resonance (Hurtado 2021). As I have been reading various articles, blog posts and seen interviews with and about Rosenberg, one thing that keeps resurfacing is that many people are critical to the way he uses his voice while singing. Some refer to him as "a chipmunk, or what some kind of woodland elf" (Caven 2017). And similar to the confusion about Chapman's voice and gender, Rosenberg's voice has created the same sense of puzzlement.

In the same Reddit-post, another member mentioned that they had listened to Rosenberg's song "Let Her Go" several times before realizing it was a man singing. This is quite interesting, as we might have been enculturated to comprehend a high pitched, breathy voice as

feminine. However, in the book *British Pop Dandy* by Stan Hawkins, he analyzes several male voices in the British pop scene, and comments on the use of high pitch and falsetto. While discussing the singing of Justin Hawkins in the song “I Believe in a Thing Called Love” from 2002, Hawkins says that “Rock performances usually involve the male artist moving beyond his ‘real’ voice to his ‘false’ one, in order to express genuine emotion” (2009, p.130). Even though Rosenberg is in the pop genre, rather than rock, this might explain why he has chosen this particular expression: to be considered more genuine in his emotional expression. Although it seems as though Rosenberg applies his falsetto to some extent in most of his songs, this soft, breathy way of singing could perhaps show a slight resemblance to that of Bob Dylan, George Harrison and Tom Waits. Seeing that Rosenberg alters his timbre to this degree we could assume that he has arrived at this particular expression in part because of his enculturation. Another explanation could be that he changes his timbre with the intent of keeping up with current tendencies. This fashion of singing seemingly had a rise in popularity in the early 2000s, with artists and bands such as Stu Larsen, Joshua Hyslop, Mighty Oaks and of Monsters and Men.

Like Chapman, Rosenberg has moments in his singing where it sounds like his voice is about to crack, which could indicate a person that is about to cry. Some sentences are finished “too soon”, as if he cuts himself off while singing. It almost sounds like he is in a hurry to finish the sentences, which could confirm the notion of wanting to cry. If it were a conversation, we would perhaps be spurred into an empathic response, and appreciate the person's vulnerability and the intimacy that could be associated with this type of private conversation (1’30”-1’45”). Rosenberg is generous in his use of vibrato, not just at the end of sentences, but scattered about during the verses and choruses. The breathy singing and vibrato in combination with the softness contributes to the production of intimacy, as it is less common to cry in front of someone who is outside your circle of confidants. The fact that he doesn’t blast his voice at full volume adds to this notion. Moreover, the combination of these traits within his performance and his backstory could affect the audience. Perhaps there are more than a few that can still relate to the message in the song, although Rosenberg has altered the lyrics somewhat from the original. It might be that this alteration has made the story even more relatable to a larger audience.

4.0 Exploring the findings

In this chapter, I will look at how the analyses have provided some answers to the questions I have posed throughout this thesis. However, many of the issues addressed are not easily reduced to definitive conclusions and many questions remain. In regards to comparison of text and timbre within the different songs and voices, I found it necessary to highlight a few notable sonic examples. There were several similarities between the artists and their way of expressing emotion. It seems that one of the ways they all create intimacy is through their use of the microphone. In the sonic examples from Baez and Plant we can hear very clearly how the microphone can be used to great effect in enhancing emotional expressions. In Baez's instance the microphone emphasizes her ability to use dynamics when she sings. The microphone lets us hear the softness in her voice on another level than what we would be able to hear without it. Especially from 2'48" - 2'54", where Baez finishes her last word. In a similar fashion Plant alternates the distance from the microphone to create a sense of being closer or further away from the listeners, which in extension could be interpreted towards him being more or less intimate with the audience. The microphone allows us to hear the quality in their timbre at different singing volumes. There are dramatic shifts in volume in the way Robert Plant sings and he uses the microphone accordingly. These dynamic changes, and the transitions between different levels of volume, entail that the timbre in his voice also changes rapidly, and a spectrum of contrasting timbres is heard in a short space in time. In comparison, Baez remains fairly constant in her expression. She uses the dynamics of her voice as well, but she does not hop from one side of the specter to the other. While Plant is more moody, and displays emotional outbursts where his self-frustration is front and center, Baez seems more stable and reflected. Nonetheless, both can be considered expressive characteristics that can be associated with melancholy.

In the renditions of "Fast Car" it seems that both artists have more set distance to the microphone, and that they use their dynamics accordingly. The microphone still enhances several aspects of their voices that might not have been as noticeable had they not been amplified by the microphone. This seems to be true for all the artists' recordings. The words that are "dying off" would most likely not have had the same impact on us if they had not been as long as they are now. I feel obliged to mention that I am aware of the producers role in the placement of the voice in the mix. Furthermore, this means that some of the dynamics

we hear in these renditions could be a result of mixing rather than the artist's ability to use the dynamics in their voices.

Moreover, these low-volumed words and sentences that the artists use are part of what creates intimacy with the listeners. According to Frith and Kraugerud we expect sounds with low volume and soft velocity to be more intimate than those that are loud and strong. Therefore we might at first experience Baez's, Chapman's and Rosenberg's songs as more intimate than Plant's. However, the image that Plant leaves us with in his rendition is that of a desperate, chaotic, hopeless and melancholic soul. And by revealing all of these emotions through his performance, who is to say that his rendition is less emotionally loaded than the other artist's songs? Kraugerud said that an artist has the opportunity to reveal themselves through both sound and lyrics, and by doing so they are able to create an intimate relationship with the audience. With this in mind we can understand that Plant does this in a rather dramatic way, but it is not less intimate than the others. All of the artists show their vulnerability and create intimacy, through being transparent in their own way,

All the artists used vibrato to some extent. While Baez has a very prominent and fast paced vibrato that she uses in every sentence of the song, the other artist's vibrato is reserved for the ends of words of sentences. Nonetheless, they seemingly serve the same purpose, which is to enhance the melancholic message that lies within the songs. When it comes to the use of paralinguistic cues, it could seem that the use of interjections and enhanced breathing is more a trait for the subgenre that is folk rock, seeing as only Plant makes use of it. This could be coincidental, as the four songs chosen for this thesis hardly is representative for the entire folk genre and all the subgenres that have emerged from it. Furthermore, the timbre of the four artists are very different from each other, but we are able to extract some similarities between them. Although Plant and Rosenberg operate with different variations of altering their timbre, they both make use of high pitch registers. While Rosenberg uses the breathy quality, the other three seem to have a greater emphasis on a clear voice. It might be that the clear voice that is closer to the speaking voice has been a trait in the folk genre before. However, it might be that this is changing, and that we are moving away from rigid parameters as to what can be considered folk based on timbre and voice alone.

Moving on, the term melancholy has had many different labels or meanings over the centuries, and we now understand that humans may experience a state of melancholy for

many different reasons. This could make it both easier and more difficult to understand how others are experiencing melancholy. From what Ferber has written, we can imagine that the feeling of isolation and despondency makes a person feel disconnected from others, and unable to share to full capacity how they are feeling, and hence in turn do not receive the support they need to make changes in their lives to avoid this gloomy state of being. Besides, if people relate to music and are able to explain how they are feeling through the voices of others, it could aid them in expressing themselves. This could be part of that creates the sense of community, which I will come back to further on.

Moreover, it could seem as if they were onto something in the middle ages when they saw melancholy as a somatic condition. Understanding that melancholy is a state of being rather than “just a feeling”, might provide us with some knowledge of how this state could come through our bodily expressions, and in this case, the voice in particular. Through the theory and analyses we have visited some potential reasons as to why we experience music and its emotional messages the way we do. When considering figure 1 and the psychological aspects of evaluative conditioning, association, semi-activated long term memories, episodic memories and our musical expectancy all together, we can understand that we are affected by music whether we want to or not. Timbre can be connected to all of these aspects, and hearing a specific timbre might trigger an emotional response in us, that we might not fully understand ourselves. While Chapman and Baez’s timbre bring about a soothing state of mind for me, the same can not be said for Plant’s or Rosenberg’s voice. However, this might be because of the difference in intensity in ‘Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You’. I will revisit why I do not feel calm when I hear Rosenberg’s voice later on. Furthermore, what the sonic examples in this thesis has provided us with, is the opportunity to briefly investigate if timbre alters our perception of the emotional message. Nevertheless, what I found is that the listener's enculturation could be an agent that interferes with our comprehension of the emotional message. For instance, I feel different when listening to all four songs. Although I understand that they all hold a melancholic message, I am inclined to experience other emotions as well. This might be connected to my own enculturation and how I have experienced similar songs and timbre before.

Furthermore, the notion of melancholy as a somatic condition is established further through the theory in this thesis. It seems that the views of the several scholars chosen to enrich this thesis would agree on the notion that we are affected by music on more levels than one. Many

of them write of how music affects our bodies and minds, without mentioning specific emotions. Still, that does not mean we should disregard the emotional aspect. I believe this is underlined as several of them either mention affect or empathetic responses. They all inform us that music is more than what first meets our ears. While Taylor wrote that music affects our understanding of body and space, and that the vibrations made from vocal communication allows for empathetic responses, Burrows said that the music was within him as much as it was around him. Eishenlor explained that atmospheres could be similar to affect, as it might have an impact on our bodies that are not necessarily conscious or voluntary. All these statements support Eidsheim's understanding of music as a vibrational practice. That music finds its way into our body and affects it whether we allow this or not. And although it is quite the coincidence, it was interesting that both Plant and Chapman in their own words mentioned how atmospheres affect the audience.

Moreover, from what Taylor wrote we can understand that not only are we affected by the music, mind and body, but the music we hear is an expression of the singer's entire life. Everything that the artist has experienced could have an impact on how they express themselves, and in turn how it affects us, consciously or subconsciously. Meaning that when we hear someone express themselves sonically, we could be able to detect a range of emotions that is stored within that person, even if they do not intend for us to do so. If we think of music as a vibrational practice, and view the sound of timbre as the bodily manifestation of our emotions, it becomes easier to understand how we resonate with the emotions expressed by someone else.

Recall the example of Fan Xiulan who seems to be exceptionally talented in listening to the bodily expressions, and not just the words being expressed. If we keep this scenario in mind, we might be able to comprehend that the vibrations we send to others through our voice, willingly or not, has an impact on those who listen to it. Throughout the thesis I have repeated: If we truly listen. What I mean about this is that although we can be affected by music and timbre in particular, there is potential for us to understand and perhaps expand our emotional horizon if we are able to reflect in more detail on the emotional signals sent out from the artist. We might also be able to learn more about ourselves and why we respond in certain ways to the music we listen to. Perhaps it is that we recognize emotions either consciously or subconsciously within the voices that we listen to, that resonate with emotions in ourselves. It seems like a sound assumption that Fan Xuilan is able to hear the pain in other

people's voices because she has trained her ear to pick up on these emotional vibrations. I believe the same could be said for mothers, and their ability to hear that something is off with their children. While Xuilan might be able to hear discomfort in anyone's voice, perhaps mothers are more attuned to their own children's voices. This would make for an interesting study in itself.

If everything around us is vibrations, it is inevitable that we will be affected by the music we surround ourselves with, seeing as music *is* made up of vibrations as well. In our everyday language we have several words and sentences to express our communication between each other, that play on the idea of music as vibrations. We might say that: “we are on the same wavelength”, or “that resonates with me”, or as mentioned earlier in this thesis “that does not vibrate with me”. All these sentences and words are used to describe how we connect to either other people or artforms, such as music in this case. Like a radio transmitter the artist sends out their messages, and the listeners being the receivers, do exactly that: receive it. Now, between the listener hearing the music and understanding the message in the exact way as the artist intended it, stands our enculturation. As a result of this, we might only understand the pieces of the message that match our values and learned preferences.

As I investigated the artist's background and explored the time of their enculturation, I found that all of them, to varying degrees, have a clear political activist background. While Chapman, Baez and Rosenberg are very clear that they use their voice actively to protest the unjust they see in the world, Plant might show his opposition to the popular opinion through the musical expression of Led Zeppelin. The way he uses his voice might be considered a protest all on its own. What I mean by this is that we know he can sing loud and clear without any form of distortion, yet he chooses to scream to enhance his message. Rosenberg alters his voice as well, but rather than altering the intensity or volume, he changes his timbre when he sings. Sandu highlighted timbre as one of the elements that help us communicate our emotional state. This is supported by DeNora, as she underlines that music can help us regulate our moods and feelings, as well as adapt to social situations. And although I was hesitant at first regarding the possibility of the artists' intentionally altering the timbre in their voices, preserving the emotional affect, I now believe that it is possible to some extent. Rosenberg does it skillfully, with intent it seems, as we can hear that there is a major difference in his talking voice and his singing voice. However, there might be a line as to where the alteration of the voice goes from authentic and enters the comedic realm.

I was curious to investigate if this alteration of timbre affected the notion of being authentic and genuine in the emotional expression. Yet, Rosenberg seems to be successful in presenting an authentic image as he expresses emotions through the timbre of his voice when he sings. Although he is successful, I found it peculiar that he would alter his voice in that manner. I would think that he could sing without the breathy quality, which I am now intrigued to hear. I could not find an answer as to why he alters his voice, only opinions made by people in forums like Reddit. And although they questioned the timbre of his voice, some of them still considered Rosenberg one of their favorite artists. This means that I am far from the only one who is wondering why Rosenberg feels the need to alter his voice in this manner, which in turn could mean I might not be the only one who wonders why this type of timbre has gained popularity in the last ten or twenty years. As mentioned in the analyses, there seems to have been a surge in the use of this type of timbre, which I can not find any obvious explanation for. Nevertheless, Hawkins wrote that when rock performers move beyond their real voice and into their false one, often meaning high pitched or falsetto, they were usually considered to express genuine emotion. It could be that this is why Rosenberg operates in this breathy, high pitched version of his voice, to display a more genuine emotional expression.

Moreover, if we recall figure 1, we know that even though we do not “vibe” with the timbre of a specific artist, we can still be affected by it. If we can imagine a stone being thrown into a lake, we clearly see the consequences of the stone landing in the water. Waves spread out from the point where the stone landed, and it continues without any limits, except where the wave meets the shore. The size of the waves are decided from the size of the stone, the strength of which it has been thrown, and from what distance. As the waves have gone through the lake, it has had an impact on all things in it. We can imagine that the same is true for music, either in a concert situation or through headphones or speakers in a listener's own living room. We can also think that our impact depends on the distance between us and the emotion expressed in the same way as being far away from where the stone initially landed in the lake. Which means that whether the listener resonates with the music or not, it will have affected the listener in one way or another. The artist might be able to change the production of the voice, high or low velocity, the distance from the microphone, even how the timbre sounds. However, this is perhaps where the “stone in a lake”-analogy ends. It might be difficult for the water/audience to understand which emotion was present or intended from the person who threw the stone, just by analyzing the distance of where the stone was thrown,

size of the stone and the size of the waves. But then again, the concept of timbre carrying the emotional expression through vibrations that resonate within the listener, might have just as many layers to it as the absolute impact a stone has on the lake it is thrown into.

Although my main task in this thesis is far from commenting on my likes or dislikes, I feel obliged to share how I was affected by the songs, and which physical and emotional impacts they might have had on me and why. Again, by sharing some of my personal experience of the songs, I hope to theorize about what it is that lies within or outside the music that affects us. The immediate response I had to Rosenberg's voice was that I did not like it, and I do not know why. The statement of "not liking" the song holds little information about Rosenberg's rendition of the song, or his ability to affect his audience. One explanation to this negative reaction, is that there might be some long time memories of mine that are semi-activated. These memories might be of a voice with a similar timbre, that I have had a negative experience with, which could explain why my initial response to his singing was negative.

Another explanation to my reaction is that I do not feel connected to his emotional expression. Maybe the combination of the semi-activated long term memories, and the knowledge that his talking voice was rather different from his singing voice, lead to a disconnect between his emotional expression and me identifying with it. It could be that because of these two factors, I registered his timbre as inauthentic. A third explanation to this particular situation could be that I can not produce this sound myself without straining my voice. While I was listening to his catalog to learn more about him and his way of singing, I felt the music affect me in a physical manner: I started to strain the muscles in my throat as if I was singing along, although I did not. It might be a little bit of a reach, but at least he did affect me to the degree where I had an empathetic response.

A fourth explanation as to why I rejected the sound of Rosenberg's timbre, could stem from my initial aversion to anything popular. It seems that enculturation affects us in all of our decisions, even the ones we might not be aware that we are making. I remember growing up in a small village, where the music my peers listened to was mostly trance and country. And just for that reason, I could not stand either of the genres. I had a hard time relating to my peers, and as a result I did not want to relate to any of the aspects that were related to them. As time passed, and I moved away from this village, I started listening to one country song here, and a trance song there, and I "excused" these guilty pleasures with thoughts such as

“they are not really country”, or “ it's closer to pop than it is trance”. Either way, I slowly started including songs from both of these genres into my daily playlists, finding myself less and less embarrassed by the fact. Fast forward to 2018, I was recording my first record and suddenly I was spellbound by the banjo. How could it be that I had been avoiding such a wonderful sound all my life? In this instance I would like to propose that as a teenager I tried my best to fight the notion of being a Norwegian redneck or country girl in any way. In other words, I tried to fight my enculturation. However, it seems as though it has caught up with me as I grew older. This situation made me question whether we are able to avoid a specific enculturation, or if we are bound to become a product of the time and place we grow up? Another question here is: If I was successful in avoiding those particular labels, would it not be because of my enculturation? That either way, the person I am today is a result of my enculturation.

Moreover, Sandu wrote that music could be a safe space for us. If this safe space is altered, then it could result in the same space feeling unsafe. Concerning “Fast Car”, I had found a safe space in Chapman’s version. I had heard it repeatedly, and felt like I knew the song and the story from start to finish. Later on when I heard Rosenberg’s rendition, I was taken aback. This might be because it felt like not only the song was changed, but perhaps the safe space I had felt within the voice of Chapman had been affected as well. My musical expectancy was not matched, and therefore I experienced some negative emotions towards Rosenberg’s version of the song. It could be that I felt like Rosenberg did not only change the song, but the memories and connections I had with the song prior to his version.

Through one of the aspects brought up by Eisenlohr, we fathom that it is easier to encourage people to understand what we are trying to convey if our physical expression matches the message. When we review the two different renditions of ‘Babe, I’m Gonna Leave You’, it is obvious that they have two very different ways of expressing melancholy. And perhaps the renditions help us understand that emotions can be linked and mixed with each other, as Eerola and Vuoskoski found. The tenderness in Baez’s rendition is vastly different from the somewhat chaotic rendition of the same song from Plant. Yet, we can feel the melancholy and desperation conveyed in both songs. Overall, if the way we express ourselves matches what we want to express, it is easier to convey the message to the audience in a manner they’ll understand. Also, if our expression matches the audience's expectations, it is more easily

received. This is another place where we can see that enculturation, musical expectancy, and our association interplay to aid in our comprehension of emotional expressions.

If a person has experienced melancholy earlier in life, and the body senses the same melancholic vibrations in the timbre of an artist, it could expect the entire song and its expression to be of the same melancholic vibrations it has felt before. Maybe this is why we are able to hear melancholy, even though the performances are different, and sometimes in languages we do not speak ourselves: because the melancholic vibrations stay the same, even though the expressions differ. If we recall, Eidsheim writes that the listeners vibrate on their own, which would support this idea. That when people are “vibing” to the music, it might be because the emotional vibrations in the music matches the emotional vibrations of their own bodies.

Before accepting this to be true, I want to submit the following questions. I had a discussion with a colleague of mine about children's ability to express complicated emotions through singing. And as we were talking, we came to the conclusion that children are able to express complicated emotions, but perhaps not in the same manner as an adult would. However, this reminded me of Angelina Jordan and her rendition of Gloomy Sunday (TV2 2014). How was it that she at age 7 was able to enchant the participants in Eidsheim's lecture with her young voice? Did the participants in Eidsheim's lecture believe her rendition of Gloomy Sunday because they thought they were listening to Billie Holiday? Does this mean that they experienced the melancholic vibes in Jordans voice? Or did they simply expect the voice to carry melancholy because they “knew” the singer to be Billie Holiday? Or is it possible that Jordan conveyed the melancholy in the song, even though she at age 7 might not have understood the full emotional expression of the song? This situation might also be an argument against the theory that we can convey emotion through the timbre in our voices. In the instance of Angelina Jordan and Gloomy Sunday, it might have been the audience's enculturation and their expectations towards a voice “like that”, that made them believe in the emotional experience which accompanied the song. Their musical expectancy “knew” who sang like that, and therefore they assumed it was Billie Holiday, who had lived about 19 years longer than Jordan when she released her rendition of the song. They might have assumed that the emotional expression in the song was authentic, because of what they knew about Billie Holiday in advance. This is an excellent example of how our enculturation has a massive influence on how we perceive timbre and the emotions conveyed through it. And it might

seem that we do not only assign bodies to the voices we hear, we assign certain histories and whole identities as well. Even though we might not know exactly why the artist has chosen a certain manner of expression.

As for the connection between text and timbre, I found that the artists alter their timbre according to what is happening in the text. When Chapman sings about escaping her current life at 0'25" - 0'38" she sounds more determined and hopeful, confident that the fast car is the solution to her current misery. At 3'34" - 3'38" we can hear the notion of resignation within the voice, as if she has admitted defeat. In a similar way, Rosenberg seems more determined at 0'20" - 0'41", but as the story unfolds it seems as if he loses hope, especially at 1'56" - 2'17" where we learn that the protagonist has to quit school to take care of the alcoholic father. The last words seem especially melancholic, and we hear Rosenberg close the story at 3'38" - 3'42", where he enhances the sad, almost bitter notion of having wasted his life.

Baez seems to vary this storytelling in her timbre within each verse. She starts each verse out strong, and fluctuates within the sentences. While we might be able to credit some of this to the use of dynamics, I still find that the emotional expression changes with the dynamics as well. Each time she finishes a verse (0'56" - 1'01", 1'28" - 1'34", 2'06" - 2'11"), it is as if she gives up. Except for the last verse at 2'45" - 2'54", where she seems to have a surge of determination before finishing the song and the conversation.

Out of these four artists, Plant is by far the one that takes full advantage of altering the emotional aspect of his timbre the most throughout the song itself. A prime example of this is at 3'26" - 3'34", when we hear three different emotional expressions within seconds. Moreover, as mentioned in the analyses, he starts off soft (0'14" - 0'23"), before he presents a more resolute notion that grows throughout the song. He plays with dynamics in a drastic manner, and yet his voice is brimful of emotions still. Where Chapman, Rosenberg and Baez lose hope, it seems Plant finds desperation and ability to take action. However, his rendition of 'Babe, I'm Gonna Leave You' has to come to an end as well. And as he finishes the song (5'59" - 6'30"), it seems as if he is in between giving up and welcoming the end. It does not seem as disheartened as the others final notes.

Furthermore, when researching why we chose to listen to a certain type of music, one element resurfaced time and again: our longing for community. As Sandu wrote, when we listen to

music we can identify with the values that are expressed. Oftentimes we might also choose the music we listen to based on how we are feeling, either to enhance or soothe them. It is not too much of an assumption to write that we might be drawn to the voices of artists that convey a story that is close to our own. And if this story surfaces not only through words, but through the emotional expression in their timbre as well, it is another reason that we might be drawn to listen to music that exhibits the same emotions that we feel. And by recognizing that other people who listen to the same music as ourselves might feel the same connection to the music and the values expressed, we are able to form a connection to our fellow listeners. This connection with our co-audience could also bring with it musically-scaffolded functional gain, as Krueger put it, allowing us to expand on our empathic response so that it concerns others than ourselves and our inner circle.

This longing to be part of a musical community could be traced back to our search for our own identity. Taylor wrote that the sounds we make are a part of our identity, and we can develop this notion and say that we use music in various ways, where one is to identify ourselves. We reflect around the themes and the musical qualities, and choose which ones that represent us or how we are feeling. Or perhaps we find features either within the musical or the visual expressions of an artist, which helps us confirm what and how we feel, in addition to who we feel like. In the early stages of our musical journey, say as teenagers, we might seek out music that represents something we find cool or gives us status of sorts. However, as we find stability in who we are as individuals, this usually changes. As we grow, our musical taste evolves, and we might seek out music that gives us energy and supports our emotions instead of chasing an image. This does not mean that we no longer seek out music to be part of a community. Even though we might have found community through our early musical endeavors, we could still seek out live performances or listen to music with our friends to strengthen those relationships, or to find new ones. Through music we choose to be part of a whole, something bigger than us, separately. And in these settings we might be able to receive the messages from the artists, magnified. Because when we are in a live setting, the music frequencies vibrate not with just one person, but with the whole community that came out to see that artist and listen to their voice, their expression. And therefore, it could be that we feel our emotions enhanced, elevated in such an environment. This means that when we hear 'Fast Car' or 'Babe I'm gonna leave you' with a larger group, we might not only connect with the vibrations from the song itself, but from the people surrounding us as well.

We can imagine that this is true for the state of melancholy as well. If we find music that expresses our melancholic state, we might find comfort in the music itself, and as an extension of this we might be able to find comfort in the people that resonate with the same melancholic music as ourselves. Drawing upon the theory from Eidsheim, we can imagine that in a concert setting, this feeling of community is not only created by the artist, but by the audience as well. Whether the concert venue is packed or not, I believe it is just to assume that the audience affects each other to some degree. While receiving the vibrations from the timbre of the voice of the artist, the audience might also “vibe” with each other. Again, creating a stronger sense of community and enhancing the emotional experience and feeling of togetherness.

In these particular sonic examples, we can see that it might be possible to convey the same message through different expressions. And that by doing so, the message can reach a greater audience. When songs are rerecorded by another artist than the one who had the original version, a new perspective of the conveyed story could reveal itself. Now, one thing that is interesting in the songs that are chosen for this thesis, is that although they are rooted in the folk tradition and share similarities both in themes and expression, they most likely target different audiences. These different audiences also represent different communities, which means that the melancholic message of the song reaches a large audience. The artists help create communities and arenas where people can tap into their emotions and share them with others. I believe this is quite clear in the songs chosen for this thesis, and perhaps in particular the renditions of ‘Babe I’m Gonna Leave You’. The subgenres are miles apart, therefore we can imagine that there are two very different audiences who are given a chance to connect with themselves and others through the music. Either way the songs offer a chance of comfort and community, a place to recognize something in themselves, outside themselves.

Through singing about different situations where one can feel melancholic, emotions can be expressed and shared. For people singing along to songs that convey a message of melancholy, sadness or loss of hope, it could be a chance to open up without necessarily being vulnerable. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we tend to venerate artists, and hold them up as idols, as they are able to do what many are not: Being raw, authentic and expressing a whole range of emotions that we usually might preserve for our closest relations, if anyone at all. The artists in this thesis express melancholy in some way through their voice. They all have different ways of expressing themselves, as their enculturation and their voices are

unique. Yet, we as an audience are able to understand, without needing to enter into detailed analysis, that there is sadness and isolation present in the songs. Moreover, seeing that all humans go through rough times at one point or another, the songs maintain their relevance. They give the audience a chance to open up and vibe with both the songs and the other people who are drawn to the same music.

When investigating the reasons for why these songs gained recognition at the time of their release, I found that there were multiple reasons why the audience would relate to songs about loss of hope, melancholy and having to do things you do not want to do. As we know the artists either grew up in or have experience with tense political climates, bearing in mind the cold war, and the increasing involvement from the U.S.A and Trump's presidency. In addition they all faced their own personal challenges such as racial issues, drug abuse, and living hand to mouth. When we accept the vibrational practices as true, we can see a clear line between these intense experiences by the artists, and their ability to express melancholy through their voices. And seeing that many themes in the artist's lives are issues that impact a larger part of the population, we can understand that many listeners were affected by the message.

Once we understand that the artists express themselves in an authentic manner, and that they reveal their vulnerability through showing how they have been affected by experiences through their lives, we believe the emotional messages they express. One of the more curious aspects of the renditions is that even though some of the lyrics have changed, the melancholy has been preserved. I believe it is plausible to say that Rosenberg has changed the story in "Fast Car" quite a bit. Although he has kept the essence, which is longing to escape a current life and the notion that hope is lost, he has still peeled away some of the images that might trigger an empathic response in the audience. On one hand we could argue that this makes the song less relatable, because the concrete situations described take less effort to identify with. On the other hand, it could actually make the song even more relatable, because some of the images might only be relatable to a smaller part of the population. Whilst keeping the essence and still expressing melancholy, more people might be able to find comfort and a safe space in Rosenberg's rendition of the song.

One of the themes that surfaced during the analyses, is that timbre can be confusing, not only in regards to definition or what it means for our emotional expression, but regarding gender as well. It seems we are more prone to perceive lower pitched timbre as masculine, and higher

pitched timbre as feminine. This is most likely why Chapman's and Rosenberg's gender has been questioned. This notion brings up several questions to me, such as: Do we believe the story of giving up one's own life to support one's father more when it is told by Chapman, who is a woman, compared to Rosenberg who is a man? Is this why he has changed the lyrics in his rendition? These questions open up for an inquiry on if gender expression is important to us when we listen to music. Is it important that we hear stories about various scenarios told by someone we can identify with? Is it only the identity of the timbre in an artist's voice that is important in this case, or would the visual expression of the artist matter as well? And does this only concern gender, or will the general enculturation make a difference relating to the emotional expression of an artist? Perhaps this will change in tact with the expansion of our understanding of gender.

One thing that was surprising to me was that people questioned the gender of Rosenberg. Although I found his timbre odd at first, I never questioned his gender. It might be because I saw photos or videos of him at the same time as I heard his music. However, when I first heard Chapman's voice as a teenager, I was unsure as to who I was listening to. Here we return to what Frith writes about assigning bodies to voices we have not heard earlier. It might be that our need to conjure images of the voices we hear are linked to our need to define who we are in correlation to those voices. We might even feel proud to be assimilated with certain people because of their status or qualities. A question that would be interesting to answer is why I was hesitant about Chapman's gender in the first place. And is there really something that is a masculine or a feminine voice? What would define it? Again, timbre's elusive nature reveals itself, and does not seem to provide any specific answers.

5.0 Closing thoughts and future research ideas

Nearing the end of this thesis, I realize I am left with more questions than I had when I first started out. I set out to research if enculturation would affect a listener's experience of melancholy in folk music, and whether timbre could help us understand enculturation. I started this research because I was intrigued by how we express and experience emotions through voices, sometimes without even knowing it ourselves. My initial intention was to contribute to the field of music psychology, and I discovered intriguing studies on music as a vibrational practice along the way.

I have sought to open up a new area of inquiry, looking at melancholy, enculturation and timbre in folk music voices. By doing so I have been able to link some theoretical perspectives together, which seem to have an innate connection. The several psychological perspectives seem closely related, and join together in their affect on how we perceive music and voices in particular.

In this thesis I have theorized about timbre as a main carrier of melancholy in four folk songs. As we have read, there are several factors that contribute to our understanding of melancholy, both consciously and subconsciously. However, it seems as though these factors interplay, and enhance each other and our perception of not only melancholy, but all emotions. I set out to find if melancholy could be traced in the timbre of these artists' voices. And I found it. If I set out to find traces of another emotion than melancholy in the same songs, would I find it? If we are to accept the theory of music as a vibrational practice, the answer to this would be yes. I would most likely find traces of other emotions as well, especially if there was a trace of an emotion I had previously experienced myself. And it has become clear that our enculturation runs deep. It seems as if enculturation encapsulates several concepts: We have been taught to hear specific timbres in certain ways, and expect particular bodies and stories to be told through these specific timbres.

Through theorizing about music as a vibrational practice and how it affects its audience with timbre as the main emotional carrier, I found that melancholy can be expressed in different manners through it. Even with a gap in genre and overall expression, like Joan Baez and Robert Plant with Led Zeppelin, the message of desolation and sadness came through. The reason seems to be a product of our enculturation, and that the psychological aspects

presented in this thesis, such as evaluative conditioning, musical expectancy and our individual potential to feel empathetic towards our fellow human beings, is a great part of it. If we recall figure 1, we might understand enculturation as an umbrella term that covers all of these psychological concepts, seeing as they are so interlinked with each other. The schemas we adopt as we grow, form our experiences, and in turn our experiences develop our schemas. Enculturation seems to be the answer to why we accept or prefer some voices over others, and as a result there might never be one answer as to why a larger group of people enjoy the same music or voice. Unless that answer is that it is unique and individual to each and every one of them. The words we use to describe our emotions can be considered as general labels to express how we feel. By extension the sounds expressed through these words can enhance their meaning and provide us with the possibility to find comfort not only in the text, but by connecting to the emotional vibrations in the timbre. And again, if we are affected by the emotional vibrations in a voice, it might make it easier for us to have an empathic response and relate to others.

There are several branches of interest to study further; for example, why do we prefer some voices over others? It would also have been interesting to perform the same study on people from different parts of the world, to see if enculturation alters how we perceive timbre and the emotions expressed through it. Also, if mothers from diverse places in the world heard a child cry, would they all hear the same emotion expressed? Or is this perhaps an ability that is limited to their own children? Moreover, would the mothers be able to hear the change in emotion in teenagers, young adults and adults? And if this special ability is constrained to mothers? Would fathers be able to find the same emotional expressions? And what about people without children? Furthermore, does our perception of timbre change depending not only on where we grew up, but on *when* we grew up? If we were to ask people of different ages, would they provide different answers as to the emotions expressed through timbre? The mystery of timbre is enchanting to me, largely because its nature is so elusive and hard to define.

From what I have found in the theory and analyses, it seems plausible that an artist can choose to some degree which emotion they want to express through their timbre. However, if we were to believe the story of Fan Xiulan, it might be that there are certain aspects of our bodily expressions that we can not hide, even if we want to. The layers of our voice, and perhaps the

notion of timbre having multiple layers as well might be an answer as to why some are more prone to picking up on changes in other peoples timbre, be it artists, children or others.

Another peculiarity that I sought to investigate was how the melancholic message of a song could remain relevant throughout the years. This was perhaps a question that is easier to answer than many others I have asked in this thesis. While both global and personal situations change, and our standards for what is considered to be a good life fluctuate, our disposition to live a rich emotional life is somewhat constant. A large part of the population will at one point or another throughout their lives, experience melancholy. Which in turn means that music that expresses this emotion genuinely will continue to be engaging and hold affective value in people's lives.

A question that arose during this thesis is whether people that choose to listen to melancholic music listen to it because they need the support it might give them? That they are unable to express themselves adequately, and the melancholic music gives them a place to release their feelings, when there is nowhere else to seek deliverance? And do the people who choose happy music *know* that it will lift their mood? Moreover, could happy music be “prescribed” to those who usually choose melancholic music, so that they might escape their melancholic emotions? And does this apply to all emotions? Perhaps the musical experience would only serve us so far, as to enable us to get in touch with our feelings. However, if we do not receive some guidance as for how to handle the feelings that emerge, it could be possible that we would not be any further along.

Furthermore, does the pain we hear or feel in music originate from pain we have experienced prior to listening to a specific song? Is it possible that we inherit an emotional susceptibility from our parents? Meaning, that if any of my ancestors experienced melancholy to a great degree during their lives, would I be more susceptible to it during my lifetime? Or would this only be decided by my perception of the events that occurred in my life? The reason this question arose is that we know of many other instincts that have helped us evolve as a species. And perhaps our emotions are similar to instinct, as they inform us of irregularities from the norm. If we feel rewarded when we complete a task, we would be more inclined to repeat that task. When the feeling is of negative notion, we might avoid repeating a task. This comes back to our conditioning, meaning that our emotions could be considered guides as to what we should and should not do to experience a comfortable or at least pain free life. However,

by this line of thought it would seem futile to listen to songs that carry negative emotions, as it would lead us to an unpleasant experience. But then again, while it might trigger our negative emotions, it could also provide release of these emotions, which in turn could lead to feeling better.

Again, timbre is influenced by our enculturation. It seems that artists adjust their voices to fit the time, the genre, the desired emotional expression, as well as the expectations of the audience. Although there is a difference between the singing and talking voices of all the artists that were analyzed for this thesis, I believe Rosenberg stood out in particular, and serves as an excellent example of how much artists can alter their voices and still convey a strong, authentic emotional expression. There are features in his voice that are more pronounced than in the other artists' voices, that perhaps enhances the stylization of the time when he first started to release songs. In regards to alteration of timbre and the ability to express emotions, it would have been interesting to analyze songs within other genres as well, especially genres such as metal and hyperpop. The singing technique in metal is quite the contrast compared to the ones used by the voices we have analyzed in this thesis, and would make for intriguing case studies as well. The same can be said for hyperpop, where the use of autotune is extensive. Would we be able to find the same type of authenticity and emotional expression in these genres? From what Plant demonstrated, intimacy can be created in more ways than one, which leads me to believe that these genres offer a safe space and emotional outlet for its audience as well.

While I have sought to refrain from letting my own opinions of the artists or the songs cloud the results of my analyses, it has been difficult at times. The reason for this is that many of my perceptions and reactions are rooted in my own enculturation. This has led to me not analyzing the songs and the timbre, but also my own opinions concerning the timbre of the artists and their ability to convey emotion through timbre. It seems that enculturation is a much broader term than I first knew it to be, and I feel that to some extent I have needed to update my cognitive schemas many times throughout the writing process, to fully comprehend the concepts this thesis concerns. By analyzing these songs and the emotional expressions of the artists, I have discovered new things about myself and how I experience music. I have gained more insight into why I experience music the way I do.

From this brief study it could seem as if timbre has an active role in the narration of the songs,

and is in fact a carrier of emotions. Through this study we have seen that although timbre might differ, we can still detect melancholy in the various voices. However, it seems as though there are multiple layers to the voice, and perhaps to timbre as well, that we have not yet been able to distinguish from each other. This could be why, when we listen to a voice and try to analyze what makes one different from another, we are left with inadequate words and explanations, which is probably why it is so difficult to provide a clear answer as to exactly what timbre is.

When I began developing research questions for this thesis I was more concerned with context than enculturation. And while I have been able to address some of the questions, I can not say I have found definitive answers to them all. It seems that the context of music listening clearly has a significant impact on our listening experience. Again, if we are to accept music as a vibrational practice, we could perhaps notice that our emotions are enhanced when we experience music together with others. This could be because we feel a stronger connection to the artist and to those surrounding us, as a result of our empathic responses kicking in. This might lead to us feeling *with* the rest of the audience, in addition to our own emotions. If this is the case, it could seem as if our own emotions are enhanced, and perhaps it means that it is easier for us to experience the emotions expressed through the timbre of the artist's voice in these situations.

It could also explain why sometimes when we enter a room, we instantly receive a feeling concerning what the overall “vibes” are. We often refer to this phenomenon as atmospheres, and as we learned in this text, artists are often preoccupied by creating certain atmospheres to capture the attention of their audience. If we recall the opening example of the funeral and the Irish hymn, we might imagine that there was a certain atmosphere in the church. And there are several reasons as to why those who came to the funeral felt grief: First, the loss of loved ones would stir up emotion in itself. Second, a funeral could evoke emotions connected to funerals they had attended previously in their lives. Third, the people that attended the funeral either consciously or subconsciously brought with them their own sorrow. Now, because most humans feel empathy towards other beings, we can imagine that when the participants of this funeral entered the small church, they walked into a mixture of emotions, like grief, comfort, sadness, melancholy, compassion and love. And perhaps the timbre in my voice as I sang the Irish hymn expressed exactly that: a combination of many different emotions. And seeing that our schemas change over time, and that our memories change over time, it would be

interesting to investigate if this experience would be possible to detect in my voice if I were to sing this hymn again. Perhaps Fan Xiulan would be able to hear it.

Finally, my analyses and discussions of the literature, and theories connected to timbre, melancholy and enculturation, and discussions of various ideas in this dissertation, all support the hypothesis that timbre does affect how we experience the aesthetic result. The degree of impact might be individual, as it seems we are all affected by our enculturation first and foremost. As figure 1 suggests enculturation functions as a filter that we experience the emotional expressions of timbre through. And the reason why the meaning of music differs from individual to individual seems to be a result of our enculturation. Certain types of timbre will have a larger impact on one person than another, because of their previous experiences with similar types of timbre. This seems to be a reason as to why someone might feel or “vibe” more with the melancholy in one song than others do.

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7.0 Discography

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