On Being Silenced and Breaking Cycles

Deliberating Patters of Violence in Tori Amos' Works

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Abstract: *While her experiencing forms of violence has inspired Tori Amos to write, her works can be conceived of as forms of defiance. She tells us stories about domestic, political, and environmental violence, about rape and miscarriage – as well as matriarchal power. Many of the topics she addresses in her songs and memoirs are tabooed. Perceiving her as lacking the authority to speak up, (self-proclaimed) authorities have repeatedly tried to silence the singer-songwriter. Above all, popular culture and stories told through music trans-/form and become part of our embodied affective makeup, knowledge, and resistance. Pieces of music become pieces of our identities and (hi-)stories. However, whose, what, and when stories are told – or remain untold – depends on social, cultural, and historical frameworks, on the dominant perspective of the authors and authorities. In patriarchal, capitalistic, and (post)colonial systems, patterns of violence and the "economy of credibility" (Fricker 2007, 1) still affect the identities of the others, e.g. those perceived as female and/or past the age of childbearing, much more adversely than the norms, e.g. cisgender and/or siring men. Amos' thematising different form of violence and gender-based discrimination can be conceived of as defying these embodied audio-visual hierarchies and as breaking cycles of abuse. Her breaking her own silence has re-/created relatability and connections among allies. It has fostered interrelationships between her and her audiences, among members of imagined communities who feel represented through her voice and in their shared (hi)stories.*

Keywords: *pop music; lived experience; storytelling; domestic violence; patterns of violence; Otherness; abuse cycles; resistance; epistemic injustice; embodied audio-visual hierarchies*

Introduction – "And Become All That They Told You"[1]

The voice in "Girl" (1992) wonders if perhaps, someday, after being "everybody else's girl," "she will be her own" (Amos 2020, 36). When Tori Amos elaborates on the "birth" of this song she describes "her" as "not just" "[applying to]" "a young woman's story" (2020, 37–38). The singer-song-writer explains that this "Song Being" is relevant to "anyone" "committing" themselves "to stop being the person someone else needs, demands, or seduces them to be or intimidates them into becoming" (Amos 2020, 37–38). And "[w]hether we become 'this me' to deflect conflict or to stave off rejection, we have all morphed into 'the me' someone else wants us to be" (Amos 2020, 37). With this piece of music, Amos (2020) sketches the power dynamics between "masters" and those whom they perceive as "[pets]" (37). These "masters" "know that people can be trained", "[e]ither with praise, shame, the fear of failure, or the fear of being gaslighted" (Amos 2020, 37). In the end, "[t]his kind of relationship" is "not about joint respectful mutual conditions", it is "all about the master's conditions" (Amos 2020, 37). "[T]he technique is a relationship of rewards and punishments," and "there is no unconditional love" (Amos 2020, 37). Amos asserts, "The mantra of 'Girl'" is "become [your] own owner," "[your] own authority" and "home," find your own "way to live what [you] believe" (2020, 37).

With "Girl", Amos does not depict human relationships or hierarchies based on mutual regard and appreciation. She describes and critiques the abuse of power, the abuse of positions of trust. In many of her songs and chapters of her memoir *Resistance* (2020), she delineates what can be read as distinctive elements of patterns of violence (Norfolk City Council 2022). The concepts of *gender* and (forms of) *violence* define

1 "Girl" (Amos 2020, 36)

her works time and time again. So, I feel it is worthwhile to deliberate what meanings these representations of violence and gender in popular music re-/create, in other words, what these "stories can tell us about our wider social locations that are at once personal, political, local, and global" (Sheperd 2013, 2).

From a broader perspective, the individuals that Amos calls "masters" in "Girl" can be conceived of as abusive human beings and institutions. These commonly hide behind the facade of the dedicated parent or partner, the benevolent friend, the honourable member of the community, the righteous clergyman or politician, the philanthropic CEO – the morally superior (self-proclaimed) authority. It might be the allegedly ethical teacher, supervisor, or the "white coats" (Amos 2020, 35, 36). A crucial element of patterns of violence is the destruction of the abused person's sense of self, be it as part of what we might regard as epistemic, medical, or sexual violence. It can be perceived as a progressing annihilation and violence de-/forming a person's individuality from the outside and the inside. Generally, individual harmful bonds and the compliance of those who are being abused might be conceptualised as reflected in and as re-/enforced by structural violence. The obedience and conformity are often based on financial dependency, the fear of humiliation and social stigma, but also a lack of bodily autonomy and an eroded sense of self. Amos' song "Girl" can be regarded as reminiscent of and as mirroring these power dynamics in fragments. Within actual and/or perceived states of dependency, such as power imbalances re-/generated by our patriarchal, capitalistic, and (post-)colonial systems, as part of 'gaslighting' manoeuvres, survivors are taught to doubt their bodily experience/s, their agency, and social value (Amos 2020, 37). All the while, they are trained not to trust others, not to speak of the violence and deception. As the abused are being silenced, they silence themselves. And as they lose their sense of self, they become the identities that the abusive individual and/or society need them to be, namely human beings that neither value, nor own themselves (Amos 2020, 37).

Patriarchy, capitalism and (post)colonialism beget, nurture, and manifest in lopsided binary systems, devaluation, and exploitation. These systems feed on segregation and confinements. On the micro,

meso and macro level, they thrive on manifold forms of violence. And their organisations derive from the mindsets and dispositions of their parental, corporate, and governmental authorities. Forms of violence, including colonial, economic, political, psychological, emotional, reproductive, and/or physical violence, and all of the inherent processes leave a lasting mark on a person's perceived identity. By the means of triangulation and smear campaigns, abusers and those who side with them – often to benefit on a financial or emotional level – deny the survivors' cognitive and/or bodily abilities. As part of projection, i.e. the attribution of their own feelings and/or attitudes to other people, an abusive person and/or society might deny the other people's humanness, intelligence, integrity, and credibility. Furthermore, they re-/present alleged lacks thereof in public (Nussbaum 2004, 75, 111, 129, 341; Fricker 2007, 1). Oftentimes, the degradation is facilitated and justified by infantilisation, pathologisation, and criminalisation. These reinforce perceived Otherness that is un-/consciously re-/constructed with discursive practices and categories such as *gender*, *age*, *race*, *class*, and/or *sexual orientation*. The deceptive re-/presentations and one-sided narratives are tantamount to pre-convictions and, at the same time, within cyclic systems, re-victimise those who have been enduring the violence. They are repeatedly subjected to ridicule and/or threats. Such tactics are part of everyday as well as institutional, for instance moral, medical, and legal discourses and practices (Amos 2020, 36, 119, 128). They all re-/generate divisions, the survivors' disrepute and isolation, as well as lacks of knowledge on the diverse manifestations of abuse. Moreover, through the use of physical and psychological confinements, physical force, neglect, the silent treatment – and/or, on a social level, symbolic annihilation – the abused experience their *selves* being repeatedly devalued and eliminated. These methods also re-/generate lacks of self-/representations, a lack of diverse stories and, thus, a "gap" in "collective hermeneutical resources" (Fricker 2007, 6, 151). *Au fond*, as part of individual violence as well as forms of systemic discrimination, an abusive person as well as abusive institutions divide and sow doubt among the members of their communities who could become allies and question the abuse of power.

There is an intra-personal effect as well, though. Aforementioned forms of violence condition those who are violated to see themselves through the abusers' eyes and from their perspective. This way, our (social) sanctioning measures beget, nurture, and manifest in the survivors' shame, fear, and alienation time and time again. Since these experiences are internalised and embodied, they often become enduring forms of self-judgement, but also self-punishment and dissociation. It seems, in public view, the abused disappear "in a prison behind [their] eyes" (Amos 2020, 49). All of these aspects influence how they confine themselves, how they conceive of their scope, their mental and/or legal power in our societies. In the end, these manoeuvres permanently affect their self-definition, visibility, and self-representations. And while bodily experience/s such as shame and fear seem to be the most affective elements of our (eventually) embodied power structures, they constitute effective elements of abuse cycles as well (Norfolk City Council 2022).

By and large, relationships in-/formed by abuse cycles can be regarded as self-sustaining and self-justifying. Whereas the "masters'" excuses might alternate, abusive people habitually rewrite history. They select, eliminate, and re-/present events, individuals, and groups in ways that suit their current purposes (Amos 2020, 37). They manage to convince the survivors and others that the abuse either never happened, or that it is not as harmful as those who have actually been harmed perceive it. Violators often play the victim and accuse the abused to be guilty of alleged (sexual) provocations, of lying, and/or irrational behaviour. Above all else, what Amos describes as a "technique," i.e. "a relationship of rewards and punishments" (Amos 2020, 37) can be understood as a cyclic system, a pattern of very different but repetitive phases. In phases of relative calm, some violent individuals and/or institutions might appear to have changed. Some oppressors make concessions. They seem protective and caring. They might grant, now and then, (short-lived) privileges. They also apologise to re-/gain trust and reenforce the bond between the abusers and the survivors. Then, however, the tension builds up and another phase of restrictions, cruelty, and escalating conflicts begins. Rarely do violent people's ill-concealed entitlement and contempt for the abused change. Rarely do their manipulation and

behaviour patterns change. More importantly, patterns of violence are difficult to discern. Remarkably enough, it is usually the abused breaking their silence and challenging the abusers' conduct that is perceived as causing disruptions and harm. In a general sense, it is the reaction to the violence that is represented as problematic – not the violence itself.

Not only since the phenomenon of the *#metoo* movement, we must assume that an entertainment and music industry dominated by male authorities, by men focusing on the (young) male gaze and address, re-/generates aforementioned power imbalances and silences. On another level, popular music, song lyrics, and music videos constitute highly effective elements of our power structures as well. They feature and can contribute to our (personal) embodied (hi)stories. Within cyclic systems, the music industry and pop songs incorporate and circulate narratives that re-/generate and normalise, e.g., epistemic and physical violence. Within cycles of profit, they perpetuate and vivify colonial and sexual violence. Thereby, as elements of our patriarchal, capitalist, and (post)colonial systems, they have contributed to systemic discrimination. On an interpersonal and an intra-personal level, they re-/produce systemic violence, i.e. violence that affects our bodies and that is fundamental to our everyday and institutional, e.g. economic, social, and political practices and discourses. All of which appear to re-/form and deform our individual and social bodies. Basically, even (self-proclaimed) authorities in the popular music business, as part of these structures, appear to re-/create and stage the desired stories and desirable bodies.

(Hi)Stories, bodies, and power structures can be reclaimed, though. Becoming aware of the patterns of abusive relationships, we can reclaim the very same elements of our power structures that seem to embrace one-sided stories and fabrics of violence, such as sexism, racism, and ageism. We can use the same social institutions to challenge limited perspectives and those who control our narratives. Many of us have been questioning our (hi)stories and ideals, the re-/enforced invisibility and silence of the identities that our societies seem so anxious to hide and *keep in their place.* By now, there is a growing and impressive body of literature that centres around the "relationship between age, women and

popular music" and, thereby, "the achievements of older women in the sphere of popular music" (Jennings and Gardner 2012, 1–2). Numerous works have extensively discussed "the gendered nature of the music industry", the inherent "power dimensions, [the] role and representations of women" (Jennings and Gardner 2012, 2 quto. Whiteley 1997). Moreover, ground-breaking analyses of rather specific performative strategies and relationships between musicians and their fan-bases have illustrated diverse forms of resistance (Jennings and Gardner 2012, 2). Madonna's videos, for example, have been described as "a key site in both the struggle for *self-representation* within the hegemonic space of MTV and an important space for *female identification* within the already overcrowded marketplace for texts that adopt a male adolescent address" (Watson and Railton 2012, 141–142, authors' emphasis). Her perceived transgressions in terms of allegedly gender- and/or age-appropriate behaviour and binary systems such as "male/female, high art/pop art […], private/public" can be interpreted as forms of resistance to the hegemonic ideals, discourses and social practices encompassed by our power structures (Watson and Railton 2012, 141, citing Kaplan 1987, 126). Other but not dissimilar forms of resistance to stereotypical views and (discursive) practices can be discerned in the works of Tori Amos. Her chosen vulnerability, self-representations, and ongoing processes of self-definition defy the silencing measures from which violent individuals and systems appear to benefit. She empowers her audiences by defying the eliminating processes that, e.g., sexism and ageism re-/enforce.

In my deliberations, Amos' ageing as an element of her perceived identity, her emotional makeup and accumulated knowledge, cannot but must be understood as having affected her embodying and telling of (musical) stories. Her ageing as well as intergenerational experiences, e.g., her daughter's and her mother's (hi)stories are part of her own (hi)story. In this chapter, her ageing, i.e. ageing as a potential factor determining the artist's appearance/s as such will fade into the background, though. I focus on Amos' representations of violence, namely violence that is, more often than not, related to gender and rooted in power imbalances characterising our relationships on a micro,

meso, and macro level. It is violence based on and justified by forms of perceived Otherness, i.e. a social construct and potpourri of (bodily) attributes and differences that have a negative connotation. More precisely, my objective is to show how Amos' sharing her experiences with gender-based violence in pop music empowers –- and re-/generates affective connections among – the musician and her audiences. As a rule, in pop music, "many women […] simply disappear from public view after their moment of fame has passed, leaving behind only an imprint of their youthful selves on the cultural memory" (Watson and Railton 2012, 139). Amos, however, despite a looming and generally widespread age-related invisibility and silence of female artists in the music industry, has spoken up time and time again. She has shed light on forms and patterns of violence. In doing so, she has broken the silence not only for herself, but for and with other generations.

Sharing (Hi)Stories of Violence

"'You survived post-menopause […]. You need to tell that story so that my future doesn't look like defeat'" (Amos in Marchese 2017). Caring nudges such as this comment by her then-teenage daughter, her own embodied trauma, as well as her mother's losing her voice after a stroke have inspired Tori Amos to use her voice for herself and for others. Hoping that, one day, "more women of more ages" will be heard, she knows that this will only happen if "women's stories of experience" are deemed "something we want to hear," though (Amos in Marchese 2017). The artist's more than fifteen albums and two memoirs comprise stories about ideals of beauty, about rape, miscarriage, environmental and political violence, the boy's club of the music industry, ageing – and matriarchal power (Marchese 2017). Many of the issues that the singer thematises are taboos, stigmatised and, thus, considered as *uncomfortable*. She has addressed misogyny, homophobia, and racism inside and outside the entertainment industry. In turn, "the fans reflect things back at [her] that make [her] realize they want to talk about the same emotions and issues [she] [wants] to talk about" (Amos in Marchese

2017). Amos reads their "letters" and "[learns] how people see the world," namely through "many different perspectives" (Amos in Marchese 2017). And she recounts that her audiences' powerful (hi)stories have informed her song-writing (Amos 2020, 135). In the more than five decades of her life, however, often regarded as having agency but not the authority to speak up, the artist has been assaulted, ridiculed, and rejected. She has been silenced, by our societies in general, by record companies and the music press in particular.

I could not do justice to Amos' extensive body of artwork within the limited scope of this chapter – if at all. Therefore, as mentioned before, my delineations do not focus on one of her songs or her memoir *Resistance* (2020) in its entirety either. Instead, centring around forms of resistance to gender-based violence on a micro level, my considerations are meant to sketch how Amos' describing forms and patterns of violence in her music and literature can be regarded as a means of personal *and* political defiance. To put it another way, her work can be conceived of as filling "gaps in collective hermeneutical resources" (Fricker 2007, 6). Drawing on elements of Miranda Fricker's conceptual framework of "epistemic injustice", I consider how Amos' sharing her lived experience with violence has established relations among members of imagined communities (2007, 1). These seem to feel understood as well as represented by Amos – and in their shared (hi)stories. Albeit potentially painful, the artist choses to become vulnerable through her pieces of music and writing. And her breaking her silence has encouraged others to share their own embodied (hi)stories of violence.

Miranda Fricker understands *collective hermeneutical resources* as a body of shared meanings that societies produce, not only to understand their own experiences, but also to express and share their understandings with other human beings (2007, 147–148). What she describes as "gaps" in our "hermeneutical resources", i.e. "in our shared tools of social interpretation", re-/create "cognitive [disadvantages]", and it is "no accident that these disadvantages "[impinge] unequally on different social groups" (2007, 6, 151). In an echo of Foucault's theories on order, discourses, and practices, we can assume that, due to one-sided narratives and trans-generational hierarchies, a society's shared meanings –

in other words, our (hi)stories – are mainly produced by and predominately benefit its powerful members (Foucault 1980, 93; Foucault 1995, 140, 170–171, 191, 217). In patriarchy, capitalism, and (post-)colonialism, these are mostly the human *norms* and, thereby, e.g., male, heterosexual, and/or white authorities.

Particularly religious, medical, and colonial discourses have created stories centred around metaphorical concepts, namely narratives that depict, e.g., female, colonised, and homosexual characters conceptualised as the sinful, irrational, dangerous, and/or less-than-human *others*. If they are re-/presented at all. In the same vein as these institutional discourses, stories told through music become part of and trans-/form our affective makeup and accumulated knowledge. As we get to know, establish an emotional connection with, and embody pieces of music, melodies and lyrics can become part of our selves and our (hi)stories. However, for one thing, when, whose, and what kind of stories are told – or remain untold – depends on social, cultural, and historical frameworks, on the privileged perspective of the authors and (self-proclaimed) authorities. In general, these conditions seem to be re-/produced by *embodied audio-visual hierarchies*. For another thing, if authors and their stories are considered as valuable, reliable, and credible is dependent on our belief, value, and evaluative systems. In western societies, patterns of violence and the "economy of credibility" (Fricker 2007, 1) still affect *the others*, for instance those perceived as female, non-western, transgender, and/or past the age of childbearing, much more adversely than the authorities that are mostly constituted by *the norms*, e.g. male, cisgender, and siring colonisers.

In my mind, we experience embodied audio-visual hierarchies, e.g., within public hierarchical structures as they re-/generate and are manifested in the number and percentage, the spacial position, the scope, but also the perceived status of human beings. They illustrate our social orders. As they show us, quite plainly, who has the authority to speak, the right to be heard and listened to, they convey who is allowed to become and remain audible and visible. I conceptualise these self-replicating and multimodal organisational structures as a product and a manifestation of the interrelations among implicit perceptions. At the

same time, they appeal to multiple senses in turn. Basically, embodied audio-visual hierarchies are part and parcel of authorship and visibility. They co-/produce our epistemological and ontological frameworks; they co-/create our belief, value, and evaluative systems. They also rely on the effect of the disciplining, medical, and/or colonial gaze (Foucault 2003, 29, 48, 54; Foucault 1995,143, 154, 170). We perceive these impressive power dynamics at home, at the hospital, school, and university, in a conference room, in parliament and church, in the food service industry and the health care sector. We seem to internalise them through and via an ever-growing multi-layered fabric of diverse *percepts*, e.g. through and via our sensations, emotions that we recognise in others, objects and phenomena that we perceive, but also (metaphorical) concepts in our minds, i.e. concepts that rely on and revive (culture-specific) values and interpretations (Niehus-Kettler 2022).[2] Hence, we experience and embody our power structures in the blink of an eye, in the course of our lifetime, and over generations. Inevitably, embodied audio-visual hierarchies manifest in the identities of our authorities and condition the identities of the authors of and protagonists in medical, political, and legal discourses. They also effect and are affected by lacks of diverse perspectives, lacks of self-definitions and self-/representations in media reports, the literary canon, in films – and in popular music. Above all

2 The different meanings and conceptualisations of 'percept' are highly dependent on which discipline defines the term, e.g. philosophy, psychology, or linguistics (Lyons 2017). To allow for intra-personal and interpersonal discrepancies among our percepts I need to include all of the understandings and definitions of 'percept' and use it as an umbrella term: a "recognisable sensation or impression received by the mind through the senses" (Harper Collins dictionary online, American English, definition 1); a recognition of emotions (Li 2015, 92); an "object or phenomenon that is perceived" (Harper Collins dictionary online, British English, definition 2); and a 'concept' in our minds (Harper Collins Dictionary online, British English, definition 1). *Metaphorical* concepts appear to be a powerful combination of percepts that also re-/generate our concepts of *the others*. While they are grounded in and, in turn, affect our tacit knowledge and experiences, they also structure our conscious thought and actions (Lakoff and Johnson 2003, 3).

else, such hierarchies re-/generate silences and invisibility. They seem to be the sources and symptoms of fictional stories about *the others*' lacking rationality and credibility. These are (hi)stories fabricated and told, almost exclusively, by the purportedly knowledgeable and righteous *norms* (Niehus-Kettler 2022, 63–63).

Ultimately, I perceive these embodied circumstances as begetting, nurturing, and manifesting in what Fricker explains to be "two forms of epistemic injustice" (2007, 1). Constituting "a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower," she "[calls] them testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice" (2007, 1).

> Testimonial injustice occurs when prejudice causes a hearer to give a deflated level of credibility to a speaker's word; hermeneutical injustice occurs at a prior stage, when a gap [in collective interpretive resources] puts someone at an unfair disadvantage when it comes to making sense of their social experiences (Fricker 2007, 1).

Fricker (2007) describes, for example, the experiences of two women who lived through *postpartum depression* and *sexual harassment* respectively. These experiences might be conceived of as representing and as being caused by different forms of violence affecting these women's bodies. Still, they can be understood as forms of violence that, in very similar ways, involve epistemic, physical, and psychological violence and harm. Fricker writes that the woman who "[suffered] sexual harassment prior to the time when we had this critical concept" could not "properly comprehend her own experience, let alone render it communicatively intelligible to others" – namely for the very reason that she was not familiar with the concept or comparable (hi)stories of violence (2007, 6). It was "strongly in [both women's] interest to understand" their experiences; however, for lacks of shared stories and, thus, interpretive resources "[they] were left deeply troubled, confused, and isolated" (Fricker 2007, 151). Consequently, they were also "vulnerable" to self-blame and "continued harassment" (Fricker 2007, 151). In a like manner, our "economies of credibility" negatively impacted on their reputation and bodily autonomy (Fricker 2007, 119–120, 147, 149, 151).

Controlling our narratives – and, thereby, controlling what and whose stories are told *or* remain untold – seems more vital to the legitimacy of our bodily autonomy and the legitimacy of our power structures than ever. And popular culture re-/creates and disseminates powerful stories indeed. Conversely, popular media "allow an insight into both the political processes that normalise (certain forms of) violence and the processes that permit the re-cognition of violence *as violence* in everyday life" (Sheperd 2013, 6, author's emphasis). In Amos' self-/representations, the "concepts" "gender and violence" "are in part rendered intelligible through their positioning in relation to other concepts, particularly metaphysical concerns about order and being and questions about moral philosophy regarding legitimacy, justice and truth" (Sheperd 2013, 6). As mentioned before, "[s]ome [of her] stories are highly specific to their social and political context, and some stories have wider resonance" (Sheperd 2013, 3). In *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories*, Laura J. Sheperd suggests that "our cognitive frameworks are (re)produced in and through the stories we tell ourselves and others" (2013, 3). Drawing on Roland Barthes, she asserts that our "numberless" "narratives, […] whether we call them myths, tales, fables, history, journalism or discursive formations […] are all stories. *We are all stories*" (2013, 3, author's emphasis). As Amos places the lyrical bodies of her songs in the matrix of her life stories, her memoir *Resistance* could be read as a metararrative, her "Song Beings" as embedded stories (2020, 37). All of which may be conceptualised as narratives embodied by and within her *and* her audiences. As a form of resistance, these stories are shared and become a part of her and other people's conceptual frameworks and identities. What is more, they can be conceived of as becoming a part of our "collective hermeneutical resources" (Fricker 2007, 147–148). In the end, Amos' writing might be a way to break cycles of abuse on both an intra-personal and an interpersonal level.

Breaking Silences and Breaking Cycles

Reminiscent of Kate Bush's giving the character 'Kathy' from Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* a voice in and through her song of the same title (Mathews 2019), Tori Amos has re-interpreted songs mothered by male artists and given them a female voice on her album *Strange Little Girls*. She is aware of the power of authorship; she knows how different interpretations of (musical) narratives and (hi)stories can affect our sense of self. Also, not unlike many political songs in the 1960s and 1970s, Amos' works are just as much a valuable response to as they are provocations for conversations. This could be conversations about trauma, bodily autonomy, precarity, about who takes part in and becomes part of art and aesthetics. Above all else, with her music and memoirs, Amos portrays affective, but thereby also abusive relationships defined by various forms of violence on a micro, meso, and macro level.

As mentioned before, when Amos refers to pieces of music, she often anthropomorphises. She writes, "Songs are living, breathing things," she describes them as speaking to her, as guiding her (2020, 37, 38). She talks of their "bones" (2020, 124), explains how they possess "power" (2020, 117). For example, circling back to the beginning of this chapter, i.e. to "Girl", we can conceive of the song as embodying a story about the abuse of power. "Girl" might be regarded as telling us about power imbalances and patterns of violence – but also about empowerment. Amos explains that "she" "had not yet been written", but that "Girl" "was with [her] forming herself into a Song Being" while the singer was "battling powerful forces against potential song demolitions" (her first solo album had just been rejected by her label Atlantic Records) (Amos 2020, 37, 38). In fact, the artist feels that songs "present themselves differently" and that they "step forward" at different times in her life (2020, 125).

The song that appears around half-way through the book *Resistance* is "Silent All These Years" (1992) (2020, 17). Amos' readers may meet this song at the heart of her memoir that was published in 2020 because she still feels "Silent" to be "one of the most important songs to [her] personally" (2020, 37, 38, 117). "Without her, I would not be writing to you now. She was the life support that helped me survive a severe personal

and artistic crisis" (Amos 2020, 117). The artist recounts that "Silent All These Years" "showed [her] that there were forces [deliberately trying] to silence people" (2020, 117).

> And in that nefarious act of silencing us, we may lose our courage to speak up. And in doing so we would accomplish their censoring for them. If you or I mute ourselves, we have been threatened or shamed into silence. And once again the perpetrators, bullies, and predators steal and possess the narrative, claiming they are the real victims [...]. The art of silencing someone is a dark art indeed (Amos 2020, 117).

Amos adds that "[t]he thought of a person being silenced is scarily as relevant [...] in 2020 [...] as it was when the song [...] was written thirty years ago" (2020, 117).

Tellingly, we find "Silent All these Years" back-to-back with the lyrical body of "Me and a Gun", a song that encompasses what seems to be the circular thoughts of a person being raped. However difficult it must have been, Amos broke her silence one day. The song is about her "own experience as a survivor" of sexual violence (Rozek 2020). Looking back, the singer remembers creating the album "Little Earthquakes", which features "Silent All these Years" and "Me and a Gun", as an "arduous climb to song-write [her] way out of a very personal hell" (Amos 2020, 118). While "writing songs [that were] personal to [her,] the issue of sexual assault [was] blowing up in the political world. The personal [was] political" (Amos 2020, 117, 118). Whereas "Silent" was not meant to be a "political call to action, it became one" as women all around her were facing a "highly charged gender divide" during the autumn of 1991 (Amos 2020, 118). Amos witnessed the humiliation that so-called victims of gender discrimination and sexual violence, such as Anita Hill, were experiencing. At this time, "Hill gave voice to being a survivor of sexual harassment. A woman of colour, she faced a panel of fourteen white men on the Senate Judiciary Committee and said, 'I could not keep silent'" (2020, 118). "'Silent All these Years' would speak to this" – as would "Me and a Gun" (Amos 2020, 118).

The memoir, as an embodied and unfolding metanarrative, the "Song Beings", the (hi)stories, and concepts give meaning to one another – be it through their ways of being re-/presented by Amos, or their having presented themselves at different times in her life (Amos 2020, 125). Moving forward through the author's multi-layered thought structures, we see the lyrics of "Silent All these Years" and "Me and a Gun" connected to a powerful anecdote or, in other words, a nexus. It conveys how our allowing ourselves to be vulnerable can establish *meaning*ful and affective relationships among human beings. One day, Amos' works encouraged a member of her audience, a female judge, to share her own (hi)story of violence with the artist. In the audiobook of her memoir, the singer tells us that she hears more and more stories that are very similar to the judge's account of "living a life of torment and cover-up" (2020, 125, 126).[3] And what follows are the descriptions of patterns of (domestic) violence.

In 2009, when the judge talked to Amos backstage, nearly twenty years had passed since the release of the album *Little Earthquakes* (Amos 2020, 125). At the beginning of the private chat, the woman spoke about" a song that she had developed a relationship with, that had been with her on her journey" (Amos 2020, 125). In the course of the conversation, she depicted a couple whose life some people, "looking in from the outside", "viewed with envy" (Amos 2020, 124). While she considered herself as having "'responsible power' in her courtroom," "she felt powerless […] as a victim of domestic violence" (Amos 2020, 126). The survivor wanted Amos "to comprehend her level of shame" (Amos 2020, 126). Still, she "did not tell [Amos] when the abuse started or how long she kept up the lie"; "at a certain point she [had] begun to believe she was worthless, as [her husband] kept beating that thought into her" (Amos 2020, 126). Moreover, she was convinced that "she could not tell any of the people in her social circle as she was positive they would not risk getting involved"

3 Based on interviews, we know that it was not the first time a woman took the singer-songwriter into her confidence after a concert (Amos 2020, 134). One of these meetings changed Amos' life and career for good; after a survivor of sexual abuse asked her for help, she became the "first national spokesperson" of RAINN, i.e. the "Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network" (Rozek 2020)

(Amos 2020, 126). So she was silenced, silenced herself, and "began making friends with songs – one of them being [Amos']" (Amos 2020, 127). In the end, "songs became her confidants" (Amos 2020, 127).

The judge felt that a song Amos co-created "had given her something and she wanted to give back" (Amos 2020, 126). The artist thanked her and replied, "We may be talking about a specific song that was with you through this nightmare, but while you are speaking, seeds are being planted for future songs" (2020, 127). And, in fact, the first one of these songs came into being as "Shattering Sea", which features on an album published two years later (Amos 2020, 135). This way, another survivor's story, or rather, one piece of her lived experience manifested in a song cycle by Amos, who feels that the "judge's story helped to inform the protagonist" in the album *Night of Hunters* (2011) (2020, 135). "At the heart of the narrative," i.e. the album, "is a woman in crisis" (Amos 2020, 135). The singer explains that the "song cycle pieces together how the woman lost her self-worth. It was built in the bones of the story that a woman who saw herself as independent found herself trapped in a 'grid of disempowerment'" (2020, 135). She narrates,

> The story was influenced by women as well as men who have survived abusive relationships and were willing to share with me the complex emotions evoked by verbal abuse and violent threats or both physical and verbal abuse they had experienced. People spoke with me about becoming a shell of their former selves. It became clear that with little or no self-confidence left, they felt they had very little ability to fight the oppressive controller in their life (Amos 2020, 135).

While we see fragments of Amos' songs mirrored in the judge's personal (hi)story, e.g. "Girl", "Silent All these Years", and "Me and a Gun", we discern fragments of the judge's (hi)story in "Shattering Sea" (Amos 2020, 34, 119, 122, 128). We can also recognise distinct parts of patterns of violence: The need to keep up appearances, the cruelty and isolation, the deceit, the lost sense of self – the bodily experience/s of shame and fear silencing and confining the survivor. Yet, her breaking her silence by talking to Amos can be conceived of as an expression of – and a move to-

wards other forms of – resistance. Within cyclic systems, both Amos' and her fan's (hi)stories begot, nurtured, and manifested in interrelated song (hi)stories, in shared meanings embodied by the survivors in particular, and the singer's audiences in general. On more than one level, they have become small, but very powerful pieces of our *collective hermeneutical resources* (Fricker 2007, 147–148).

In sum, as part of popular culture, Tori Amos and her shared lived experience affect human beings. They re-/generate meaning/s and understanding in ways that so-called *high-brow* culture and academic discourses might simply not. Her stories foster relatability in societies in which individual, structural, and historical violence are hidden and often go unpunished. She co-/establishes relationships among potential allies in patriarchal, capitalistic, and (post)colonial systems that are, by design, weighted in favour of the (self-proclaimed) authorities and, thus, in favour of keeping pre/convictions in place. Until today, most of our widely-circulated narratives are still written and told – and controlled – by those who have the power to abuse their positions of trust. Above all, the composer shares her experiences with gender-based violence from the perspective of a female, ageing, but privileged singer-songwriter. She tells us (musical) stories that predominantly feature female protagonists, very often even versions of her (former) self. Still, she acknowledges that human beings of any gender and, by implication, people with all kinds of perceived identities experience (trans-generational) patterns of violence (Amos 2020, 135). Due to complementary supremacist ideologies, individuals and groups perceived as *the others* are generally more susceptible to forms of violence, though (Fricker 2007, 119–120, 151).

Amos describes the process of her creating pieces of music as, at times, an "arduous climb to song-write [her] way out" (2020, 118). Like many artists before her, she conceptualises writing as a form of resistance and defiance, as moving forward, as a way of surviving forms of violence. It is not only, but most certainly her storytelling that we can conceive of as a way to become and remain vulnerable, heard, and visible. It is a way of breaking her silence and breaking cycles of abuse – for herself and for others. Albeit painful, in the end, our sharing embodied (hi)stories of violence constitutes and contributes to ways of

making sense of our experiences. And it might open up new ways of owning ourselves and becoming the self that – sometime, somewhere, somehow – we feel *we* want to be.

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