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## “Do I Make You Horny Baby?”

A musicological analysis of current sexual music made by women in  
relation to contemporary feminism

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## Abstract

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A musicological analysis of current sexual music made by women in relation to contemporary feminism.

In this study I examine current sexual music, made by women. I focus on songs made and/ or performed by contemporary female artists working in genres - such as hip-hop, pop and R&B - that fall under the umbrella term popular music. What kind of methods do these artists use to make a song feel or come across as sexual? Is it the lyrics? The sound? Could these songs come across as more or less sexual depending on the methods used? How do these songs stand against two commonly known feminist stances? These are all questions I examine in this study.

I have conducted an music analysis on three different contemporary female artist's songs with the aim to shed light on today's sexual music. I discuss two commonly known feminist points of views and there relation to sexual music.

My findings show that the sexual music I have examined use multiple of different methods to make the music come across as sexual. It also shows that all the songs have one foot in each of the two feminist stances, making for a grey area of subjectivity.

Key words: sexual music, popular music, feminism, female empowerment, self objectification

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

In 2020, Cardi B released the track *WAP* (Wet Ass Pussy) featuring fellow female rapper Megan Thee Stallion. Both of the rappers had uploaded pictures beforehand on their social media, hinting towards a new single. The picture was of Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion holding their tongues out towards each other against a pink background and the word ‘WAP’ written in the description. Upon release, it immediately became the talk of not only the music world but of American conservative politicians and everyday people. The track attracted a lot of positive feedback but also a lot of negative critique. The majority of the critique came from politically involved men and women who just did not get the picture, so to speak. The comments ranged from personal attacks against Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, to accusing the rappers of sending women back a 100 years in progress<sup>1</sup>. Ben Shapiro, an American political commentator as well as one of the conservative candidates for congress in California and James P Bradley, both spoke openly about their dislike of *WAP* and what they think this song represents. Bradley spoke of *WAP* as the product of someone who was raised without god and Shapiro pointed to the feminist movement as a way for women to be able to speak sexually, not to make them independent. Michelle Chresfield, lecturer at the University of Birmingham point out that Shapiros and Bradleys words are particularly hard to fathom since they both supported Donald Trump as president who openly said things like “grab em’ by the pussy”<sup>2</sup>. Cardi B has defended herself and the song by explaining that her music is meant for an adult audience. She also explained that this is the kind of music she grew up with and that it is normal to her<sup>3</sup>. Just a couple of days after the release I heard the track for the first time on the Swedish radio station P3. The radio host spoke very highly of the track and argued against the negative comments it had gotten thus far. *WAP* is definitely not the first sexual song made by a woman but in 2019-2021, I felt an increase in releases of sexual songs made by women, that could be considered popular music. This kind of explicit music has nestled into the mainstream listener. This made me wonder, what is it that makes music come across as sexual and why did *WAP* for instance evoke such strong emotions related to the feminist stance?

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<sup>1</sup> Pash. What’s the big deal with WAP? . *The Chronicle*. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Michell Chresfield. The ‘danger’ of Cardi B, Megan Thee Stallion’s WAP: Critics are afraid of women’s audacity to own their sexual satisfaction. *Firepost*. 2020.

<sup>3</sup>Isobel Lewis. Cardi B defends ‘WAP’ against critics who claim track is too explicit: ‘It’s for adults’. *Independent*. 2020.

## 1.2 Aim and Thesis

Although there is existing research on sexual music made by women (further explored in section 1.4) I can see a gap of knowledge regarding current sexual music made by women in the popular music scene and their relation to feminist thought. I also feel the importance of highlighting the music itself since a lot of the research done is focusing on the cultural aspects rather than the music to a greater extent. This is not to exclude the importance of culture from music but to make the music the centerpiece. By looking at this kind of music in the light of musicology, new knowledge can hopefully be found and presented. Therefore the aim of this study is to contribute to the understanding of current sexual music made by women and how these songs are viewed from two feministic stances. The songs in focus in this study are; *WAP* by Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion, *Rules* by Doja Cat and *34+35* by Ariana Grande. These songs fall under the umbrella term “popular music” but belong to different genres such as hip-hop, R&B and pop. I have taken a closer look at the different methods used in this type of music that make it sound sexual. The components I focus on are sound, lyrics and vocal performance. I then explore how the songs relate to the current feminist stance. The main questions asked are as follows: *What kind of methods are used to make a song sound or come across as sexual? And how do these songs relate to the two common feministic stances?*

## 1.3 Theories and Methods

To answer my research question a music analysis has been conducted. The analysis portion of this study focuses on three case-studies: Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallions *WAP* (2020), Doja Cat's *Rules* (2019) and Ariana Grande's *34+35* (2020). I have conducted three different analyses on each song related to three components; sound, vocal performance and lyrics. One that focuses on the sound (the music itself), one that focuses on the lyrics and one that focuses on the vocal performance and arrangement in the songs. To help break down the songs, form sketches were made where the different methods got categorized by the three components. My aim with the analysis is as Alan Moore puts it “To analyse a popular song is, of its very nature, to offer an interpretation of it, to determine what range of meaning it has, to make sense of it”<sup>4</sup>. I also, to some extent, use Alan Moore's methodology on

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Moore. *Song means : analysing and interpreting recorded popular song*. Burlington: Ashgate Pub. co. 2012

music analysis especially on the delivery of the vocal performance which serves as a good stepping stone for this part of the analysis. Moore talks about what he calls four “positional aspects” that can help to identify character. These consist of the following: *Register* - what kind of voice register is the singer/rapper using (normal, high and low). *Cavity* - from where in the body does the singer/rapper's voice resonate (head, throat and chest coupled with the use of the diaphragm). *Heard attitude to rhythm* - the singers/ rappers relation to rhythm while singing. *Heard attitude to pitch* - the singer/ rappers relation to pitch, for example if the voice is in tune or not<sup>5</sup>.

Two different feministic thoughts or perspectives on sexual music have been brought to light and later applied on the result of my music analysis. These perspectives will be further examined in the next section where concepts such as *empowerment* versus *self-objectification* and, *good* versus *bad* feminist will be brought to light.

#### **1.4 Two Feminist Stances**

Through all my research there has been one resurfacing factor, namely the open discussion of good and bad. Different perspectives and theories on feminism result in scholars being divided into two feminist stances regarding sexual music. To clarify, there are those who argue that sexual music has a positive impact that leads to women claiming their sexuality through *female empowerment* and then there are those who think it has a negative impact - meaning that it can fortify the patriarchy and benefit the *objectification* and marginalisation of women. These stances in turn bring up the problematic idea of being a *good* versus *bad* feminist. It is important to mention that a vast part of the discourse I bring up in this report is grounded in the studies of black feminism which focuses on problems regarding black women and black culture. The discussions are not clear cut and can easily get shrouded by double standards and contradictions.

There is a split in thought where some academics would argue that the idea of *female empowerment* is not enough to justify overly sexual music and the negative impact it can have. They by contrast argue that overly sexual music caters towards mens' fantasies and desires, and that this in turn promotes *self-objectification*. It is no secret that women are fabricated as sexual subjects in popular

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Moore. *Song means : analysing and interpreting recorded popular song*. Burlington: Ashgate Pub. co. 2012. 102-103

music (black women even more so)<sup>6</sup>. In *Subjects and Objects*, Maeve Eberhardt explains that black rap music (hip-hop) has received its fair share of criticism. For example criticism regarding the subjects of the music being violent, expression of sexual aggression and the viewing of black women as sexual objects. And since the thought of these subjects often are strongly tied to masculinity, Eberhardt points out that it is a complication that women thereby are seen adapting a masculine role in their own music<sup>7</sup>. In *Missy Misdemeanor Elliot and Nicki Minaj*, Theresa Renee White writes the following:

“On one hand, there is the hypersexual image of Black women; on the other hand, there is the stigma associated with the Black woman who boldly tries to assert control over her own life, sexuality, and how she is treated in society.”<sup>8</sup>

White also concurs with Eberhardt's statement about females facilitating a man's music style in hip hop: “As rap became more mainstream than ever, and “ironically” appropriating the misogynist, violence-tinged lyrics of their hip-hop colleagues, artists like Missy Elliott, Lil' Kim (and Nicki Minaj), tried to appeal to fans with music similar to their male contemporaries”.

She adds that many black female artists who worked in this fashion never reached any form of *female empowerment*<sup>9</sup> and she also asks herself if sexual music actually could be a way of exclaiming *female empowerment* or if it's simply a way of *self objectification*<sup>10</sup>. It would be interesting to know if it was that practice specifically that stopped them from reaching *female empowerment* or if other factors were involved. These thoughts tie into the debate of a *good* versus *bad* feminist and a good example of this is the artist Beyoncé. Beyoncé is a hot topic regarding this debate where her feminism has been described as a menace, mostly due to that the sexuality and portrayal of perfection in her music and performances could affect young black girls in a negative fashion - that it creates an unreachable standard to live up to<sup>11</sup>. At the same time Beyoncé's way of feminism gives ordinary black women a voice in a society where this voice often gets shot down.<sup>12</sup> When Beyoncé came out with her album *BEYONCÉ* in 2014 which featured songs like *Flawless*, the argument was that her poetry of feminism lacked a seasoned touch.

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<sup>6</sup>Maeve Eberhardt. *Subjects and objects: linguistic performances of sexuality in the lyrics of black female hip-hop artists*. Part of: *Gender and Language*, Volume 10, Number 1. Vermonte: Equinox publishing. 2016. 21-23

<sup>7</sup>Eberhardt. *Subjects and objects: linguistic performances of sexuality in the lyrics of black female hip-hop artists*. 24

<sup>8</sup>Renee Theresa White. *Missy “Misdemeanor” Elliott and Nicki Minaj: Fashionistin’ Black Female Sexuality in Hip-Hop Culture—Girl Power or Overpowered?*. Part of: *Journal of Black Studies*, Volume 44, Number 6. Northridge: California State University Northridge. 2013. .616

<sup>9</sup>White. *Missy “Misdemeanor” Elliott and Nicki Minaj: Fashionistin’ Black Female Sexuality in Hip-Hop Culture—Girl Power or Overpowered?*. 619

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 621-22

<sup>11</sup>Tia C.M. Tyree, Melvin L. Williams. *Flawless Feminist or Fallible Freak?*. Part of: *The Beyoncé Effect, Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*. Edited by Trier-Bieniek Adrienne. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company. 2016.127

<sup>12</sup>Tyree, Williams. *Flawless Feminist or Fallible Freak?*. Part of: *The Beyoncé Effect, Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*. 129



This is the recurrent argument Sherri Williams talks about in *Cardi B Love Hip/ Hop's Unlikely Feminist Hero*. She continues to talk about Beyoncé and how the view of her feminism changed with the release of her album *Lemonade* (2016) which included songs like *Freedom* and *Formation*. In this “refined” version of her feminism Williams means that the “liberation of women” was clearer and that Beyoncé’s feminism evolved<sup>13</sup>. Williams has the same argument for Cardi B, were she point to her being a feminist hero but at the same time suggeste that Cardi B should get a chance to evolve her feminism. I however find this idea of “evolving” problematic since it could be considered that feminists who reject another form of feminism is anti feminism. I do however recognize that this can get problematic since the whole discourse is multifaceted. Cardi B has as well as Beyoncé gotten critiqued on her way of feminism and she is very open about this on social media where she has mentioned that people with her background (regarding upbringing and her former job as a stripper), without any academic history have to be included and not rejected in the discourse. Ofcours Cardi B’s feminism could evolve but its important not to take away her credibility because of surrounding factors. In my upcoming discussion I try to explore if the same problems that I have mentioned above could be seen in the music itself since a lot of the research mentioned focuses more on image, persona and culture.

What all these discussions have in common are influences from the different waves of feminism. The feminist movment itself and its different waves such as second, third wave and postfeminism. During the second wave, feminist had a diffuculty with questions regarding sexuality. There were to distinct sides, one that argued for *empowerment* and the other seeing confirmation of the oppression of gender in questions regarding the pornindustry, sexwork and sexuality overall<sup>14</sup>. One can only assume that this affected the music as well. I would argue regarding sexual music that it should be as simple as making your own choices on what you put out there. The question of choice in third wave feminism is what R. Claire Snyder-Hall discuss in her article *The third-wave feminism and the defence of "choise"*. The idea is that a woman should be able to make her own choices in how she wants to live her life and in how she presents herself. The matter of choice can however become problematic due to potential risk of catering to the patriarchy<sup>15</sup>. In sexual music this could translate into the following

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<sup>13</sup> Sherri Williams. *Cardi B: Love & Hip Hop's unlikely feminist hero*. Part of: *Feminist Media Studies*, Volume 17, Number 6. London: Routledge. 2017.1117

<sup>14</sup> Claire R. Snyder-Hall. *Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice"*. Part of: *Perspectives on Politics*, Volume 8, Number 1. Published by: American Political Science Association. 2010. 255

<sup>15</sup> R. Snyder-Hall. *Third-Wave Feminism and the Defense of "Choice"*. 255

example: Should a woman that is active in the music industry be able to express herself in a way that could cater towards mens' fantasies or desires? The matter of choice and *female empowerment* is tied together and *female empowerment* is meant to give women the ability to obtain agency and control over their own life and choices . The two sides of feminism is clear, some think sexual music transgress into *female empowerment* while some think that sexual music reinforce the patriarchy and *objectification* of women. What one also should have in mind is the perspective of what the artist form of *female empowerment* is meant to convey. It is important not to forget that these two perspectives are ever fluctuating, and more times than not the views are correlating in some aspects. What I mean to say is that there is a gray zone and to say that one thing is wrong and another is right is impossible. If a woman is not free to choose, that in of itself suppress her freedom, but I can also see how this turns problematic- that by there free choice they involentarily participates in what is the very problem that feminism try so hard to fight.

## 1.5 Research Overview

When I started to dig deeper into this field of research I quickly noted the difference in quantity of academic research about current sexual music (say the last couple of years) versus if I were to compare it to other subjects in musicology. There is however a good amount of research on sexuality in other forms, but not that touches the subject of this study specifically, at least not in the musicology realm of academics. There is however research done on the subject of music and feminism as well as music and sexuality. I will present the current research mode and discourse in the light of the study's subject.

A pioneer in the field of musicology and feminism is Susan McClary, in her book *Feminine endings, music, gender and sexuality* from 1991, McClary takes on feminist criticism. For example, she examine Madonna's music and music videos to find out how Madonna creates an image of freedom in an oppressive environment<sup>16</sup>. In her conclusion McClary states that the patriarchy will have gotten a dose of their own medicine if Madonna were to surmount and speak as she has been doing all these years<sup>17</sup>. Her research for her book overall covers a broad spectrum, where she touches on everything from sexual politics in classical music to feminism and popular music. A important aspect of her research is that McClarys perspectives of feminist criticism in music relays on the studies of feminist

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<sup>16</sup> Susan McClary. *Feminine Endings, Music, Gender and Sexuality*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. 1991. 148-149

<sup>17</sup> McClary. *Feminine Endings, Music, Gender and Sexuality*. 166

criticism from other disciplines such as literature and film studies<sup>18</sup>. The same could be said about my own research.

Sheila Whiteley is another known name in the realms of sexuality and feminism in music. Her book *Woman and Popular Music, Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* from 2000 examines the changing roles of women and the way their songs resonate in popular culture. Just like McClary, Whitley has done research on Madonna. However, Whitley has a very different thesis and uses other methods to reach a conclusion. Whitley examines Madonna herself, her music and musicvideos in the light of eroticism and autoeroticism. She concludes that Madonna challenge the patriarchy with the use of autoeroticism and female homosexuality<sup>19</sup>. Whitley also examine the british pop group Spice Girls and their relation to feminism through their image and their music. She examine the question of whether Spice Girls was a “cartoon feminist popgroup” or a positive rolemodel for teenage girls<sup>20</sup>.

Although there is a lack of academic research regarding sexuality and feminism regarding today's popular music in the musicology discipline it have been covered in other forms. I point to examples such as *Siren songs : representations of gender and sexuality in opera* from 1995 edited by Mary Ann Smart and *A feminist ethnomusicology, writings on music and gender* from 2014 by Ellen Koskoff. Another example is *Feminist Perspectives on gender and music* from 1999, edited by Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou, a collection of essays that examines feminism in relation to musicology. Except for one essay on rap music they mostly consist of essays on classical pieces<sup>21</sup>.

A part from the examples mentioned above there is a lot written about feminism and sexuality in other disciplines such as: Culture studies, linguistics and social studies. These will be most helpful in this study. In *The Beyoncé effect : essays on sexuality, race and feminism* from 2016, edited by Adrienne Trier-Bieniek, there are multiple essays covering different aspects of feminism and sexuality with Beyoncé as the focal point. One example of the content of these essays touches upon aspects that correlate to my thesis. There is a discussion of academic feminist thought that see Beyoncé as the wrong kind of feminist, but there is also those who thinks that she is the future of it<sup>22</sup>. Beyoncé is a popular interest of study for many scholars, and according to Tyree and Williams this is part due to the

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<sup>18</sup> Susan McClary. *Feminine Endings, Music, Gender and Sexuality*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press. 1991.

<sup>19</sup> Sheila Whitley. *Woman and Popular Music, Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*. London: Routledge. 2000. 150

<sup>20</sup> Whitley. *Woman and Popular Music, Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*. 218

<sup>21</sup> *Feminist Perspectives on gender and music*- edited by Susan C. Cook and Judy S. Tsou

<sup>22</sup> Tia C.M. Tyree, Melvin L. Williams. *Flawless Feminist or Fallible Freak?*. Part of: *The Beyoncé Effect, Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*. Edited by Trier-Bieniek Adrienne. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company. 2016. 124

knowledge that can be retrieved by analyzing her lyrics. They claim that focusing on lyrics is a good way to subtract cultural knowledge and that the music or sound itself can become distracting from the quest for social meaning<sup>23</sup>. I do agree that there can be a lot of information to gather from lyrics. However, I do not agree that the music itself is a distraction but rather just another medium to gather knowledge from. In this study I will examine lyrics as a medium, but there is so much knowledge that can be found when analysing the sound and vocals performance as well. I will also be utilizing this.

## 1.6 Demarcation

In the preparation of this study the question of why I am suitable to write about this subject came to light, and this also led me to make some demarcations regarding the different approaches. For instance I will refrain from talking about the cultural aspects of these artists in depth since I am a white woman from Sweden while most of the artists mentioned are black women from America, and there is a gap here that I can not fill. The same goes for the black feminist approach. I will instead focus on the music itself. I can bring an interesting point of view as a musicology student but also as a woman that listen to a lot of music that could fall under the term sexual music as well as me producing music that I consider as sexual music. If it would be of interest to learn more about the aspect I mentioned above, black feminism and black female music, I recommend having a closer look at Cunninghams *Make it Nasty* and/ or Kendrick L Colemans *Spaces of Liberation and Black Womens Reclaiming of Their Corporal Bodys*, among others.

In the upcoming analysis I will go over sexually explicit lyrics. Some of the words may be found to be racially offensive. It could be argued that I simply should not mention them in this study. However, I find it important to stay as close to the authenticity of the music and all its attributes as possible. Therefore I have made the decision to censor these words instead of removing them or replacing them since it potentially could affect the end result of my analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> Tia C.M. Tyree, Melvin L. Williams. *Flawless Feminist or Fallible Freak?*. Part of: *The Beyoncé Effect, Essays on Sexuality, Race and Feminism*. Edited by Trier-Bieniek Adrienne. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company. 2016. 125-126

## **1.7 Definition**

The term “sexual music” is one of the central and recurring concepts of this study. Which kind of music that should or could be called sexual is highly subjective. However, I will argue that there are some distinct characteristics that could be interpreted as especially sexual. When I use the terms “sexual music” I mean that the music in question has some or all of these characteristics, and the interpretation is one that I have made with my knowledge as a musicology student as well as someone that is active in listening to and making music that come across as sexual.

I use the term “popular music” as a way of explaining music that is widely known or that has made its way into the mainstream. Not to be confused by the genre pop but instead songs from different genres that have been or are widely popular.

Another term that will be recurring is “components” which is used to describe the different elements of a song, for example vocals (vocal techniques), instrumental (the sound) and lyrics.

The term “methods” are used to explain the different ways of how the song can sound sexual. Method in the way of different techniques that are used to evoke a specific sound or effect.

## **1.8 Disposition**

The first chapter has served as an introduction to what is yet to come. After this introduction, four chapters will follow. These chapters will entail the primary examination of the thesis. In the second chapter I will present a concise overview of my research. I have further divided this chapter into subheadings. Under 2.1 I present a short but concise history of sexual music and in 2.2 I will also present a short introduction to the artists of the songs in question, in this case Cardi B, Doja Cat and Ariana Grande. In the third chapter I will conduct my analysis of the three songs. As in the second chapter I have divided the chapter into four subheadings. I have done this to make it easier to follow the different aspects of the songs. In 3.1 I focus on the analysis of the sound, in 3.2 the analysis of the vocals, in 3.3 the analysis of the lyrics and then a summary of the analysis. Next follows the fourth chapter where I have a discussion about the result of the analysis and the two feminist stances. And last but not least, a conclusion where I present my findings which have accumulated through a discussion of the findings from the analysis through the eyes of the two feminist stances.

## CHAPTER 2: Sexual music by women: History and present-day practitioners

### 2.1 A short history of female sexual music

To sing or rap about sex is nothing new and it has been done for longer than we could imagine. An example of this is the afro American blues singer Lucille Bogan also known as Bessie Smith explicit version of Ma Rainey's *Shave 'Em Dry* from 1925 (Bogans version however was released in 1935).

I got nipples on my titties, big as the end of my thumb. I got something between my legs, I'll make a dead man cum Oh, daddy, baby, won't you shave 'em dry? Now, draw it out! Want you to grind me, baby, grind me until I cry....Now your nuts hang down like a damn bell sapper. And your dick stands up like a steeple. Your god-damn ass-hole stands open like a church door, and the crabs walk in like people, haw, shit! Shucks, ooh! Baby, won't you shave 'em dry?<sup>24</sup>

The dirty blues which was a subgenre of blues at the time had many influences of sexual themes and is a predecessor to today's sexual music, and as Cunningham puts it, a predecessor to today's black female "sexual anthems"<sup>25</sup>. It is not my intention to go any further in to this song or songs of that time, however, it is a good example of that sexual music is nothing new.

Genres that have followed the dirty blues that often have some sexual undertones are R&B, hip-hop and pop. Examples of artists that work/ worked inside the frames of these genres are artists like Madonna, Missy Elliot, Lil Kim and Nicki Minaj, and they have all paved the way for artists like Cardi B, Doja Cat and Ariana Grande. They are of course not the only ones, but if I were to name every female artist that have been a part of the evolution of sexual music I would not have room for much else in this study. Some examples of songs from the artist mentioned above are Madonna's *Like A Virgin* from 1984 (pop), Missy Elliott's *Pussy Cat* from 2002 (hip/ hop, r&b), Lil Kim's *Suck My Dick* from 2000 (hip/ hop) and Nicki Minaj's *Anaconda* from 2014 (hip/ hop).

### 2.2 A short introduction to Cardi B, Doja Cat and Ariana Grande

**Cardi B**, born Belcalis Almanzar is an American rapper born in the Bronx, New York. She mostly caters to the genre hip-hop, although she has featured on songs in other genres as well. Her rise to fame

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<sup>24</sup> Genius. *Shave 'Em Dry*. Genius. 2021.

<sup>25</sup>Alexandria Cunningham. *Make It Nasty: Black Women's Sexual Anthems and the Evolution of the Erotic Stage*. Part of: *Journal of Black Sexuality and Relationships*, Volume 5, Number 1. Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press. 2018. 78, 80

started when she went viral on Instagram for being outspoken about her then current job as a stripper. In 2017 she appeared on *Love and Hip Hop: New York*, a reality television show brought on by VH1. She thereafter signed with Atlantic Labels and released *Bodak Yellow* in 2018, which was her first single under the major label. *Bodak Yellow* climbed the Billboard charts at a rapid pace and Cardi B became the second female rapper in history to reach number 1 on the top 100 chart with a first output<sup>26</sup>.

Through the majority of Cardi B's music you can locate sexual themes. The sexual attributes of her songs can come across as sexual in a couple of ways; the way she executes her vocal performance, the instrumental or in her lyrics. Although *Bodak Yellow* mostly is a boasting song there is some sexual attributes, the same could be said for another song of hers, *Up* while *WAP* has been named a female sexual anthem<sup>27</sup>.

**Doja Cat**, born Amala Zandili Dlamini is an American singer, rapper, songwriter and producer born in Tarzana, California. Doja Cat mainly put out music in a mix of hip-hop, R&B and pop. Doja Cat began releasing her self-produced songs in 2014. The songs quickly grabbed the internet's attention. One of these songs called *Mooo!*, released in 2018, took off and proceeded to go viral on YouTube. Following that year Doja Cat revealed her first full-length album *Amalia*. With these releases on her back she took her rise to stardom with her 2019 album *Hot Pink* which featured artists such as Gucci Mane, Tyga and Ty Dolla Sign. In 2020 *Hot Pink* reached number 1 on Billboard top 100<sup>28</sup>.

Sexual themes are a recurrent factor of a lot of Doja Cat songs. Her latest album *Planet Her* has more than one song that could be described as sexual. Among these songs we have *Need to know* and *Your right*. From her earlier album *Hot Pink* there are songs such as *Rules*, *Freak* and *Cyber Sex*. In all these songs it's easy to argue for the sexual themes in the different components, the vocals, sound and lyrical. She has been praised for her embracing of sexuality and the fight of what is often marked as taboo in the pop industry<sup>29</sup>. She has also, together with rapper Megan Thee Stallion done a feature on Ariana Grande's 34+35 Remix.

**Ariana Grande** is an American singer, songwriter and actress born in Boca Raton Florida. Grande is big under the pop/ R&B genres. Grande has been in the spotlight from a young age. In her

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<sup>26</sup> Cardi B Official. Bio. *Cardi B Official*. 2021.

<sup>27</sup> Dalyah Jones. "Let's Have A Sex Talk": The Eras of Sex Talk By Black Women In Hip-Hop. *Okayplayer*. 2020.

<sup>28</sup> Matt Collar. Biography Doja Cat. *All Music*. 2021.

<sup>29</sup> Rosa Phelps. What a time to be alive! – Sex positivity in music. *Varsity*. 2021.

teenage years she starred in Disney Channel's tv show *Victorious*. Even before *Victorious* she had been involved on Broadway and had small parts on different tv shows<sup>30</sup>. Grande's musical career started in 2013 with her debut album *Yours Truly*. After this she has released chart topper after chart topper, and her latest albums *Thank u next*, *Sweetener* and *Positions* are no exceptions. However, her latest album, *Positions*, released in 2020 has a stronger sexual vibe than any of her other albums. *Entertainment Weekly* called Grande's album *Position* "the horny album we needed this year"<sup>31</sup>. As well as sexual themes, the Magazine *Centennial Beauty* writes of *Positions* and the strong feminist influences<sup>32</sup>.

Grande does have some songs that I regard as sexual, but this is the first album that I would put the label 'explicit' on. An exception would be the song *Side to Side* featuring Nicki Minaj, released in 2017 which simply is about having too much sex which in turn makes you walk side to side. I would also include songs of hers that have a sexual vibe in sound and vocal performance but not in lyrics such as *Dangerous Woman* from 2016. Grande is also a proud feminist and fighter for women's rights and the LGBTQ community which is apparent on her Instagram.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYSIS

### 3.1 Music Analysis- Sound

#### ***WAP*-Cardi B Featuring Megan Thee Stallion**

The first thing that meets your ears when listening to *WAP* is a strong pulsating subby baseline that goes in D<sub>b</sub> major which holds a rhythmic swing, adding a strong clap on ¾ with an accompanying sample of Frank Ski's *Whores in this house* from 1993 in a stable 133 beats per minute. This intro lasts about 15 seconds before we encounter some change in a teaser for the chorus. The subby bass gets exchanged with a heavier trembling sub bass along with an added trap beat consisting of edge strokes and regular strokes on the snare drum alternatively, although I find it less likely, a down pitched closed high hat. Both the subby and trembling bass could be parable to the vibrations one can feel going through their body while dancing, but the vibrating and pulsating bass could also be parable to the feeling one can get when feeling aroused, this, coupled with the trap beats rhythm is reminiscent of acts that take place in the bedroom. At 0.28, moving into the verse the beat and bass melody does not

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<sup>30</sup> Tony Moore. *Ariana Grande Biography*. The Biography. Published by A&E Television Networks. 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Malcolm-Aimé Musoni. Ariana Grande's *Positions* is the horny album we needed this year. *Entertainment Weekly*. 2020.

<sup>32</sup> Centennial Beauty. Ariana Grande's 'Positions' is filled with feminist easter eggs you probably missed. *Centennial Beauty*. 2020



change much. However, the sampled “there’s some whores in this house” gets pitched up to what almost sounds like a baby’s voice along with an added high hat in 8ths. There are also interesting sound effects such as the sound of a droplet hitting water as well as a horn of a truck honking, these sound effects play into very specific lines of lyrics. Right before the honking of the horn there is a pause in the music to emphasize on the punchline of the lyric, this scene is ended by the horn honking, after this the familiar beat returns. In the second verse 0.56 they switch from Cardi B as the lead rapper to Megan Thee Stallion. With the change of lead they change the sample back to the original voice as well as the reinstatement of the subby base that could be heard in the intro. This gives a clear demonstration, other than the fact that you can hear the difference in the voice of the rapper, that they have in fact made a change. The beat stays consistent throughout Megans verse, however there is the addition of adlibs in form of moans that also works as a way of building to the rhythm and beat. Moving on to the chorus at 1.12 the trembling sub bass returns once again with the original form of the sample, the moanes continue all the way from the verse into the chorus, but apart from that not much else happens here. At 1.25 we get into Cardi B’s second verse, the beat stays the same, the heavier trembling bass is used along with the baby version of the sample. Once again, pauses are used to emphasize Cradi’s punchlines. Moving onto Megan’s second verse at 1.54 the base goes back to the smother intro bass once again, the sample goes back to its original form, and the moanes play with the rhythmic. Added to this verse is a bell representing a knockout bell used in boxing, like the droplet and horn honking tied to a particular piece of lyrics. After the bell, the bass changes to the heavier bass maybe emphasizing on a win in the form of the punchline. The sound between 2.18-2.31 takes us back to the beginning of the song with just the bass, sample and clap. After that we move into the last chorus, nothing new, the same as the other parts of the chorus. The take back to the simpler form of chorus however makes the chorus with all the added components much more impactful. The song then fades out with the outro in the same form as the intro. At first glances the instrumental for *WAP* could come across as sexual, but I would argue that is mostly due to the sample and the rap. However, there are some methods used that depending on how its listened to could be interpreted as sexual. I argue for the dancefeel of the song and that this could be connected to a sexual vibe. The pulsating bass coupled with the beat’s rhythm could be perceived as a feeling of lust or arousal. The sound effects and adlibs makes the song come across as sexual. However, the sound effects such as the droplet and

honking of the horn loses its sexual meaning without the context of the lyrics. The moaning during Megan's verse however, gives the sound of the instrumental a sexual vibe. Although even this is on thin ice, due to the possible argument that the moans should belong to the vocal part of the analysis and the same could be said about the sample. I do however think that it is an important part of the overall sexual sound, and if I were to remove it from the equation, the sexual vibes get reduced to an extent. The combination of the beat, the heavy base, sample and sound effects like moaning all contribute to an overall sexual feel, although I would not go as far as to say that this "feel" I speak of is obvious to the everyday listener.

### ***Rules-Doja Cat***

Doja Cat's *Rules*, played in G-major at 144 beats per minute with a time signature of 4/4. The intro starts off with a bluesy country electric guitar with some very apparent effects, which could be a phaser of some sort. The guitar plays two different loops, almost over each other - when the first guitar loop is almost at its end the second loop begins. There is also a bass that plays along with the two guitar loops. In the background there is a distinct sound of two notes in the same tone playing, it almost gives the feel of an altered voice but after further intense listening my bet is on one string being played on the guitar that later has been altered, maybe they added a phaser as well as a wah pedal. The vibe of the intro is very bluesy and mysterious. When the intro has run its course the bluesy vibes get cut off by a rather heavy trap beat at 0:12. In the beat, the bass drum mostly hits on 1 and offbeat on 5, this together with the snardurm, high hat as well as claps, and the beat following the bassline, gives the illusion of a slower song even though it's at 144 bpm. This is the main form of the song throughout, for added depth they remove and add the beat to the guitar and bass loops that lie in the background for almost the entirety of the song. Unlike *WAP*, *Rules* does not have as much diversity within the instrumental, it rather leans on Doja Cat's vocal performance for development, which I will cover in 3.2 *Music Analysis- Vocals*. But what was harder to locate in *WAP* is easier to find in *Rules*. The methods that have been used in *Rules* to make it come across as sexual is for starters the bluesy country feel of the electric guitars. It draws you in and sounds sensual, intimate and passionate. The two loops work and play together in a flirtatious and intimate fashion, just like a couple infatuated with each other would, or like a game between two lovers. The overlaying effects on the guitar and loops arrangement is the cause of this. When you then add the heavy trap beat on top you got yourself a

dance song, I would go as far and say a song good for stripping. Even though the bpm is at 144, the heavy syncopation of the beat makes it come across as slower, which makes it a perfect rhythm for someone to roll their hips as well as twerk to. The syncopated beat and the playful guitar loops playing with each other translate into a pure bedroom song.

### **34+35-Ariana Grande**

With 110 beats per minute and a time signature of 4/4 in F major, Grande's 34+35 make for a good danceable song. The song starts off with the chorus as an intro. Aside from Grande's song I am able to distinguish some sort of plucked string instrument. I would guess this instrument is set with vinyl strings which makes for a rounder and smoother feel. The plucked strings are accompanied by two or more violines playing a dreamy, almost romantic melody. The beat at this stage consists of a high hat double tapping on 1,2 and a single tap on 3, then adding claps on 2 and 4. In about 0.17 a heavy bass line gets added in time for the first verse, as well as a bass drum, edge taps on a snare drum and a cow bell. The beat is reminiscent of that of a Roland TR-808 or 909, although this is not anything I can confirm or deny. During the verse 0.17-0.35 the string ensemble gets quiet only leaving the plucked strings and the bass to carry the melody. The strings then rejoin the rest of the instrumental in time for the chorus. After the chorus there is a bit of the second verse (0.53-1.10) that goes back to the easier beat of the intro. It is joined by claps which are later accompanied by the high hat, coupled with the plucked strings and string ensemble. From 1.10 in the verse and forwards the heavier beat sets in and the entirety of instruments are present throughout the verse and the chorus up until 1.46 where the bridge sets in. Through half of the bridge the simpler beat without the bassline is using its magic. In the middle of the bridge the heavier beat sets in again together with the bassline. The introduction of the last chorus is accompanied by some kind of boomer effect. Through the last chorus the instrumental holds itself to the same form as the previous chorus. The outro is reminiscent of how the intro started except no singing, instead there are some spoken lines by Grande.

The methods used in 34+35 are in my opinion harder to flag down if I compare it to *WAP* or *Rules*. Firstly I will say that I do not think there has been any intention in making this song sound sexual in its instrumental. However, I do think there are methods used to make it feel romantic, flirtatious and playful, and I argue that this is just another form of sexual music. To start off I find the string ensemble as one of the methods used to evoke a romantic feel, like walking down the street of

Paris with your lover and hearing violin playing. The way they have the different instruments play against each other to evoke a cheeky rhythm is interesting. And the modern beat makes it, as I have said with the other examples, dance appropriate. The plucked vinyl strings remind me of a playful and flirtatious vibe that goes well with the romantic string ensemble. This methods combined creates something playful yet sexually and romantically mature in the sound of the song.

### **3.2 Music Analysis- Vocals**

#### ***WAP*-Cardi B Featuring Meghan Thee Stallion**

The first thought I had when listening to the vocal technique of *WAP* is the importance of articulation, flow in the rhythm and emotional delivery. This is fundamental for the message the rapper is trying to convey. Cardi B's vocals are delivered with an assertiveness which drives the sound of the vocals forward. Cardi B has a very recognizable timbre in her voice and so does Megan Thee Stallion, at the same time they could not be more different. These methods translated into vocals that are not asking, they are demanding. They are both however rapping in their normal *register* where the voice comes from the chest (*cavity*), which makes the delivery more assured. This gives the soundscape of the vocals a nice and diverse dynamic. This in turn express a womans sexual want and need. Certain words/phrases are articulated through the song such as 'wet as pussy', 'weak', 'give me everything you got'. These examples are a mix of rhythmic play and assuring an understanding of a punchline and that is where *heard attitude of rhythm* and *heard attitude to pitch* comes in.

Even though I have found some vocal methods that translate into a sexual feel, I have an understanding of what the lyrics mean. It is hard for me to try to block them out and only focus on the sound. What I am getting at is that it is not certain that I would draw the same exact parallels to sexual music if i did not understand the language. However, at about 0.56 Megan Thee Stallion enters with a fast yet rhythmic flowing verse, a much softer delivery than Cardi B, although I think this could be because of the difference in timbre in their voices since none of the articulation and delivery is lacking. The backing vocals consist of Megan's moaning and sounds from her mouth such as an 'eeeh' sound when sticking her tongue out. These methods are more blunt and self explanatory, they sound sexual and there meant to. This method translates into most languages, not only for those who understand English. As a finishing comment I do think that the overall sound of the vocals gives a dominant and selfsured feel, which I interpret as sexual. Even though there is the existing problem of my

understanding of the English which can make me biased, I do believe that I can separate the two and hear the melody of the vocals.

### ***Rules-Doja Cat***

Out of the three examples I am analyzing, *Rules* are one of the more interesting ones when it comes to sexual feel in form of different vocal methods. In the chorus Doja Cat approaches the feel of the song with a raspy and sultry voice in her rap, originating from her use of a normal to low *register* in her voice and a chest (*cavity*) voice placement. The delivery of the words are however direct and distinct, articulating certain words more than others words like ‘pussy’ and ‘fuck’. This approach showcases her *heard attitude of rhythm*. These combined methods of the vocals give the feel of a woman that knows what she wants and who is self-confident. The timbre and delivery also gives a flirtatious feeling. Then there are the backing vocals that play off the lead vocals almost as an echo that translates into a moan, almost needy in agency. From 1.07 Doja Cat's *register* and *cavity* changes to a high head voice which sounds nasal and whiny but still holds on to the distinct delivery by her rhythm and flow, almost making it sound patternizing. Like a babying voice that slaps you on your fingers. The backing vocals continue in this part as well, mimicking or echoing the lead vocals. This gives off an illusion of a Medusa character, who has her snakes echo every word, seductively confirming her intentions. It could also be interpreted as one's inner mischievous voice(s). These methods delivers a sassiness and a babying voice that is common in sex talk. At 1.46 the backing vocals work almost as a choir while the lead vocals answer, giving it a call and response feel. Once again playing into the idea of voices talking to the singer in some form and then the lead delivering with conviction and directness. This then leads into an exhilarating pace where the articulation and aggression builds stronger and stronger, resembling building towards a sexual climax. When she reaches this climax it is heard in the way of her finally losing her breath, continuing the vocal performance throughout this. The last piece of vocals which I find interesting is around 2.06 where the vocals style resembles that of a famous movie persona, Austin Powers phrase “Do i make you horny baby?” embodying this and making it her own is a method that translates into some playfulness and flirtiness on her part.

### ***34+35-Ariana Grande***

At 0.01 second into the song Grande opens up her vocal performance with a playful, assertive and short ‘hmm’, delivered with a high velocity which makes it more cheeky. Throughout the chorus the

delivery is fluent and airy. I do not feel that she articulates one special word to get a point across in the same strong way they do in *WAP* and *Rules*. I do think this is due to the fact that Grande sings rather than raps, not to take away those elements of rap/ song she does include. Her vocal technique with air control as well as her changes from normal to high *register*, and from chest voice to head voice give a deep dynamic and makes the vocals come across as sensual and flirtatious. These methods give away to a mature but still cheeky sexual tension throughout the song. At 0.18 there is a build up in pitch that correlates to the meaning and build up of the lyrics, this method gives of a exhilarating speed of sexual excitement. At 2.02 there is a buildup and release method, Grande switches from her normal chest voice to her head voice. This repeats itself three times before she ultimately ascends to her high *register* once again, only to grant the listener a final long descending release. Again this speaks of excitement both emotionally and in a sexual way. Grande's backing vocals are harmonizing together with the lead vocals and gives depth to the overall sound. You can hear examples of this at 2.02 where the method of buildup and release is used. These harmonizing backing vocals just add to the idea of her excitement.

### 3.3 Music Analysis - Lyrics

#### ***WAP* - Cardi B Featuring Meghan Thee Stallion**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah  
Yeah, you fuckin' with some wet-ass pussy  
Bring a bucket and a mop for this wet-ass pussy  
Give me everything you got for this wet-ass pussy<sup>33</sup>

These are the first lines of lyrics that are presented to us in *WAP*. Right from the beginning there is no holding back, the lyrics are in your face and are delivered with conviction. Bringing a bucket and a mop emphasizing even further the concept of a 'WAP', her being so much in the mood that the partner is going to need a bucket and mop to clean it up. The line of giving her everything he/ she got I interpreted in two ways. 1- She has presented herself as ready to go, and wants her partner to give the best of the best in the bedroom. 2- She has presented herself as ready to go but wants something in return in material form.

'Put this pussy right in your face  
Swipe your nose like a credit card  
Hop on top, I wanna ride

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<sup>33</sup> Genius. *WAP*. *Genius*. 2021

I do a kegel while it's inside  
Spit in my mouth, look in my eyes  
This pussy is wet, come take a dive<sup>34</sup>

The first two lines in this section speaks of faceriding, and she is telling the partner to do this, no asking involved. Using the not so subtle metaphor of swiping a credit card. Another metaphor is the last line where she first very bluntly tells the partner that she is wet, then emphasizing this by inviting the partner in for a swim. The use of not so subtle metaphors is a recurrent method in this song, another example of this:

'I want you to park that big Mack truck right in this little garage'

In all honesty I do not think I need to give this line much explanation. Even though it is a metaphor it does speak for itself. In the last piece of the verse Cardi B's raps that it was due to her 'WAP' and not her skills with common house chores that made her husband put a ring on her finger.

In Megan's first verse she raps about getting something out of what she is giving. However, she also states that this is not needed because the partner would do anything for the 'WAP' and that the partner was ready to give her anything even before getting involved in the bedroom. She continues to state what her partner is willing to give her just because of how good that 'WAP' is. Example of this exchange:

Ask for a car while you ride that dick (While you ride that dick)  
You really ain't never gotta fuck him for a thang (Yeah)  
He already made his mind up 'fore he came (Ayy, ah)  
(...)  
He bought a phone just for pictures of this wet-ass pussy (Click, click, click)  
Paid my tuition just to kiss me on this wet-ass pussy (Mwah, mwah, mwah)  
Now make it rain if you wanna see some wet-ass pussy (Yeah, yeah)<sup>35</sup>

Cardi B continues my examples of unapologetically obvious metaphors rapping about letting her partner taste her only for him to turn diabetic caused by the sweetness of her 'WAP'. Even though the lyrics are very explicit and there is no hiding their intent, there still is a sort of flirty playfulness. There is also a sort of embedded humor in these metaphors. The lyrics uses several methods to convey a sexual feel, there is directness, there are not so subtly metaphors, and the sheer amount of play with words that

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<sup>34</sup> Genius. WAP. Genius. 2021

<sup>35</sup> Genius. WAP.

represent a 'WAP' are paramount. In some ways I feel I could have written down the hole lyrics and the reader would probably understand why the lyrics come across as sexual, but I also feel the importance of exploring in what way they are sexual. I'll end this analysis with one last 'WAP' metaphor.

Macaroni in a pot, that's some wet-ass pussy, huh<sup>36</sup>

### **Rules - Doja Cat**

Said play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions)

If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya)

When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion)

You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it)<sup>37</sup>

These are the first lines of lyrics from Doja Cat's *Rules*. Right away we get the method of directness and assertiveness that also could be found in *WAP*. She is not beating around the bush, she says what she says and means it. She raps about a partner that is a bit of a player and directs that partner to save those games for the bedroom and not her feelings. Later in the song she further elaborates on this by saying that the partner is manipulating her emotions despite her warnings and this does not fly by her. She wants devotion and the partner has now blown it, leaving her partner to take care of their sexual needs alone.

(And now you playin' with my emotions)

N\*gga, don't do it, you blew it

You tryna cast spells on a bitch with potions

N\*gga, I need devotion

(Leaving you with that lotion)<sup>38</sup>

After this part Doja Cat starts an exhilarating pace in her rap, almost as she's angry that the partner for not taking her up on her offer and instead opted for playing with her. In this verse she uses a lot of metaphors or words of associating to something that is wet. She also has a metaphor for her breasts being indistinguishable from one another, she displays this by comparing them to the famous Olsen twins models. Another interesting line is a direct quote from the movie *Austin Powers*. *Austin Powers* is a comedy movie about a British spy that likes the ladies and to "shag" a lot. The character often

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<sup>36</sup> Genius. WAP. *Genius*. 2021

<sup>37</sup> Genius. Rules. *Genius*. 2021

<sup>38</sup> Genius. Rules.



mentions his own sexappeal. The quote ‘Do I make you horny baby?’ speaks on different levels towards the sexual feel of the song: In one way it works as question towards the listener, have the song made you horny? Even if this is not Doja Cat’s intent it is an interesting method of including the listener into the song and the sexual landscape she has built with sound, vocals and lyrics. In another way it plays with the sexual dimentions of the song bringing in some sexual comedy, that is however only if you know the movie and catchphrase. It also ties in to this special kind of persona that belongs in the sexual landscape shes built in the song.

If you don't dive in that pussy like dolphins  
If he don't dive in that pussy like oceans  
Twins look identically like Olsens  
N\*gga, don't hide from the pussy, be open  
N\*gga wan' spy on the pussy like Austin  
(Do I make you horny, baby?)  
That's my ego that you stroking  
N\*gga, don't laugh 'cause the pussy ain't joking  
N\*gga, go splash when the pussy be soakin' (Yeah)<sup>39</sup>

To conclude, even though I interpet *Rules* lyrics to be sexually explicit, there is some aspect of vulnerability that shines through and this raises new questions for me. I can however not answer them here and now. She also brings a humoristic side of her to the song which gives the lyrics more dimension.

### **34+35 - Ariana Grande**

Unlike *WAP* and *Rules* Grandes lyrics are more modest on the sexual spectrum, however the lyrics are still higly explicit. The method of using metaphors is heavily used in 34+35 and the metaphors are both direct and more subtly where you as a listener have to think twice about what she means.

Grande starts off by singing about how her partner must think of her as crazy since she has been craving him so much and that she just want his ‘babies’, ethier referring to her wanting a actual baby, but by the nature of the lyrics it is more likely that she is referring to the sexual act itself. One of the interesting parts of Grande’s lyrics however, are the lines that at first sight lacks any kind of sexual implecation, but once listend to again is in fact highly so. Example of this:

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<sup>39</sup> Genius. Rules. *Genius*. 2021

I don't wanna keep you up (You up)  
But show me, can you keep it up? (It up)  
'Cause then I'll have to keep you up  
Shit, maybe I'ma keep you up, boy<sup>40</sup>

I will elaborate on a possible interpretation of this piece of lyrics. First of all, it is implied that she and her partner are about to go to bed and that she does not want to keep him awake with her cravings for him. She then proceeded to ask him cheekily if he can keep his manhood up which then resulted in her needing to keep him awake. To finally have the realization that something is going to happen and that it is her, that is doing this to him. In this way she still have the possibility to express sexual desire.

Can you stay up all night?  
Fuck me 'til the daylight  
Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)<sup>41</sup>

Above we have a good example of the opposite side of the method I mentioned in the previous paragraph. She plays off on the part of keeping her partner up and is now asking him directly if he can stay up all night and give her what she wants.

One other part of the lyrics I wanted to highlight is the section I have included below. First of she gives more examples on sexual metaphors that makes even stronger ties for me to deem it as a sexual song. However what is specially interesting in this part is the way shes talking about her sexual partner. She implies that she is his 'wifey' (wife) and that she does not need anybody else. And she further points to, that herself and her partners are lifelong partners with the last line where she expresses that they can share this intimate time for the rest of their life. The overall sexual and lustfilled feel of the song turns in to something more than just someone singing about wanting sex, it gives way to something romantic. Grande is not singing about just any man, she is singing to someone special and she thereby gives us a peek of an intimate act between herself and her partner.

Baby, you might need a seatbelt when I ride it  
I'ma leave it open like a door, come inside it  
Even though I'm wifey, you can hit it like a side chick  
Don't need no side dick, no

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<sup>40</sup> Genius. 34+35. *Genius*. 2021

<sup>41</sup> Genius. 34+35.

Yeah, we started at midnight

Go 'til the sunrise (Sunrise)

Done at the same time (Yeah)

But who's counting the time when we got it for life? (Got it for life)<sup>42</sup>

Last but not least, Grande conclude the song with singing 'Means I wanna "69" with you, no shit'<sup>43</sup>, and I almost feel like she is toying with me and the analysis at this stage, as to say 'duh, of course it is sexual'.

### 3.4 Summery Music Analysis

To summon up everything I have stated in the three sub hedges above, there is clear methods used to make all the songs stand out as sexual in some way or another. Although the three different components, sound, vocal and lyrics all have their own separate way of channeling a sexual feel, it is first when these componets are together that the contribute to a sexual song in whole.

The three component showed us that the sound and vocals of *WAP* is sexual to some extent, even without the lyrics. It showed us that *Rules* sound has a dance and bedroom friendly demeanor with its flirtatious and intimate feel and when we put all the components together we get a purley sexual song. The song comes shrouded in double meaning that taps into both lust and emotions. And last but not least it showed us that *34+35* plays in on a romantic sexual impression rather than pure lust, both in sound, vocals and lyrics.

## CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Now, how would these sexual songs be seen in relation to the two feminist stances? Where between good and bad in the scale do they fall? As I have demonstrated in the previous chapter there have been multiple methods used which make each song, in some way or another come across as sexual.

I will start off by discussing what can be observed about *WAP*'s relation to the two feminist stances. In the analysis I mentioned that the different bass lines together with the rhythm from the trap beat could invoke the same feeling parable to arousal. This could, from one of the feminist stances be problematic since it could be seen as a way of catering towards mens' desires. However, it could also be said that arousal could cater towards anyones' desire without the presence of gender. However, in

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<sup>42</sup>Genius. 34+35. *Genius*. 2021

<sup>43</sup>Genius. 34+35

*WAP* there are two more methods that give us this without the addition of vocals and lyrics. The sample ('there's some whores in this house') and Megan's adlibs. All these three methods could be seen as problematic. The sample could be seen as a negative sexual transgression by the very words used and the fact that it's performed by a man. Words like 'whore' have always been negatively loaded and the fact that a male sample is used by two female artists could exacerbate the justification of the misogynistic utilization of the word. In other words, one could argue that because the women use the word, their male counterparts will take that usage, not as a take-back in power, but as an okay way to keep using the word as a derogatory term. However, it would also be possible to argue that these women are taking the word "back", and using the word in another way, thereby owning it and shifting the definition of the word, thus conveying a message of *female empowerment* instead. Although this argument would be stronger if they would have recorded this phrase themselves instead of using the male version. Furthermore, Megan's adlibs (moans) could on one side be seen as a way of owning one's own sexuality but it could also be interpreted as a way to build up a landscape of lust to draw in a male audience, as we know sex sells and this results in a form of *self objectification*. Adding to this argument, the not so subtle metaphors in the lyrics and the assertiveness and directness of the vocal performance with lines such as 'ask for a car while you ride that dick' and 'pay my tuition just to kiss me on this wet ass pussy' is also problematic, it is catered towards men's desires and it becomes almost like a promise, "if you spend money on me I will give you something" type of deal. On the other side of the spectrum it is her choice how she decides to express herself, and it is also just a statement from Megan's side, it is her boasting about how good her 'WAP' is. In a way Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion provide women a voice to use and demonstrate that it is okay for women to ask for what they want and to embrace one's sexuality, making *WAP* a song with a *good* feminist message.

In 1,4 Eberhardt talks about the problem of black women adapting a male way of rapping and hip-hop's critique for its *objectification* of women. In one way it is possible to perceive this in *WAP* but I would say that Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion each have come into their own as artists, and they both have their own characteristics, not only in their lyrics, but in how they deliver these lyrics in their vocal performances.

Unlike *WAP*, *Rules* sound has a more distinct sexual feel yet it lacks the definition of gender, so it is not until the other components are introduced that we get a specifically female sexual feel. Once adding the other components the two feminist stances are relevant, and thereby *self objectification* and *female empowerment* can be discussed. The landscape of lust that I talked about in *WAP* can also be seen in *Rules*, and this also brings the same problems. In the lyrics of *Rules*, Doja Cat sings about an exchange between money and sex (like in *WAP*) and this can be seen as form of *self objectification*. However, the emotional aspect of *Rules* is not to be forgotten, although the sexual theme of the song, there are a lot of hidden meaning. Doja Cat express' that she is fine with a sexual game, but she do not want her emotions to be played with. This contrast gives away for a form of *female empowerment* where she not only owns her sexuality, but also her emotions along with it.

In *Rules* Doja Cat plays with acceleration that builds towards a climax. This becomes a sort of storytelling within the sexual landscape which once again can be viewed as a way of intising the male sex. But it can also be seen as a way for a woman to assert her agency over her sexuality and to be vocal about her wants and needs. Since women have a history of being silenced, the opportunity to express herself or her wants is a way of executing *female empowerment* and also a matter of having the choice to do so. As said about *WAP*, *Rules* can also be considered having a good feminist message, adding the nuance of staying true to ones' emotions and that it is ok to draw lines in a relationship.

When it comes to Eberhardt's points that I mentioned earlier in the text in relation to *WAP*, Doja Cat also trancedes this, maybe even more so than Cardi B and Megan Thee Stallion. In the vocal performance of *Rules* Doja Cat mixes singing with rap, she also as I have pointed out before, brings up a conversation of emotion among her sexual sound and lyrics, making the song and her performance her own.

*34+35* is the odd one out of the three songs, although as seen from my analysis, a form of sexual landscape can be heard, it is not presented in the same way as it is in *WAP* or *Rules*. Despite the very direct language in the lyrics and the vocal techniques, it gives of a romantic, rather than a pure sexual feel. The question is how this would be seen in relation to the feminist stances. On one side it could be said that Grande hides her sexual intent behind clouds of romance, that her way of expressing sexuality through music is romantaciced by the sound and her vocal performance. Her being more of a singer than Cardi B or Doja Cat reflects heavily on the overall feel of the song and also contribute to

this camouflaging of the sexual feel. Thereby *34+35*, in some ways winds up in a grey zone regarding a *good* or *bad* feminist message. On one hand it could be said that she becomes a wolf in sheep's clothing, on the other hand it does not matter how it is camouflaged, the song is still sexual. However, it is possible that the romantic sound and vocal performance overshadow the sexual lyrics and this leaves listeners to deem it less sexual than *WAP* and *Rules*. It is quite obvious that Grande is singing to someone in particular (her husband) and it could be that this in some way could be considered a more “okay” way of expressing sexuality. But in the spirit of *female empowerment* it should not matter who she directs her intentions towards. It is about letting a woman make her own choices and no matter if these choices could be seen as a way of catering towards the patriarchy, women should be able to have that power of choice.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The three songs can on each of their own be seen as good or bad relating to the two feminist stances. All of the songs can in one way or another be said to cater towards mens' desire, whether intentional or not, my opinion is of the latter. They all build landscapes of desire and sexuality, with methods used in the sound, vocals and lyrics. However, it is not until an aspect of femininity gets added that one is able to detect a form of gender and this in turn leaves the music in limbo until this is included. Some methods can be discussed by themselves in the light of *self-objectification* and *female empowerment*, like in *WAP*, meanwhile others need the combination of the other components like in *Rules* and *34+35* even more so considering the softer/ romantic approach.

The songs could either be seen as a *good* or *bad* way to convey a feminist message. But overall I do think that they all convey a form of *female empowerment* simply because a choice to sing/ rap about what pleases them has been made. However, I do also understand that this comes with certain problems. Maybe the exposure to sexual music is a step in the right direction.

It is clear from my research that all the songs I have analyzed could fall into a good or bad feminist stance depending on how they are viewed. However, I personally feel that there is a difference when a man or an industry uses a woman's sexuality for profit in contrast to when a woman explores and expresses her sexuality for the sake of herself. These kinds of songs should be seen as a way for

women to express themselves, to *empower* themselves. That it is every woman's right to do as they please with their mind, speech and body. What I think slips through the cracks in the discourse of sexual songs related to these feminist stances are the different dimensions it so often inherits. As stated in my analysis there are other aspects of the songs. It is not only that they are sexual and cater to men's desires and it's not only about *female empowerment*. In conclusion, *WAP* has an aspect of women having a voice to express their inner wants without shame. In *Rules* there is an aspect of deep emotion and fears of getting these emotions hurt and in *34 + 35* there is a wish or need to express love for a partner.

It would be interesting to further explore this topic by conducting polls among women to get an understanding of how everyday women view sexual music made by women. Perhaps even conducting a poll on men's thoughts and see how men's and women's views differ on this topic.

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*Rules*- Doja Cat

*34+35*- Ariana Grande

*Shave em dry*- Lucille Bogan

*Pussycat*-Missy Elliot

*Suck My Dick*- Lil Kim

*Anaconda*- Nicki Minaj

*Like A Virgin*- Madonna

*Bodak Yellow*- Cardi B

*Up*- Cardi B

*MOOO!*- Doja Cat

*Need to know*- Doja Cat

*You right*- Doja Cat

*Freak*- Doja Cat

*Cyber Sex*- Doja Cat

*34+35 Remix Featuring Doja Cat and Meghan Thee Stallion*- Ariana Grande

*Side to Side*- Ariana Grande

*Dangerous Woman*- Ariana Grande

Spotify playlist for music mentioned above:

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## **Lyrics**

### **WAP:**

[Intro: Cardi B, *Al "T" McLaran* & Megan Thee Stallion]

*Whores in this house*

*There's some whores in this house*

*There's some whores in this house*

*There's some whores in this house (Hol' up)*

I said certified freak, seven days a week

Wet-ass pussy, make that pullout game weak, woo (Ah)

[Chorus: Cardi B]

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

Yeah, you fuckin' with some wet-ass pussy

Bring a bucket and a mop for this wet-ass pussy

Give me everything you got for this wet-ass pussy

[Verse 1: Cardi B & *Megan Thee Stallion*]

Beat it up, n\*gga, catch a charge

Extra large and extra hard

Put this pussy right in your face

Swipe your nose like a credit card

Hop on top, I wanna ride

I do a kegel while it's inside

Spit in my mouth, look in my eyes

This pussy is wet, come take a dive

Tie me up like I'm surprised

Let's roleplay, I'll wear a disguise

I want you to park that big Mack truck right in this little garage

Make it cream, make me scream

Out in public, make a scene

I don't cook, I don't clean

But let me tell you how I got this ring (*Ayy, ayy*)

[Verse 2: Megan Thee Stallion]

Gobble me, swallow me, drip down the side of me (Yeah)

Quick, jump out 'fore you let it get inside of me (Yeah)

I tell him where to put it, never tell him where I'm 'bout to be (Huh)

I'll run down on him 'fore I have a n\*gga runnin' me (Pow, pow, pow)  
Talk your shit, bite your lip (Yeah)  
Ask for a car while you ride that dick (While you ride that dick)  
You really ain't never gotta fuck him for a thang (Yeah)  
He already made his mind up 'fore he came (Ayy, ah)  
Now get your boots and your coat for this wet-ass pussy (Ah, ah, ah)  
He bought a phone just for pictures of this wet-ass pussy (Click, click, click)  
Paid my tuition just to kiss me on this wet-ass pussy (Mwah, mwah, mwah)  
Now make it rain if you wanna see some wet-ass pussy (Yeah, yeah)

[Verse 3: Cardi B & Megan Thee Stallion]

Look, I need a hard hitter, need a deep stroker  
Need a Henny drinker, need a weed smoker  
Not a garter snake, I need a king cobra  
With a hook in it, hope it lean over  
He got some money, then that's where I'm headed  
Pussy A1 just like his credit  
He got a beard, well, I'm tryna wet it  
I let him taste it, now he diabetic  
I don't wanna spit, I wanna gulp  
I wanna gag, I wanna choke  
I want you to touch that lil' dangly thing that swing in the back of my throat  
My head game is fire, punani Dasani  
It's goin' in dry and it's comin' out soggy  
I ride on that thing like the cops is behind me (*Yeah, ah*)  
I spit on his mic and now he tryna sign me, woo

[Verse 4: Megan Thee Stallion]

Your honor, I'm a freak bitch, handcuffs, leashes  
Switch my wig, make him feel like he cheatin'  
Put him on his knees, give him somethin' to believe in  
Never lost a fight, but I'm lookin' for a beatin' (Ah)  
In the food chain, I'm the one that eat ya  
If he ate my ass, he's a bottom-feeder

Big D stand for big demeanor  
I could make ya bust before I ever meet ya  
If it don't hang, then he can't bang  
You can't hurt my feelings, but I like pain  
If he fuck me and ask "Whose is it?"  
When I ride the dick, I'ma spell my name, ah

[Chorus: Cardi B]

Yeah, yeah, yeah

Yeah, you fuckin' with some wet-ass pussy

Bring a bucket and a mop for this wet-ass pussy

Give me everything you got for this wet-ass pussy

Now from the top, make it drop, that's some wet-ass pussy

Now get a bucket and a mop, that's some wet-ass pussy

I'm talkin' wap, wap, wap, that's some wet-ass pussy

Macaroni in a pot, that's some wet-ass pussy, huh

[Outro: Al "T" McLaran]

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

There's some whores in this house

### **Rules:**

[Chorus]

Said play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions)

If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya)

When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion)

You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it)

Play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions, yeah)

If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya, yeah, yeah)

When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion, slow motion, yeah)

You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it, you know I want it)

[Verse 1]

Break some bread up, n\*gga, that butter my biscuit (Ha)

You ain't talk money, then really, that's none of my business (That's none of my biz)

I don't even need these lenses (Yeah)

20 on 20 my vision (Woo)

Bad yellow bitch with her eye on the prize  
But n\*gga, I ain't no minion (Yeah, yeah)  
Millions, thousands, billions (Trillions)  
Bobs on me like Dylan, blondes on me like Hilton  
Wendys on me like Williams, shouting, digging  
Look at me like I'm alien, bitch, I'm fucking reptilian  
Bitch, bitch, aw  
All y'all bitches was wrong  
Talkin' 'bout I fell off  
You ain't even get on  
Bitch, bitch, yaw  
All y'all bitches is precious  
Wait, I meant to say jealous  
All y'all bitches is jealous  
Bitch, bitch

[Chorus]

Said play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions)  
If you spend some money then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya)  
When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion)  
You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it)  
Play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions, yeah)  
If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya, yeah, yeah)  
When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion, slow motion, yeah)  
You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it, you know I want it)

[Verse 2]

(And now you playin' with my emotions)  
N\*gga, don't do it, you blew it  
You tryna cast spells on a bitch with potions  
N\*gga, I need devotion  
(Leaving you with that lotion)  
Telling me this and that, the third  
That shit for the birds, I'm ghosting  
If you don't dive in that pussy like dolphins  
If he don't dive in that pussy like oceans  
Twins look identically like Olsens  
N\*gga, don't hide from the pussy, be open  
N\*gga wan' spy on the pussy like Austin  
(Do I make you horny, baby?)  
That's my ego that you stroking

N\*gga, don't laugh 'cause the pussy ain't joking  
N\*gga, go splash when the pussy be soakin' (Yeah)  
Where that nigga who don't play mind games at?  
You got a fake gold chain on, change that  
Tryna spit game while I'm on my way out, late ass  
Where that nigga, man? Where he at? Where he at?

[Chorus]

Said play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions)  
If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya)  
When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion)  
You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it)  
Play with my pussy, but don't play with my emotions (Emotions, yeah)  
If you spend some money, then maybe I just might fuck ya (Fuck ya, yeah, yeah)  
When I shake that ass, I'ma do that shit in slow motion (Motion, slow motion, yeah)  
You got a whole lotta cash, and n\*gga, you know I want it (Want it, you know I want it)

**34+35:**

[Intro]

Hmm

[Verse 1]

You might think I'm crazy  
The way I've been cravin'  
If I put it quite plainly  
Just gimme them babies  
So what you doin' tonight?  
Better say, "Doin' you right" (Yeah)  
Watchin' movies, but we ain't seen a thing tonight (Yeah)

[Pre-Chorus]

I don't wanna keep you up (You up)  
But show me, can you keep it up? (It up)  
'Cause then I'll have to keep you up  
Shit, maybe I'ma keep you up, boy  
I've been drinkin' coffee (I've been drinkin' coffee; coffee)  
And I've been eatin' healthy (I've been eatin' healthy; healthy)  
You know I keep it squeaky, yeah (You know I keep it squeaky)  
Savin' up my energy (Yeah, yeah, savin' up my energy)



[Chorus]

Can you stay up all night?  
Fuck me 'til the daylight  
Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)  
Can you stay up all night? (All night)  
Fuck me 'til the daylight  
Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

[Verse 2]

You drink it just like water (Water)  
You say it tastes like candy  
So what you doin' tonight? (Tonight)  
Better say, "Doin' you right" (Alright)  
Watchin' movies, but we ain't seen a thing tonight (Yeah)

[Pre-Chorus]

I don't wanna keep you up (You up)  
But show me, can you keep it up? (It up)  
'Cause then I'll have to keep you up  
Shit, maybe I'ma keep you up, boy  
I've been drinkin' coffee (Said I've been drinkin' coffee; coffee)  
And I've been eatin' healthy (And I've been eatin' healthy; healthy)  
You know I keep it squeaky, yeah (Except this wine, babe)  
Savin' up my energy (Yeah, yeah, yeah)

[Chorus]

Can you stay up all night? (All night)  
Fuck me 'til the daylight (Daylight)  
Thirty-four, thirty-five (Thirty-five; yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)  
Can you stay up all night? (Can you stay?)  
Fuck me 'til the daylight (Can you stay?)  
Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

[Verse 3]

Oh yeah, yeah  
Baby, you might need a seatbelt when I ride it  
I'ma leave it open like a door, come inside it  
Even though I'm wifey, you can hit it like a side chick  
Don't need no side dick, no  
Got the neighbors yellin' "Earthquake!" (Earthquake)

4.5 when I make the bed shake

Put it down heavy even though it's lightweight (It's lightweight, yeah, yeah, yeah, babe)

Yeah, we started at midnight

Go 'til the sunrise (Sunrise)

Done at the same time (Yeah)

But who's counting the time when we got it for life? (Got it for life)

I know all your favorite spots (Favorite spots)

We can take it from the top (From the top)

You such a dream come true, true

Make a bitch wanna hit snooze, ooh

[Chorus]

Can you stay up all night?

Fuck me 'til the daylight (Yeah, yeah)

Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

(Thirty-four, thirty-five)

Can you stay up all night? (Do you know what that means?)

Fuck me 'til the daylight (Do you know what that means?)

Thirty-four, thirty-five (Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah)

Yeah, yeah, yeah

[Outro]

Means I wanna "69" with you

No shit

Math class

Never was good