

Where the waves meet the sky:  
Virginia Woolf, Kate Bush and the expression of musical androgyny

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## **Declaration**

Excepting that which has been properly acknowledged, this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in substantially the same form for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

*For Barbara, my mother and first love...*

*'whose heart is my heart's quiet home'*

Christina Rossetti

## Abstract

In popular music studies, androgyny is frequently used to describe a performance that demonstrates a fusion of male and female characteristics. The commitment to the image of the androgyne dominates interpretative strategies, and any discussion of how androgyny might be expressed in a song's musical elements are orientated around the concept's visual presence. In this thesis, I develop and apply a practice of 'listening out' to androgynous expression in the musical fabric of popular song, and I mobilise this through a comparative analysis of Virginia Woolf's novel *The Waves* (1931) and Kate Bush's song cycle *A Sky of Honey* (2005). I begin by providing an overview of the study of gender and sex in popular music, before focussing on examples that specifically consider androgyny. Identifying key discourses and methodological approaches I consider the possibilities and limitations in existing strategies. I close the chapter with some preliminary thoughts on how 'listening out' can enrich the understanding of androgyny's expressive capacity. In chapter one, I explore Woolf's formulation of androgyny as presented in *A Room*. By surveying critical responses to her formulation, I claim that the textual expression of Woolf's androgyny shifts the focus away the specificity of the sexed/gendered body of the androgyne. I then consider the reception of Bush's music in academic research, highlighting methodological strategies and her existing connection to androgyny. Drawing parallels between Woolf's and Bush's artistic ambitions and their expressions of androgyny, I explore the importance of ekphrastic approaches and musical-theoretical techniques, both for transmedial analysis and the interpretation of androgyny. In chapter two, I begin the comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky of Honey* by examining the creative context surrounding each text. I then explore expressive parallels in form, genre and narrative, before considering how Woolf's and Bush's textual

representations of pastoral complicates androgyny's connection to states of nostalgia. In chapter three, I examine the technical expression of characterisation. I argue that the evolving relationship between characters progresses through a state of deconstruction to the disarticulation of 'I', and in privileging a choric community reveals the androgynous subject as multiple, fluid and fragmented. The final chapter expands these explorations by examining the material life of androgyny. I mediate this through a study of the revolutionary potential of artistic practice, focussing specifically on the presence of birdsong in both works. Analysing two exceptional moments in *A Sky of Honey* and recontextualising comparable moments from the final soliloquy of *The Waves*, I trace the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*.

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obsession with literature and for instilling within me the importance of imagination.

## Introduction

### Towards a Reformulation of Androgyny

Or

### How to Catch a Rabbit

In this thesis, I develop and apply an approach of ‘listening out’ to explore how androgynous expression manifests in the fabric of popular song. My intention is to enrich the understanding of androgyny by shifting the focus away from the specificity of the sexed/gendered figure of the androgyne through engaging textual strategies and practices of listening. To demonstrate the potential of ‘listening out’ as an approach to conceptual interpretation, I will conduct a comparative analysis of Virginia Woolf’s novel *The Waves* (1931) and Kate Bush’s song cycle *A Sky of Honey* (2005).<sup>1</sup>

I chose Woolf because the formulation of androgyny she presents in her essay *A Room of One’s Own* is central to how the concept is understood in academic research, although I perceive her formulation to be more complex than general considerations allow, particularly when considered alongside her textual strategies. I will account for this as my thesis progresses, but my understanding of Woolf’s androgyny as the expression of multiplicity — rather than a sexed/gendered body rendered by the logic of the male/female binary — led me to *The Waves* because its textual complexity negates conventional interpretations of the concept. Where Woolf’s novel *Orlando*, for instance, evokes traditions of androgyny through descriptions of physical mutations, the textual strategies of *The Waves* do not represent androgyny in a straightforward way. For explicating the possibilities of ‘listening out’ to the textual expression of androgyny, *The Waves* provides the perfect literary environment.

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<sup>1</sup> From here, I will refer to *A Sky of Honey* as *A Sky*.

My reasons for focussing on Bush and *A Sky* are comparable. As an artist, she is characterised by elaborate physical performances, exploiting multimedia platforms and incorporating a range of techniques from mime, dance, theatre and film. Whilst her strong visual presence is balanced by complex compositional and production practices, there is not an extensive body of academic research dedicated to her music, and there is significantly less focus on her later works, including *A Sky*. Bush is not regarded as a traditionally androgynous performer, although there are several studies that highlight androgynous moments in her music. The interpretative strategies adopted in these perceptions prioritise visual presence, reflecting conventional understandings of what androgyny means. ‘Listening out’ presents an opportunity to expand upon the existing connection between Bush and androgyny, thereby enriching the understanding of conceptual meaning. *A Sky* is removed from the visual presentation typically associated with androgyny, and is, therefore, the ideal musical text through which to ‘listen out’ for androgynous expression.

‘Listening out’ to the textual expression of androgyny is an interpretative strategy that has not previously been adopted. As such, I will take a methodical approach, providing detailed information on the multiple interpretative layers necessary to make ‘listening out’ matter for conceptual expansion. I will begin by ‘setting the scene’, giving an overview of the debates that surround androgyny and offering an account of the concept’s controversial reception in the sex/gender debates of the twentieth century.

In 1973, the Modern Language Association (MLA) dedicated their annual conference to discussions on the literary, cultural and political significance of androgyny. The conference — which led to the publication of “The Androgyny Papers” in 1974 —

was conducted in response to increased academic interest in the concept of androgyny, particularly within the then emerging field of feminist literary theory (MacLeod, 1998, p.12). Significant in the resurgence of androgyny was Heilbrun's *Toward a Recognition of Androgyny*, the writing of which was inspired by Woolf and the aesthetics of the Bloomsbury group (Heilbrun, 1993).

Heilbrun's text is one of the first in academic discourse to recognise androgyny — defined as 'a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned' — as a positive step towards equality for women and liberation from sexual polarisation (Heilbrun, 1993, p.x). For Heilbrun, 'androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes' that 'seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate' (Heilbrun, 1993, pp.x-xi). She advances her claim by tracing the 'hidden river of androgyny', beginning in classical Greece and ending with Woolf, to demonstrate historical continuity in literary expressions of the unification of masculine and feminine principles (Heilbrun, 1993, p.xx). Central in her move toward the recognition of androgyny is highlighting the positive role of women within the social order, which she does by affirming the 're-entry of the feminine principle as a civilising force' (Heilbrun, 1993, p.21). Heilbrun's study of literary androgyny is part of a broader appeal to break the rigidity of normative gender definitions and the power it wields in society. This is demonstrated most clearly in the final chapter of the text, where Heilbrun frames the Bloomsbury Group and Woolf 'not as the apotheosis of the androgynous spirit, but as the first actual example of such a way of life in practice' (Heilbrun, 1993, p.115).

Heilbrun's promotion of androgyny was controversially received, and in influencing developing feminist literary theories, the cultural and political

ramifications of her ideas were central to discussions at the MLA's forum. Whilst Heilbrun was not alone in recognising the potential of androgyny as an emancipatory strategy — refer to Bazin, Freeman and Greene (1974) — others were more cautious, finding a 'strange collapsing of categories' inherent in androgyny's conceptualisation (MacLeod, 1998, p.16).

Gelpi, Secor and Harris found androgyny too attached to patriarchal value systems to be beneficial in liberatory strategies (1974). Gelpi examined nineteenth century uses of the concept to highlight the privilege given to the 'vision of the first sort of androgyny, the masculine completed by the feminine, but not of the second, the feminine completed by the masculine' (Gelpi, 1974, p.152). Secor argued that androgyny is 'essentially a male word' and was unconvinced of the concept's potential to incite cultural and individual change (Secor, 1974, p.162). Harris concluded that androgyny could have 'no positive value', and as an 'ideal image of liberation from traditional sex-role stereotypes' it is a sexist myth in disguise (Harris, 1974, p.171). Each of these critiques share unease regarding the relationship between men and women in the structure of androgyny's formulation. Gelpi, Secor and Harris associated androgyny with a patriarchal value system that regards women and feminine principles useful only for the elevation of male consciousness. For these commentators, the vision of androgyny as a strategy for equality was compromised by the narratives of history, with any revised model unable to deny, or adequately respond to, androgyny's connection to essentialist understandings of sex and gender.

In response to the reception of her book, Heilbrun returned to her original thesis and contributed further notes in "The Androgyny Papers" (Heilbrun, 1974, pp.143-149). Heilbrun addressed the assumptions in her method and clarified her initial intentions for engaging androgyny above other strategies. She emphasised how

enmeshed androgyny is, often to the point of conflation, with other discourses of sexuality — for instance hermaphroditism, bisexuality and homosexuality — and argued that the ‘whole discussion is uncomfortably burdened with the baggage of the former usage’ (Heilbrun, 1974, pp.143-148). On this point, she clarified her original intention as an attempt to ‘conceptualise the world in new ways’, to ‘startle’, ‘to penetrate our age-old defenses and make us aware of the need to give up stereotyped roles and modes of behaviour’, and perhaps make possible ‘interesting new approaches to the study of literature’ (Heilbrun, 1974, pp.147-149). Whilst Heilbrun’s work divided opinions, her text prompted scholars to ask questions about the conceptualisation of androgyny beyond conventional understanding.

I take Heilbrun’s sentiment as my starting point, and as other scholars have ‘picked up the notion of androgyny, criticized it, turned it inside out [and] shook it vigorously’ (Heilbrun, 1974, p.144), so I take my practice of ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression to enrich conventional notions about what the concept means. Within this practice, I work *with* the complexities of the concept’s historical configuration to reveal the *possibilities* of androgyny. Despite its controversial reception — which continued beyond the historical moment outlined above and will be discussed at various moments throughout the thesis — androgyny has maintained a persistent presence in discourses that interrogate normative structures of sex and gender. My research takes this persistent re-emergence as an invitation to launch a new investigation into the concept’s potential.

To facilitate this exploration, I will extend the study of literary androgyny to the study of popular music, where the figure of the androgyne intersects with social, cultural and political inquiries into expressions of sex and gender in musical

performance. My primary focus will be a comparative study of androgynous expression in Woolf's novel *The Waves* and Bush's song cycle *A Sky*, through which I will apply my practice of 'listening out'. In chapter one, I provide a detailed overview of Woolf's formulation of androgyny, its critical reception and role within the wider androgyny debates of the twentieth century. I will provide a similar overview of academic research focussed on Bush, including her existing relationship to androgyny, before drawing parallels with Woolf's creative aesthetic.

To contextualise the importance of 'listening out' as an interpretative approach to the close reading of *The Waves* and *A Sky* that follows, in this chapter I will explore key texts in the study of sex and gender in popular music research. I will follow this with a discussion of texts from the field that focus specifically on androgyny.

Presenting these literature reviews chronologically, I will show how androgyny's conceptual engagement has evolved alongside the wider discipline, identifying the possibilities and limitations of existing interpretative and methodological strategies. Where pertinent, I will draw on androgyny's wider historical context to show how the concept has progressed alongside the primary debates outlined above. I will close this chapter with an impression of my practice of 'listening out', outlining key influences upon my thinking, whilst detailing how listening can enrich androgyny's conceptualisation.

#### Sex, gender and popular music studies: An overview

In this section, I explore key texts from the study of sex and gender in popular music research to provide an overview of the discursive field and methodological approaches employed. Popular music scholarship is vast and transdisciplinary, with contributions to knowledge shared between academic fields, for example feminist theory,



postcolonial studies, musicologies, literary criticism, gender and queer theories.

Acknowledging that it is beyond the scope of my research to provide a comprehensive history of popular music studies, I will summarise texts that I consider most relevant to my research, offering suggestions for further reading where appropriate.

Susan McClary – *Feminine Endings* (1991)

Originally published in 1991, McClary's *Feminine Endings* initiated alternative responses to questions surrounding music, gender and sexuality (2002). Working towards a feminist interpretation of music, McClary sought to incorporate analytical strategies from literary and film studies into musicological research. Prior to the emergence of feminist criticism, musicologists 'preferred dealing with formal structures and objective information', with the 'dimensions of experience', such as the 'emotional and bodily elements in music', being left to individual listeners' (McClary, 2002, p.xvii). Despite the institutional challenges, some women musicologists 'began to excavate the history of women composers and musicians', bringing to light individual performers, teachers and patrons of music, whilst exposing traditions that marginalised 'female participation in music' (McClary, 2002, p.5).

McClary demonstrated how 'music theorists and critics often rely on analogies to cultural habits of thought based on a binary opposition between male and female', and interrogated convention whilst furthering new theoretical perspectives (McClary, 2002, p.x). She worked to find a 'culturally informed method of analysis' and found the developmental relationship between theory and practice an important discursive manoeuvre (Burns, 2002, p.50). The text is guided by overarching questions that support McClary's exploration of 'the underlying premises that come along with the conventions and basic procedures of music' (McClary, 2002, p.xi, p.7). McClary

clusters these questions into five groups.

The first — *‘musical constructions of gender and sexuality’* — concerns the historical development of a musical semiotics of gender in compositional practice and the creation of ‘conventions for constructing “masculinity” and “femininity”’ (McClary, 2002, pp.7-9). Beginning with the rise of opera in the seventeenth century, McClary connects theory to practice, demonstrating how the social organisation of gender in particular historical moments is expressed through musical repertoires (McClary, 2002, p.8).

The second group — *‘gendered aspects of traditional music theory’* — considers how music is shaped by constructions of gender, and upon what premise (conscious or unconscious) a composer chooses particular musical metaphors to create male and female characters (McClary, 2002, pp.8-12). McClary shows how the language of music theory has often relied upon metaphors of gender, illustrating her point with the classification of cadences, which are determined masculine or feminine based upon the strength of the endings they offer (McClary, 2002, p.9). She argues that this distinction reinforces the binary opposition of masculine/feminine and its corresponding attributes strong/weak (McClary, 2002, pp.9-10).<sup>2</sup>

The third cluster attends to questions of *‘gender and sexuality in musical narrative’* (McClary, 2002, pp.12-17). Here, McClary is concerned with how ‘music itself often relies heavily upon the metaphorical simulation of sexual activity for its effects’ (McClary, 2002, p.12). Drawing upon theories of narratology, McClary notes how the masculine (protagonist) theme typically subsumes the feminine (Other) to satisfy narratives of tension and release (McClary, 2002, p.14). She claims that these

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<sup>2</sup> In her discussions, McClary also cites examples — for instance Schoenberg’s desire for an ‘asexual musical discourse’ — where the gendered structures of traditional music theory are negotiated and resisted (McClary, 2002, p.2).

narratives become naturalised through time and as ‘habits of cultural thought that guarantee the effectiveness of music’, they contribute towards how music ‘makes sense’ to its audience (McClary, 2002, p.16).

The fourth cluster focuses upon ‘*music as a gendered discourse*’ and the feminine gender identity that is historically assigned to music (McClary, 2002, pp.17-18). McClary weighs the impact of this association and considers the influence of reclamation manoeuvres taken by male musicians upon the development of musical discourse, including theoretical and analytical methodologies.

The fifth group expands the previous four outlined above and revolves around ‘*discursive strategies of women musicians*’ (McClary, 2002, pp.18-19). McClary considers how women have been excluded from music education and training, identifying ways twentieth century female artists have forged a path into institutions from which they were once barred. She examines compositional practices that embrace and resist the ‘semiotic code[s] they have inherited’, challenging the expectations imposed upon women musicians by questioning the significance of gender identity in the reception of music (McClary, 2002, p.19). McClary points to women musicians who deploy strategies that combine an interrogation of ‘inherited conventions’ with attempts to ‘reassemble them in ways that make a difference inside the difference itself’, ‘envisioning narrative structures with feminine endings’ (McClary, 2002, p.19).<sup>3</sup>

Crucial in all five clusters of questions — which McClary mobilises through an analysis of multiple genres — is the understanding of music as a social discourse. Her interrogation of musical conventions through a combination of musical-theoretical techniques, historical study and critical theory supports this understanding,

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<sup>3</sup> McClary cites Joan Tower, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Thea Musgrave, Pauline Oliveros and Libby Tarsen as examples.

showing how ‘music is always dependent on the conferring of social meaning...[and] the study of signification in music cannot be undertaken in isolation from the human contexts that create, transmit, and respond to it’ (McClary, 2002, p.21). This approach has made *Feminine Endings* an invaluable text in musicological disciplines, including popular music studies.

Lori Burns and Mélissee Lafrance – *Disruptive Divas* (2002)<sup>4</sup>

Published in 2002, *Disruptive Divas* focusses on the music of Tori Amos, Courtney Love, Me’Shell Ndegéocello and P.J. Harvey to ‘make sense of the multitudinous mechanisms through which four women have contested the discursive regimes of sex, gender and race organizing late-twentieth-century mass culture’ (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.1).

The text provides close readings of songs, combining approaches from musicology and sociocultural theory to find a current of resistance politics in popular music songs of the 1990s. Each chapter explores themes of ‘gender consciousness, sex/gender performance and performativity, agency and resistance’, and attempts to understand how these articulations are ‘produced, sustained, and understood within a contemporary Western popular cultural imaginary’ (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.xiv). Whilst the writers provide individual readings in the context of their respective disciplines, they work together to develop an interdisciplinary methodology that supports their investigations into disruptive musical expression.

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<sup>4</sup> I also point the reader to the following texts published between *Feminine Endings* and *Disruptive Divas*: Gaar *She’s a Rebel: The History of Women in Rock & Roll* (1993), Walser *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (1993), O’Brien *She Bop: The Definitive History of Women in Rock, Pop and Soul*, Reynolds and Press *The Sex Revolts: Gender, Rebellion and Rock ‘n’ Roll* (1995), Negus *Popular Music in Theory* (1996), Whiteley (ed.) *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (1997), Frith and McRobbie ‘Rock and Sexuality’ (1990), Bayton *Frock Rock: Women Performing Popular Music* (1999), Whiteley *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (2000) and Fast *In the Houses of the Holy: Led Zeppelin and the Power of Rock Music* (2001).

Burns' and Lafrance's choice of songwriter is based upon the ability of each artist to 'adopt marginal, countercultural positions in and through their creative work' and 'disquiet and unsettle the listener' through music (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.2). Influenced by McClary, Burns' musical-theoretical methods consider how 'unexpected instrumental and/or vocal strategies' and 'failure to resolve tensions...in the musical and narrative norms...ultimately destabilize the conventional listening experience' (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.3).<sup>5</sup> Burns and Lafrance also explore creative control and the processes of music making, highlighting how their chosen artists successfully navigate a male-dominated industry to become 'creative actors in their experiences of musical production' (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.3). Lafrance argues that ensuring creative control 'constitutes a formidable and formerly inaccessible vehicle of gynocentered self-expression', which contributes towards how the 'autobiographical "female" voice is disseminated in popular culture' (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.3).

*Disruptive Divas* represents a crucial chapter in the study of gender in popular music because Burns and Lafrance contextualise their approach amidst broader debates in feminist and gender theories, particularly those which 'allow for an agential gendered subject without effacing the ever-present regulatory technologies of sex/gender regimes' (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.12). Here, Butler's theory of gender performativity is a key influence. (Burns and Lafrance, 2002, p.10-11). Gender performativity refers to the enactment of gender through corporeal significations, such as 'words, acts, gestures', which 'produce the effect of an internal core or substance' (Butler, 2006, p.185). The repetition of acts and gestures secures the performance of gender and give the impression of an essence, or 'organising core', which allows the

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<sup>5</sup> Burns also cites Cusick (1993) and Solie (1993) as influences.

‘regulation of sexuality’ (Butler, 2006, p.186).

This understanding of gender is important in *Disruptive Divas* because it provides an alternative context through which to interpret the disruption of patriarchal power and heteronormative femininity expressed by Amos, Love, Ndegéocello, and Harvey. Gender performativity allows Burns and Lafrance to explore how artists negotiate and subvert the political expectations of mainstream popular culture. Their overarching theoretical framework supports this exploration, and in avoiding the installation of a blanket definition, Burns and Lafrance encourage open-ended interpretations that promote a reader-orientated approach.

Sheila Whiteley – *Research Strategies of the Unruly Feminine* (2009)<sup>6</sup>

Whiteley has been contributing to research on popular music and gender since the late 1990s and she is preoccupied with questions about what it means to be a man or woman.<sup>7</sup> In her work on research strategies of the unruly feminine, she explores how feminine gender identities are approached in popular music research. Butler’s theory of gender performativity is a key influence on Whiteley for the insight it offers into how femininity ‘shifts with cultural norms surrounding sexuality’ (Whiteley, 2009, p.205).

Whiteley is concerned with strategies that avoid ‘simple description’ and ‘help understand femininity within the gendered constraints of popular music’ (Whiteley, 2009, p.206). She warns against the imposition of interpretations and advocates an

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<sup>6</sup> See also Hawkins *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (2002), Bannister *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities and 1980s Indie Guitar Rock* (2006), Whiteley and Rycenga (eds.) *Queering the Popular Pitch* (2006), Peraino *Listening to the Sirens* (2005), Jarman-Ivens (ed.) *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music* (2007) and Leonard *Gender in the Music Industry: Rock, Discourse and Girl Power* (2007).

<sup>7</sup> Refer to Whiteley (ed.) *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (1997), *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (2000) and *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age and Gender* (2005).

approach that supports the context of individual songs, albums and their production (Whiteley, 2009, p.206). Whiteley argues that relying on lyric analysis as the main interpretative approach lacks that ‘crucial ingredient when exploring meanings’, and ‘it is the way in which the words combine with the music...that both impacts on and informs the melodic nuance and hence the meaning of words’ (Whiteley, 2009, p.206). Whiteley’s approach is underpinned by Middleton’s work on dialogics, which proposes an intertextual methodology to show how meaning is ‘produced through dialogue within the textures, voices and structures; between producers and addressees; between discourses, musical and other’ (Middleton, quoted in Whiteley, 2009, p.207).

Whiteley notes how the interpretation of gender and sexuality is affected by developments in gender theories, citing the influence of queering upon research approaches in popular musicology. Her strategy explores the affective powers of popular musics upon listeners and audiences, and she draws upon Oakes’ work on Stevie Nicks’ fan communities to explicate her argument (Whiteley, 2009, p.210).

Whiteley explores the significance of repetitive acts in perpetuating heteronormative constructions of gender. Applying this to Nicks — whose ‘witchiness and hyperfemininity’ are crucial to her reception (Oakes, quoted in Whiteley, 2009, p.210) — Whiteley considers how normative expressions of femininity can disrupt and disturb hegemonic gender identity, with music making possible the reclamation of ‘myths surrounding femininity’ (Whiteley, 2009, p.211). To support this claim, Whiteley considers the importance of feminine archetypes in the music of Kate Bush and Tori Amos.<sup>8</sup> She details the storytelling and compositional practices of both artists to explore their reclamation of the ‘historical construction of femininity’ (Whiteley,

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<sup>8</sup> Whiteley’s research incorporates ‘history, literature, biography, queering, archetypes and Jungian psychology’, and the engagement of each is determined by her choice of songs — Bush’s ‘Waking the Witch’ and ‘Wuthering Heights’, and Amos’ ‘The Beekeeper’ (Whiteley, 2009, p.219).

2009, p.213). Her analysis joins social, historical and biographical readings with lyrical, musical-theoretical and performance analysis to account for how Bush and Amos bring the 'inner space of the imagination' to their compositional practice (Whiteley, 2009, p.218).

Whiteley's discussion on research strategies and femininity places method alongside practice to 'explore how "meaning" can be inscribed within the shifting formulations of femininity' (Whiteley, 2009, p.219). Her approach is guided by her choice of artists, the context created by specific songs, and historical and contemporary narratives of femininity. Whiteley emphasises the 'relationship between femininity and popular music' whilst showing how existing research methods need to advance 'new interpretational strategies' and 'challenge received meanings' (Whiteley, 2009, pp.219-220).

Jason Lee Oakes – *Masculinities in Popular Music* (2009)

Oakes' exploration of masculinity in popular music is structured around questions of what it means to be a man and what it means to be masculine (Oakes, 2009, p.221). He argues that popular music can help answer these questions because it operates in a 'network of gendered codes and institutions' and is 'continually and compulsively bound up with the interrogation of gender' (Oakes, 2009, p.221).

Oakes considers 'masculinity as essence', 'masculinity in crisis' and 'masculinity without men' as three approaches taken to the study of masculinity in



popular music (Oakes, 2009, p.221).<sup>9</sup> The first is ‘defined through binary distinctions’, the second sees masculinity ‘threatened through multiple contradictions’, whilst the third considers how masculinity is ‘displaced through the abject sublime’ (Oakes, 2009, p.221).

Whilst Oakes draws upon the theory of gender performativity to provide context for his discussion, he focusses specifically upon Butler’s use of the Aretha Franklin song, ‘(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman’ (Oakes, 2009, p.221). Butler draws upon this song in *Gender Trouble* to examine what it means ‘to be’ male or female, arguing that ‘feeling like a natural woman’ is achieved through ‘differentiation from the opposite gender’: ‘one is one’s gender to the extent that one is not the other gender’ (Butler, 2006, p.30). For Oakes, this differentiation is important because it is sustained by a ‘naturalized binary relationship’ that assumes heterosexuality and produces essentialised gender (Oakes, 2009, pp.221-222). Referring to McClary’s work in *Feminine Endings*, specifically her claim that musical conventions mark femininity as inferior, Oakes wonders about the ‘default and dominant subject position’ given to masculinity’ (Oakes, 2009, p.222). Specifically, he is concerned about the ‘concealed masculinist perspective’ and how narratives of dominance are musically encoded in popular music (Oakes, 2006, p.222).

Through this frame, Oakes contextualises his discussion of ‘masculinity as essence’, interpreting Bo Diddley’s 1955 song ‘I’m a Man’ through an analysis of singing style, onstage behaviours, media reception, lyrics and instrumentation (Oakes,

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<sup>9</sup> Other texts focused on masculinity in popular music include: Jarman-Ivens (ed.) *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music* (2007), Biddle and Knights (eds.) *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location: Between the Global and the Local* (2007), Biddle and Gibson (eds.) *Masculinity and Western Musical Practice* (2009), Hawkins *The British Pop Dandy: Masculinity, Popular Music and Culture* (2009) and Prince: *The Making of a Pop Music Phenomenon* (2011), Biddle *Music, Masculinity and the Claims of History: The Austro-German Tradition from Hegel to Freud* (2011), Forman and Neal (eds.) *That’s the Joint: The Hip-Hop Studies Reader* (2012), Purvis (ed.) *Masculinity in Opera: Gender, History and New Musicology* (2013) and Bradley ‘Barbz and Kings: Explorations of Gender and Sexuality in Hip-Hop’ (2015).

2009, pp.223-227). Oakes compares this track to Peggy Lee's 1963 recording 'I'm a Woman' to show how masculinity as essence is defined in relation to essentialised femininity and is similarly dependent upon the repeated performance of accepted ideas concerning gendered identity. He explores how the binary understanding of gender has informed popular music genres, reaching into 'every aspect of their associated cultures: from musical instruments...to performance conventions [and] practices of consumption' (Oakes, 2009, p.226). Tracing the idea of naturalised masculinity from its expression in one song to the homosociality of rock music scenes, Oakes demonstrates the various ways 'masculinity has retained...power and coherency in many domains of popular music' (Oakes, 2009, p.227).

Shifting to masculinity in crisis, Oakes interprets Pulp's 1998 track 'I'm a Man', which in contrast to Bo Diddley's performance expresses the 'contradictions of masculinity' and the complexities of sexual fantasy and desire through lyrical themes of struggle and alienation (Oakes, 2009, p.228). He argues that these interrelated themes challenge the assumed naturalness of masculinity and achieves differentiation through ambiguity and multiplicity (Oakes, 2009, p.227). Through analysing frontman Jarvis Cocker's voice and vocal technique, Oakes argues that the masculinity on display is learned and marketed rather than natural (Oakes, 2009, p.229).

Oakes connects the song's narratives to the 'crisis in masculinity' and the 'shift in gendered consumerism' beginning in the 1980s (Oakes, 2009, pp.230-231). Exploring theories on the roots of this crisis and its social and political developments, Oakes shows how emerging contradictions in masculinity creates precarious and uncertain roles for male subjects (Oakes, 2009, pp.230-232). He connects this lack of 'substantial reality' to music in the age of sound recording and mass mediation, arguing that the 'very notion of "copy" is contradictory if one lacks a singular ideal or

object to be copied' (Oakes, 2009, p.232). Oakes argues that in popular music studies, where 'corresponding notions of gendered authenticity' are 'consistently aligned' with masculinity, the inconsistency of masculinity is a central discourse (Oakes, 2009, pp.232-233).<sup>10</sup>

Discussing the final approach to masculinity in popular music studies — masculinity without men — Oakes draws upon Halberstam's theory of 'female masculinity' (Oakes, 2009, p.235). Halberstam's work is predicated upon the claim that 'masculinity must not and cannot and should not reduce down to the male body and its effects' (Halberstam, 1998, p.1). Given this, women who express masculinity are engaged in more than imitation because 'female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity' (Halberstam, 1998, p.1). Crucially, the expression of masculinity by women does not equate to the reproduction or reinforcement of male power, rather, female masculinity is concerned with engaging its own forms of masculinities. Halberstam argues that whilst these expressions challenge the coherence of male masculinity and traditional notions of maleness, 'female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing' (Halberstam, 1998, p.1). Challenging the common perception that female masculinity indicates a form of maladjustment, Halberstam argues that such expressions expose the mechanisms that construct and sustain bare masculinity. Oakes draws upon this

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<sup>10</sup> For further reading on issues of authenticity in popular music see Grossberg *We Gotta Get Out Of This Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (1992), Frith *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (1996), Moore 'Authenticity as Authentication' (2002), Marshall *Bootlegging: Romanticism and Copyright in the Music Industry* (2005), Auslander *Performing Glam Rock: Gender and Theatricality in Popular Music* (2006), Dibben 'Subjectivity and the Construction of Emotion in the music of Björk' (2006) and 'Vocal Performance and the Projection of Emotional Authenticity' (2009), Richardson 'Televised Live Performance, Looping Technology and the Nu-Folk: KT Tunstall on *Later...with Jools Holland*' (2009), Bradby 'Growing up to be a rapper? Justin Bieber's duet with Ludacris as transcultural practice' (2017), Askerøi 'Spectres of masculinity: Markers of vulnerability and nostalgia in Johnny Cash' (2017) and Coulter 'Singing from the heart: Notions of gendered authenticity in popular music' (2017).

idea to analyse P.J Harvey's performance 'Man-Size' from her 1993 album *Rid of Me*.

Oakes notes that the song, told in first-perspective, addresses 'what it takes to be a man', as the protagonist expresses anxiety at 'how (s)he will "measure up" to the expected dimensions of the phallus both literally and figuratively' (Oakes, 2009, p.236). Oakes argues that this anxiety is amplified by two versions of the song Harvey includes on the album (Oakes, 2009, p.236). He offers an analysis of both songs, focussing on the intersection of instrumental arrangement, vocal delivery and lyrics. Whilst Oakes identifies the musical and lyrical construction of masculinity in each version, he reads Harvey's construction of masculinity in 'Man-Size' as 'audibly sick — both sick in terms of perversity and sick in terms of weakness and decline' (Oakes, 2009, p.238). Further, Harvey's presentation of abjection, whether in lyrical imagery, performance style, production technique or composition, allows her to submit both masculinity and femininity to 'messy treatment' (Oakes, 2009, p.239).<sup>11</sup> Concluding his discussion of Harvey's music, Oakes claims that 'by transforming gender into a kind of freak show, abject masculinities are paraded before our eyes and ears, and masculinity is revolting in both senses of the word' (Oakes, 2009, p.239).

Oakes' discussion of masculinities in popular music demonstrates how images and behaviours normatively associated with masculinities can unpack the complexities of gender and its social and cultural relevance. Tracing the notion of gender as naturalised and essential, Oakes shows how popular music performance can reinforce and interrogate masculinity, whilst anticipating emerging masculinities. He combines gender and cultural theories with interpretations of instrumental arrangement, production technique and performance style to show how gender expression is codified in song. Contributing to a discipline that is continually developing, Oakes'

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<sup>11</sup> Oakes draws upon Fox's work on the 'abject sublime' in country music (2004) and Kristeva's psychoanalytical theory of abjection (1980).

study reinforces the significance of popular music as a site that reflects upon and engages with ‘associations, ideologies and behavioural norms that circulate around masculinity’ (Oakes, 2009, p.239).

Marita B. Djupvik – *Female Masculinity and Missy Elliott* (2017)<sup>12</sup>

Djupvik’s contribution to Hawkins’ anthology on popular music and gender develops the strategies taken by Oakes in his interpretation of P.J Harvey’s female masculinity (Djupvik, 2017, pp.117-131).<sup>13</sup> Djupvik’s research explores ‘what happens when a female artist adopts various signifiers of masculinity...those that are deemed as superficial...and those that are considered substantive’ through a reading of Missy Elliott’s video ‘Work It’ (Djupvik, 2017, p.117). Like Oakes, Djupvik’s discussion starts from the idea that ‘certain representations of masculinity have traditionally been perceived as authentic’, where femininity has been considered artificial and constructed (Djupvik, 2017, p.117). Djupvik’s work, however, intersects with developing research in popular music scholarship that claims masculinity is as constructed as femininity (Djupvik, 2017, p.117). This claim is central to Djupvik’s analysis of ‘voice production, choice of instrument and expression of attitude’ in Missy Elliott’s performance, which she reads through Halberstam’s theory of female masculinity (Djupvik, 2017, p.117).

As with the other examples of popular music research explored above,

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<sup>12</sup> Published between Oakes’ and Djupvik’s work, I would also recommend: Stras (ed.) *She’s So Fine: Reflections on Whiteness, Femininity, Adolescence and Class in 1960s Music* (2010), Jarman-Ivens *Queer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (2011), Jennings and Gardner (eds.) *Rock On: Women, Aging and Popular Music* (2012) and Hawkins *The British Pop Dandy: Masculinity, Popular Music and Culture* (2016).

<sup>13</sup> Hawkins’ companion provides an overview of the most recent debates in popular music and gender, whilst accounting for how the discipline has developed. The companion considers gender from multiple perspectives, from how gender intersects with the definition of other social categories, to a reconsideration of analytical perspectives from ‘fresh audiovisual perspectives’, to critiques of the music industry and the ‘phenomenon of celebrity’, to ‘investigations of the dissonances between sexuality and gender’ (Hawkins, 2017, p.8).

Djupvik's approach is a combination of theory and practice. She considers details of Elliott's biography, highlighting the struggles she faced to acquire the status of self-produced artist, whilst weighing these achievements against the expectations of the music industry and the precarious role of women of colour within a predominantly white male-dominated business (Djupvik, 2017, pp.118-119). These details contextualise Djupvik's reading of Elliott's video 'Work It' and the presentation of four personas – the MC, the music producer and instrumentalist, the butch and the queen bee (Djupvik, 2017, p.119).

Djupvik orientates her analysis of the MC around Elliott's choice of clothes and vocal style, identifying an attitude of performance associated with male MCs (Djupvik, 2017, p.122). Within the MC persona, Djupvik finds four distinct vocal styles — 'a talking voice, a lead vocal rap, a backing vocal rap and a shouting voice' — which Elliott uses to create her own 'crew' through studio effects (Djupvik, 2017, p.122). By drawing on common practices and traditions in mainstream hip-hop videos, Elliott performs 'female masculinity by signifying masculinity', a strategy that is reinforced as 'she draws attention to how the crew is constructed and how she can control them with her own voice' (Djupvik, 2017, p.122).

Djupvik connects the manipulation of voice through studio effect to the character of the producer and instrumentalist. She claims that Elliott's 'producer role is audible' through the 'choice of instrument' and in 'the virtuoso use of samples of and studio effects' (Djupvik, 2017, p.123). Tracing historical narratives of male virtuosity in music performance and production, Djupvik interprets the turntable imagery in the song as parodic expression, as Elliott 'employs her skills to challenge gender norms and invade the male-dominated space' by flipping expectations and ensuring her 'virtuoso command' of studio equipment (Djupvik, 2017, pp.124-125).

This is underlined by the air turntable imagery, which demonstrates Elliott's 'ability to claim power that traditionally has been reserved for men' and qualifies her for Halberstam's definition of the butch (Djupvik, 2017, p.126).

Djupvik concludes by examining Elliott's performance as the queen bee, contextualising her discussion through the role of female MCs in histories of hip-hop and rap. She demonstrates how Elliott's adoption of multiple personas — including male identified characters — 'draws attention to the cultural constructedness of the macho black masculinity' common in hip-hop videos (Djupvik, 2017, pp.126-127). Drawing on African American history, Djupvik recognises that whilst Elliott acknowledges the historical struggle of her male colleagues, she refuses the male gaze and the role traditionally given to women in hip-hop. This, Djupvik argues, reinforces Elliott's engagement of the 'butch character'; her 'masculine appearance, her vocal style and her virtuoso studio production' creating a space beyond male and female figures typical in mainstream hip-hop videos (Djupvik, 2017, p.128).

Elliot's practice of the 'queer trickster' leads Djupvik to her interpretation of Elliott as 'queen bee, who, uncannily, reverses the hierarchy of power in both a mainstream hip-hop video and the recording studio' (Djupvik, 2017, p.128). Djupvik interprets the bee and beehive imagery in the video as an inversion of the harem, 'a compelling metaphor for success' for several male hip-hop artists, but Elliott's 'beehive metaphor inverts the studio's power balance' (Djupvik, 2017, pp.128-129). Djupvik's analysis combines intersecting interpretative narratives from social and music history, biographical readings, gender theory to audiovisual analytical techniques. Through reading Elliott's 'virtuosic use of studio effects in tandem with her personal narrative', Djupvik's study shows how expressions of female masculinity exploit normative gendered discourse to question the 'naturalness of the traditional

power structures in the studio' (Djupvik, 2017, p.129).

The above examples demonstrate the range and complexity of research focussed on gender and popular music. Collectively, they show how popular music research intersects with wider discourses on sex and gender to interrogate essentialist ideas of masculine and feminine sexuality, whilst accounting for how these ideologies have influenced musical traditions and practices of music making. In representing the condition of research in the discipline, these examples highlight the complex web of discourses that arise when studying popular music. Whether it be revealing the gendered nature of music traditions and genres, or a close reading of an individual song, popular music research draws into its strategies broader sociocultural and political investments in the meaning of gender. Consequently, its focus shifts with 'new social contexts', trends in 'reception and consumption', 'emerging media landscapes' and developments in 'audiovisual research' (Hawkins, 2017, p.2).

An example of this is the increasing influence of queer theory in the field. This can be seen in texts discussed above where the interrogation of binary structures of sex and gender evolve to incorporate 'the recognition of queer sexualities, identities, sensibilities and diversities' (Hawkins, 2017, p.5). The importance of 'tactics of queering' in popular music research is demonstrated by the influence of Butler and Halberstam upon interpretative approach (Hawkins, 2017, p.5). Their theories support explorations of the cultural investment in binarisms, whilst allowing space for diversities that are beyond the restrictions of the heteronormative matrix. The increased awareness of transgendered and intersex movements in recent years has impacted popular music, both the choices artists make, and the research strategies chosen by scholars. Hawkins has theorised the former as '*genderplay*', which 'refers



to the antics of a singer's persona, musical idiolect, and strategy in performance' (Hawkins, 2017, p.7).<sup>14</sup> He argues that 'genderplay in the name of entertainment can enable us to imagine ourselves and others differently', and through 'new modalities of gender we are obliged to constantly review the restrictive politics that shape our past' (Hawkins, 2017, p.7).

On the issue of scholarly approach, Hawkins has argued for a 'degree of sensitivity...when devising theories and methods for gender research' (Hawkins, 2017, p.3). This is because music 'incites the senses in all of us quite differently', and 'furnishes us with a mix of ideals that often break down and contest reactionary social norms' (Hawkins, 2017, p.3). This sentiment is echoed by McClary, and Burns and LaFrance in the examples discussed above, as each scholar writes about being struck by something in the music before unravelling its significance for gendered expression in accordance with their overall agenda (McClary, 2002, p.30; Burns and LaFrance, 2002, p.xiii). All these texts I have considered cite the importance of experience in popular music research. They emphasise the necessity of maintaining an open interpretative approach, one which is not pre-determined, but is guided by the relationship between broad context — biographical details, genre, social, cultural and political climate — and close reading, for instance record performance strategies of the artist, production technique and vocal strategies, to the analysis of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic elements. Any aspect of a performance or song might be considered significant, and as I will discuss in chapter one, questions of 'interpretive process and what criteria we impose on analysing music' has preoccupied popular music scholars (Hawkins, 2017, p.5).

The study of gender and popular music attests to the fact that there is 'no

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<sup>14</sup> See also Hawkins *Queerness in Pop Music: Aesthetics, Gender Norms, and Temporality* (2016).

simple way of looking or listening' to gender (Hawkins, 2017, p.6). As Hawkins has said, 'gender is never clear-cut', it is 'located in the twists and shapes that construct the subject' (Hawkins, 2017, p.9, p.1). The examples above 'give thought to the functions of gender in popular music', demonstrating the complexity of gendered subjects and the different ways artists and scholars can 'inquire into the politics mediated by performance practice' (Hawkins, 2017, p.7).

### Androgyny and popular music studies: Examples of engagement

The previous discussion provided an overview of texts focussed on popular music and gender to show the breadth of research in the field. In this section, I turn to examples that specifically engage androgyny. As in the preceding exploration, it is not possible to exhaust the literature drawing on androgyny in popular music performances. Given this, the case studies I have chosen are representative of the general attitudes and methodological approaches used to engage androgyny in popular music research.

#### Robert Walser – *Running with the Devil* (1993)

Walser draws upon androgyny in his work on masculinity in glam metal, defining androgynous expression as the 'adoption by male performers of the elements of appearance that have been associated with women's function as objects of the male gaze' (Walser, 1993, p.124). His discussion is mediated through a reading of Poison, a band whose 'garish makeup, jewellery...stereotypically sexy clothes, including fishnet stockings and scarves, and...“feminine” hairstyles' contribute towards the androgyny of their visual style (Walser, 1993, p.124). Whilst Poison are typically associated with the heavy metal genre, fans interpret their music as 'less “heavy” than the mainstream', which Walser attributes to the band's incorporation of androgynous

elements into their appearance (Walser, 1993, p.124). Placing this in the broader context of androgyny and popular music genres, Walser argues that glam metal's androgyny lacks the 'ironic distance' seen in the performances of glam artists (Walser, 1993, p.124). The absence of irony is crucial in Walser's interpretation because it creates tension between 'metal's gender construction and the patriarchal premises undergirding the ideologies and institutions of rock' (Walser, 1993, p.124).

Walser's analysis focusses upon the song 'Nothin' but a Good Time' and its accompanying music video, where 'power, freedom, transcendence, and transgression...are articulated through fantastic, androgynous display' (Walser, 1993, p.127). He reads the music video as a 'free space' for 'pure spectacle', where Poison's 'play of the real and unreal, authenticity and desire' meets the 'ambiguous subversiveness' of androgyny and the energy of the music (Walser, 1993, p.127). Walser details the song's lyrical content and the musical setting, paralleling 'visual narrative and...musically coded meanings', where he identifies an association between 'androgynous visual style' and specific musical characteristics (Walser, 1993, p.127). He notes that whilst the song's 'compelling rhythmic patterns...requisite guitar solo...distorted timbres' meet the 'generic criteria' of metal, androgynous metal is less innovative and virtuosic (Walser, 1993, p.127). This, Walser argues, creates tension between 'visual spectacle and transgression' and 'metal's dominant valorization of sonic power, freedom and originality', because the aural signifiers of androgyny evoke 'feminine semiotic instability' and an abdication of power (Walser, 1993, pp.127-128). Whilst Walser attributes Poison's success to visual style and musical simplicity, his interpretation of androgyny's musical characteristics is dependent upon the context created by the band's visual display.

Walser interprets androgyny as a strategy for dealing with masculine anxiety

and associates the concept with Oedipal rebellion. The contradictory nature of this display signals the simultaneous desire to reject patriarchal authority *and* achieve manhood. In the glam model of male androgyny, the adoption of characteristics typically associated with expressions of femininity allows artists to enact this tension. Through this, feminisation becomes a site of power and conventional modes of femininity are made dynamic and assertive, offering the opportunity to ‘play’ with flamboyance and artifice, whilst challenging the oppressive force of normative gender hierarchies (Walser, 1993, p.133).

Simon Reynolds and Joy Press – *The Sex Revolts* (1995)

Writing about gender and rebellion in rock ‘n’ roll, Reynolds and Press represent androgyny as a gender blurring technique employed by male rock stars in their rejection of gender norms and societal expectations (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.16). Behaviours that are ‘normal’ for women — normal referring to what is ‘conventional in real women’ — become subversive if adopted by men (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.16). This formulation of androgyny is contextualised as a vacillation between masculinity and femininity, where the sliding between polarities reveals both the states of in-betweenness open to the androgyne and the transgression of normative expectations of gender.

Reynolds and Press contextualise androgyny amidst a discussion about the creation of rock rebellion and the aesthetic of angry young men in the 1960s. They argue that, in this tradition, androgyny represents a space between effeminacy and machismo; male performers adopt markers of female identity and feminine expression. They argue that effeminacy lets male performers explore masculine anxieties, which develops the conditions under which masculinity is understood.

Reynolds and Press associate androgyny with ‘a kind of all-encompassing narcissism’ that has ‘endured as a staple of rebel rock’, allowing the amplification of difference within states of rebellion (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.17).

The second narrative of androgyny identified by Reynolds and Press is the antithesis of the first, marking a ‘transition from I to we’ by ‘affirming the trans-individual’ (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.156). Where effeminacy allowed male rock performers to assert masculinity beyond the domestic sphere, the aesthetics of psychedelia and hippie rock rejected hyper-masculinised expression by emphasising feminine passivity and receptivity. Reynolds and Press claim this was a ‘childlike androgyny’, representing a longing for completion, wholeness and transcendence; a return to the Edenic garden and the Mother’s womb (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.160). In this expression of androgyny, the difference between polarities was neutralised, and male and female members of the counterculture adopted a unisex style.

Reynolds and Press do not directly discuss the musical gestures associated with the machismo/effeminate presentation of androgyny, although they do point to stylistic features of psychedelia, noting how songs became pastoral symphonies, taking complex forms and incorporating intricate melodic and harmonic developments. In both narratives, Reynolds and Press contextualise androgyny as the expression of a middle way, a defiance of the logic of gender hierarchies, and the interrogation of masculine power through feminine expression.

Sheila Whiteley – *Mick Jagger, sexuality, style and image* (1997)

Whiteley explores androgyny as part of Mick Jagger’s complex expression of gendered identity, interpreting an ‘otherness’ in his performances unaccounted for in

traditional readings of masculinity (1997b). Drawing on Frith and McRobbie's discussion of masculinity in rock music, Whiteley begins by arguing against Jagger's categorisation as 'cock rock' performer, claiming that his expression of androgyny is suggestive of a more 'ambiguous sexuality' (Whiteley, 1997b, p.94).<sup>15</sup> Whiteley argues that whilst Jagger seems to create an 'overtly phallogentric performance', the self-conscious presentation of masculinity and femininity disrupts the implication of normative masculinity (Whiteley, 1997b, p.67). She claims that labelling Jagger a 'cock rock' performer oversimplifies the ambivalent structure of relations he creates between male and female characters and fails to account for the 'essential androgynicity' that creates a foundation of 'self-invention and sexual plasticity' (Whiteley, 1997b, p.75, p.67).

She cites Jagger's mirroring of Tina Turner's performances, onstage sexual posturing, effeminacy, choice of outfits and song lyrics as expressions of the androgynicity that counter the machismo rock with which he is typically associated. She claims that Jagger's adoption of the androgyne creates an 'enigma', which acts as an 'interface' between the 'real maleness' of the androgynous performer and the song (Whiteley, 1997b, p.95). Androgyny in this context creates conflict between the messages communicated via a song's lyrical, musical and visual aspects. Whiteley argues that macho personas are complicated by an 'androgynous sexuality' that emphasises 'pleasure-as-power/power-as-pleasure' by being at the centre of masculine and feminine polarities (Whiteley, 1997b, p.78). For Whiteley, the performance of androgyny enables the ambivalent sexuality Jagger displays by opening the normative framework of masculinity to a range of gender experiences and expressions.

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<sup>15</sup> Frith and McRobbie's discussion of 'cock rock' is an attempt to understand how rock music generates male power, and within the essay they cite the music industry as a patriarchal institution (1990). For a critical discussion of the essay, please see Leonard (2007, pp.23-42).

Stella Bruzzi – k.d. lang — from cowpunk to androgyny (1997)

Bruzzi makes a claim for a masculinised female androgyny by charting the development of k.d. lang's musical and personal style (1997). Her discussion focusses on a movement of 're-presentation' in lang's career, which marks a shift from a performative and ironic style to a 'homogenised, conventionally ambiguous androgyny' (Bruzzi, 1997, p.192). Drawing on theories of drag, *jouissance* and gender performativity, Bruzzi identifies a radical expression of 'sexual and gendered difference' (Bruzzi, 1997, pp.193-199). Bruzzi argues that through musical and visual references to the Country genre, lang created performances that were intended to confuse and challenge the audience by resisting synthesis, communicating 'complex reflexivity' and suggesting a 'space between the notes...where heterosexual conformity meets queer unconformity' (Bruzzi, 1997, pp.192-193).

Bruzzi positions lang's 'presentation of herself as raucously female' and 'emphatically non-male' as a masquerade of womanliness that challenges essentialist thought to reveal the 'imitative structure of gender itself' (Bruzzi, 1997, pp.196-197). Bruzzi associates lang's move towards androgyny as the renunciation of transgressive desire and radical expressions of gender, favouring 'conventionalised masculinity as the visual reference point' (Bruzzi, 1997, p.199). Bruzzi regards this shift as the neutralisation of femininity and lesbian desire; the 'androgenisation of the lesbian woman via overt masculinisation' being a mainstream method for sanitising lesbian intimacy (Bruzzi, 1997, p.200).

Bruzzi finds androgyny a troubling concept because of its association with the transcendence of sexual difference to a state where there is 'no difference at all' (Bruzzi, 1997, p.200). She briefly engages positive and negative responses to androgyny, although she finds the dynamic conflict of lang's early performances lost

to the 'frustrating universality and tentative equivocation' of absented sexuality (Bruzzi, 1997, p.201). The 'all-encompassing androgyny' following lang's representation indicates a 'strained anonymity' that fails lesbian sexuality (Bruzzi, 1997, p.204). Consequently, Bruzzi connects androgyny with an extinguishing non-specificity in lang's music, articulated through direct and indirect speech in the lyrical content, and an easy-listening musical style. She concludes that lang's masculinised androgyny is 'unconcerned with boundaries and difference or the moment of change, tension and confusion'; it is a state that indicates a 'critical loss', representing 'complementary interaction' by nullifying the 'ambivalent process' of gender expression (Bruzzi, 1997, pp.199-204).

#### Lauraine Leblanc - *Pretty in Punk* (2002)

Leblanc draws upon androgyny in her discussion of women and gender resistance in punk countercultures, where she situates the concept within a wider exploration on the construction of femininity, and the relationship between social expectation and gender expression (2002).

Leblanc likens the 'normative ideology of femininity' to a game, the 'rules' of which enforce expectation by dictating women's behaviours through sets of 'norms and practices' (Leblanc, 2002, pp.138-139). Leblanc emphasises that despite the pressure of these expectations it is possible to subvert their rules by embracing different practices. Leblanc interviews 'punk girls' to reveal the methods through which femininity is practised, challenged and changed in traditions of punk. Finding an intersection between the masculine domination of punk and the rejection of traditional femininities by women seeking to enter the subculture, Leblanc identifies masculinity as a resource for women (Leblanc, 2002, pp.142-143). She is careful to



note that the rejection of behaviours associated with conventions of femininity does not constitute a rejection of all feminine identities, and it is on this point that she engages androgyny more explicitly.

Leblanc argues that female punks expanded their relationship to femininity through an expression of androgyny that incorporated masculine style. She emphasises that punk girls affiliate themselves with androgynous style by wearing male or unisex clothing and adopting 'tomboyish' mannerisms (Leblanc, 2002, p.152). Whilst Leblanc honours her interviewee's attachment to androgyny, she refers to androgynous style as 'unisex masculine' because she does not believe there is enough of the 'blending of gender characteristics' usually required to 'define the term' (Leblanc, 2002, p.151).

Leblanc rejects androgyny as a categorising term because she questions its usefulness in describing women's gender identifications, although the adoption of androgynous identities in the punk scene allowed women to explore their personal relationship to femininity and masculinity. This enabled the rejection and expansion of gender norms along a sliding scale; embracing that which resonated and rejecting that which did not. In relation to normative categories of gender, the punk girls in Leblanc's study articulate an exploration which actively assessed personal relevance, connecting self-expression to subcultural traditions.

#### Philip Auslander - *Performing Glam Rock* (2006)

Auslander's study of gender and theatricality in glam rock draws upon androgyny to explore gendered subjectivity in the glam subgenre of rock (2006). Auslander contextualises the rise of glam rock by tracing the emergence of glam artists and identifying the genre's stylistic and musical differences from psychedelic rock

(Auslander, 2006, pp.39-70). Auslander characterises glam's specific type of masculinity as 'androgynous and feminized' (Auslander, 2006, p.60). He argues that the relationship between androgyny and feminisation is different to that of the hippie movement in the 1960s, where feminised soft masculinity was presumed heterosexual and androgyny was considered 'natural' (Auslander, 2006, pp.60-61). Glam masculinity, on the other hand, alludes to homosexuality or bisexuality, where 'glam rockers...foregrounded the constructedness of their effeminate or androgynous performing personae' (Auslander, 2006, p.61). Androgynous expression in glam was part of a new model of sexuality that favoured fluidity, and in becoming part of glam's presentation of transgressive acts against 'dominant concepts of masculinity', androgyny emphasised the 'constructed nature of glam masculinity' (Auslander, 2006, p.62). Crucial to this was the manipulation of visual image, which Auslander claims is not intended to create the 'illusion of female identity, nor that of a seamless, androgynous blending of masculine and feminine': 'glam rockers were clearly *men* who had adopted feminine decoration' (Auslander, 2006, p.62).

Auslander argues that within glam strategies, androgynous personae are 'overtly constructed as bricolages of bits of masculine and feminine gender coding in clothing, makeup and behavior used in playful and self-conscious ways', and this purposeful creation of multiple styles interrogates the idea of 'natural' gender (Auslander, 2006, p.67). Glam rockers constructed performing identities whilst simultaneously denying their authenticity, and by adopting personas in 'the public arena of popular cultures' made gender an 'important act signifying a freedom' when 'constructing one's own identity' (Auslander, 2006, p.67). Within glam, androgyny is part of the performance that reveals masculinity and femininity as cultural constructions accompanied by social expectations that can be transgressed and

manipulated. When discussing musical elements, Auslander supports his interpretation of androgyny in glam masculinity by referring to vocal technique, use of instruments, lyric analysis, image and media reception.

Abigail Gardner – *Shock and Awe at the Ageless Black Body* (2012)

Gardner's work on Grace Jones is orientated around a reading of press responses to both the artist's role as curator at the 2008 Meltdown Festival and her following tour (2012). She engages Jones' media reception to tease out strategies that frame the artist in 'ways that are indicative of a process of containment through awe and artefactualisation' (Gardner, 2012, p.65). Gardner explores a media counterpoint between an explanation of the 'ageless Black body of Grace Jones' that results in artistic objectification, and one which positions her in a heritage of Black performers, emphasising her 'resistance to conventional constraints and normative womanhood' (Gardner, 2012, p.65). These contrasting strategies represent the difference between a 'tired, neo-colonial (and ageist) template' and a progressive approach where Jones is regarded as 'a subversive and a positive presence' (Gardner, 2012, p.65).

Gardner points to a 'framework of androgyny' in Jones' early performances, where generic expectations of softness are subverted by cold, undecipherable and ungendered expressions (Gardner, 2012, p.66). Writing about the confusion of conventionality on the album *Nightclubbing*, Gardner points to Jones' 'snarled and spoken' vocal delivery and her look, 'dressed in a man's wider shouldered suit with her chest bones showing, flat-top hair and a cigarette to one side of her mouth' (Gardner, 2012, pp.66-67). She characterises these performances as an 'androgynous, audiovisual experience', where the presentation of androgyny, even before Jones' signing to Island Records, is fundamental in her developing 'brand' (Gardner, 2012,

p.67). This, Gardner argues, demonstrates an ‘ongoing refusal’ to comply with ‘conventional idioms of gender’, a refusal which is identifiable in Jones’ bodily, musical and vocal performances (Gardner, 2012, p.67).

Gardner explores how Jones evolved her brand through strategies of manipulation, within which she contextualises androgyny as a subversive tactic, where the aim is to neither retrieve blackness and femininity from dominant discourses, nor seize the privileges of whiteness and masculinity. Jones’ performances transgress barriers by ‘not doing gender right’, by refusing the demarcated structures of the heteronormative matrix and the associated expectations that are placed upon race, the body and ageing (Gardner, 2012, pp.76-77). Drawing on gender and queer theories, Gardner traces these threads to contextualise androgyny as one of several approaches taken by Jones to reconceptualise her role as a performing artist.

Lucas Hilderbrand – *Queer Pop Music’s Moment* (2013)

Hilderbrand’s article focusses on how pop music in 1981 interrogated and negotiated ‘nonnormative sexuality in tandem with new musical aesthetics’ (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.416). Hilderbrand identifies a ‘queer surge’ in songs released in 1981, which he reads as a ‘set of sonic reverberations that reflected and resisted the period’s broader sense of cultural change and instability’ (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.416). He argues that these songs suggest the ‘existence of a brief and forgotten interlude of queerness more radical than the gay golden age of the 1970s and prior to the full cultural force of the 1980s’ (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.416).

Hilderbrand contextualises the queer music of 1981 by discussing the ‘cross-pollination’ of genre and media reception (Hilderbrand, 2013, pp.418-422). Focussing on the ‘*actuality* of queer’s pop music’s existence’, Hilderbrand draws upon

McClary's work on the politics of popular music to emphasise the bodily aspects of music making and listening, and it is within this framework that androgyny is contextualised (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.422).

Hilderbrand mediates his interpretation of when 'pop went androgynous' through a discussion of Prince and Grace Jones (Hilderbrand, 2013, pp.423-426). He reads several queer strategies on Prince's album, *Dirty Mind* — arrangement of the songs, lyrical content, album artwork and vocal delivery — and contextualises androgyny as part of a genderqueer strategy mobilised by the enactment of feminine ecstasy (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.423). Hilderbrand finds a similar presentation in the Jones track, 'Pull Up to the Bumper'. He concludes that the success of the song owes to a combination of 'Jones's intriguing androgyny and the song's danceable groove' (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.424). Hilderbrand locates Jones' androgyny in her 'gender ambiguous' image, arguing that the macho personas she incorporates into her performances create a posthuman element (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.424). He reads androgyny as part of an overall queer strategy in Prince's and Jones' performances, identifying the inclusion of different genres prominent in both artist's music as a form of sonic queerness (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.424).

Throughout his article, Hilderbrand situates androgyny as a strategy of ambiguity amidst wider expressions of queerness and queer desire in pop music in 1981. Where he directly interprets the sonic presentation of androgyny, he focusses on vocal technique and the manipulation of genre. More broadly, androgynous expression is evoked as one of several narratives — others include homosexuality, irony and parody — that prompted 'repeated questioning, curiosity, innuendo, and speculation' from audiences, and 'reiterated the transitional period's sense of possibility and ambivalent actuality' (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.426).

Timothy Laurie – *Toward a Gendered Aesthetic of K-pop* (2016)

In his study of Korean pop (K-pop), Laurie attends to the different ways the genre ‘produces its own distinct syntheses of sound and image to produce a utopian and communitarian aesthetic’ (Laurie, 2016, p.214).<sup>16</sup> Laurie argues that critical responses to K-pop songs and their accompanying music videos — specifically those that consider sexual politics and gendered identity — should be aware of the expectations of genre as both ‘constraints upon and affordances for the organisation of new social meanings’ (Laurie, 2016, p.215). He emphasises how K-pop ‘provide[s] special creative openings for fan communities and for those interested in the cultural valences of newly visible androgynous idols’, rather than expressing ‘authentic social experiences’ (Laurie, 2016, p.215). Laurie contextualises his reading of queerness in K-pop through the genre’s own ‘synesthetic conventions’, and consequently, does not seek to create a ‘yardstick’ by which to measure or interpret how it negotiates politics of sex and gender (Laurie, 2016, p.215).

Laurie begins his study with an overview of K-pop and its trans-national development, including a survey on cultural approaches to the genre’s music videos and the importance of idols and fans in framing and determining ‘communitarian utopias’ (Laurie, 2016, p.218). Despite acknowledging the conceptual difficulties that surround androgyny, Laurie argues that the concept is crucial for the narratives of sexuality and gendered identity in K-pop. He argues that whilst androgyny ‘invites interest in bodies that do not read easily as masculine or feminine’, it generalises

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<sup>16</sup> This article features in a volume of work about glam and the global imaginary, edited by Chapman and Johnson (2016). In the introduction to the volume, the editors state that ‘androgyny, spectacle and artifice’ are essential components in glam (Chapman and Johnson, 2016, p.1). Given its significance in glam rock, androgyny is drawn into several chapters in the volume, albeit in varying degrees. Whilst I cannot summarise all the relevant material here, I point the reader to the following chapters: Mills ‘Glam Britannia’ (2016, pp.98-110), Klypchak ‘All Those Wasted Years’ (2016, pp.142-155), Keister ‘Naughty Women vs. Macho Men’ (2016, pp.156-168), Zevolli ‘When Hip Hop Met Glam’ (2016, pp.169-181), Auslander, ‘Twenty-First-Century Girl’ (2016, pp.182-196), and Johnson and Kawamoto ‘Visual-kei’ (2016, pp.199-213).

principles that allow the normative and nonnormative to be differentiated on an ‘imagined spectrum of possible gender identities’ (Laurie, 2016, p.220). Here, Laurie draws upon Butler’s theory of gender performativity, arguing that androgynous and non-androgynous identities should be interrogated once the stability of gender has been questioned (Laurie, 2016, pp.220-221). Performativity functions in K-pop between groups; ‘enunciations are collective and citational’, they ‘make sense relative to other known performatives’ (Laurie, 2016, p.221). Laurie emphasises the ‘citational economy’ in K-pop, which primes viewer expectation and separates the economies of boy and girl groups (Laurie, 2016, p.221).

Laurie draws upon Auslander’s work on glam rock, highlighting that whilst glam performers interrogated and subverted the organisational powers of heterosexuality, the ‘sudden visibility of male androgyny did not necessarily create visible new roles or spaces for women’ (Laurie, 2016, p.221). He argues that ‘discourses on androgynous masculinity must be able to interrogate which kinds of masculinity are being transgressed’, as well as what femininities are re-signified and how audience members are interpellated through new musical personae (Laurie, 2016, p.221).

Laurie takes this discussion to the centrality of the *kkonminam*, or flower man, in the creation of ‘vibrant aesthetic imaginary around male fashions, friendships, and intimacies’ (Laurie, 2016, p.221). He explores the *kkonminam* culture and argues that whilst girl groups are segregated and ‘heterosexuality continues to operate as the code through which androgyny is deciphered’, it becomes difficult to make broad, supportive claims about a ‘transformative sexual politics in K-pop’ (Laurie, 2016, p.222). Here, Laurie distinguishes between the performance behaviours and reception of male and female idols: where ‘elegance and emotional vulnerability’ cast male

idols as ‘dramatic improvements on their forebears’, girl groups are subject to criticism for resisting or conforming to social expectations of gender (Laurie, 2016, p.223).

Laurie works through the ‘asymmetrical gender relations’ of K-pop through an exploration of f(x) band member, Amber Lui (Laurie, 2016, p.223). He accounts for Amber’s androgynous performance style by examining her performance style on-stage and in music videos, her role in fanfiction culture and her visibility in Korean popular culture, specifically within *iban* communities (Laurie, 2016, p.224). Using Ji-Eun Lee’s work as a reference point, Laurie details the complexities of *iban* expression arguing that Amber’s persona in f(x) opens an ambiguous space, where ‘girl retro-experience’ reorganises her life (Lee, quoted in Laurie, 2016, p.224). Laurie identifies three types of performances that employ gender queer strategies, through which he contextualises Amber’s persona. The ‘ordinary player’ is a parodic display that manipulates audience expectations by playing roles (Laurie, 2016, p.225). The second, the ‘spoilsport’, highlights the ‘arbitrary and unexplained character’ of the rules of the gender (Laurie, 2016, p.225). The third, Amber, is the ‘cheat’; she ‘appears to play by the rules but succeeds by making moves that are prohibited within the system as a whole’ (Laurie, 2016, p.226).

By working within the traditions of K-pop Amber achieves a ‘genuinely ambivalent interplay between masculine and feminine, rather than a proliferation of oppositions between them’ (Laurie, 2016, p.226). In doing this, Amber demonstrates an understanding of the ‘constitutive power of the “performative” act’, and the connection of movements and gestures to pre-given structures (Laurie, 2016, p.227). Laurie argues that Amber’s androgyny is recognisable by audiences who are accustomed to ‘locating masculinity and femininity on a spectrum of natural kinds’,



and by engaging these strategies she opens the ‘wellsprings of the imagination’ (Laurie, 2016, p.227). For Laurie, Amber’s androgyny poses unanswered questions about identity, and in encouraging speculation from her fans, her performance ‘dramatizes tensions already central to K-pop’s utopian imaginaries and fanfiction cultures’ (Laurie, 2016, p.216).

#### The popular music model of androgyny: Possibilities and problems

The explorations of androgyny I presented in the previous section were chosen to represent the breadth of research and methodological strategies. Together, they demonstrate androgyny’s relevance across genres, artists and historical moments, as each text considers wider debates concerning gendered identity and popular music performance. In the following discussion, I unpack these trends to identify the possibilities and problems in popular music studies, relating my findings to the conceptualisation of androgyny more broadly. To support my readings, I will show how androgyny intersects with feminist and gender theory.

A distinct point of divergence in the study of androgyny in popular music is the difference between male and female androgyny, and I will now explore the significance of this distinction as it is represented in the examples discussed above.

In his study of glam metal androgyny, Walser demonstrates a consistent awareness of the power of gender politics, and the ways women are implicated both in his discussion and within metal culture. Walser turns to fan communities to evaluate the significance of male androgyny for female fans and to challenge the interpretation of metal as the ‘reproduction of male hegemony’ (Walser, 1993, p.130). He argues that the expressive style of metal androgyny opens a space for female fans to explore their relationship to masculinity and femininity (Walser, 1993, pp.130-133). The

opening of this space, Walser claims, is the result of the ‘fusion of the sign specific...to notions of femininity with musically and theatrically produced power and freedom that are conventionally male’, and by appropriating culture notions of femininity, the sign of the gender becomes invested with patriarchal power (Walser, 1993, p.131). Walser argues that due to the investment of power, female fans do not perceive their identities as victims of masculinised structures, but see masculinity transformed by femininity. Walser’s argument claims that metal androgyny allows women to explore their cultural status as objects whilst reclaiming and embodying power. Despite identifying narratives of empowerment, Walser’s discussion lacks an exploration of female metal androgyny in the wider metal community and as an independent expression of gendered identity. His primary focus is retained by expressions of male androgyny and what androgyny offers to male performers, with the discussion of female fans contextualised primarily by this agenda.

A similar dynamic occurs in Reynolds and Press’ study. The consideration of androgyny in strategies of male rebellion in rock is problematised as their discussion progresses to female artists who adopt comparable tactics of resistance. Turning to the ‘herstory of rock’, Reynolds and Press identify a strategy of female rock rebellion that takes a ‘*can do* approach...a hard-rock, punky attitude, women impersonating the toughness independence and irreverence of the male rebel posture’ (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.233). They offer several examples of artists who express this female *maschisma* — Patti Smith, Chrissie Hynde, Joan Jett, Suzie Quatro, Kim Gordon and L7 — and yet, they do not characterise these performers as androgynous, despite identifying techniques comparable to those of male-orientated androgyny, such as lyrical content and performance style. For instance, Reynolds and Press categorise Hynde as a ‘tough chick tomboy’ who ‘muscle her way into the rock fraternity’ with

‘androgynous looks and cool attitude’, to become ‘one of the first, and best, examples of a female equivalent to the classic rock ‘n’ roll snarl/swagger’ (Reynolds and Press, 1995, pp.238-239). They similarly cast Suzi Quatro as the ‘archetypal male impersonator’ who sacrificed her creativity to ‘play the tough rebel as convincingly as any man’ but failed to ‘register as impressively as the artifice and androgyny of male glam rockers’ (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.244). Despite the stylistic similarities between male androgynous musicians and rock’s female rebels, Reynolds and Press associate female artists with an expression of tomboyism and the emulation of male rebellion, rather than androgyny.

Whiteley’s discussion of male androgyny details the complex interaction of masculinity and femininity in Mick Jagger’s songs. She identifies androgyny as one of Jagger’s subversive strategies, and by combining cultural context with performance and lyrical analysis she shows how he engages bisexual desire, polymorphism and the politics of power. Whiteley tracks Jagger’s image from ‘cock rock’ star to sexually ambiguous, androgynous performer by focussing on his developmental performance aesthetic and the superimposition of multiple identities (Whiteley, 1997b, p.94).

Whiteley argues that Jagger’s various expressions of masculinity — including the androgyne — ‘lock into the discourses surrounding gender and masquerade’, although the ‘power of the phallus is omnipresent’ (Whiteley, 1997b, p.94). Though she recognises the subversive potential in Jagger’s performance, Whiteley emphasises the complexity in the appropriation of feminine behaviours and personalities, particularly when the male/female relationships in his music are read as constructions of a male world (Whiteley, 1997b, p.94). She argues that the ‘mysterious image of the androgyne sets up an enigma’ where a song’s male perspectives are eroticised by the personas adopted in performance, and this risks the replication of hierarchical

structures of gender that privilege masculinity (Whiteley, 1997b, pp.94-95). Whiteley highlights that any study exploring the potential of femininity for the expression of masculinity risks contextualising femininity *through* masculinity, and this tension — which is also expressed by Walser — is evident throughout her discussion.

The work of Walser and Whiteley recognise the potential of androgynous expression in expanding gender definitions, whilst acknowledging the concept's complex attachment to binary structures of gender. Bruzzi and Leblanc are more sceptical about the relevance of androgyny when exploring female artists. Bruzzi recognises androgyny as a masculinised form of expression, and she is concerned about what is lost when female artists adopt a masculine gendered identity. The narratives of her discussion characterise androgyny as a state where difference is neutralised, but masculinity remains dominant. Bruzzi considers the formulation of androgyny through positive reactions and dissenting views — with reference to Woolf's formulation — although she is concerned about the eradication of sexual difference in the concept's historical narratives.

Interpreting lang's re-presentation as a shift towards an expression of generalised masculine performance, Bruzzi positions androgyny as a masculine form of expression. She argues that 'the arrival of the androgynous lang with masculine undertones...has effectively legitimised the *absenting* of her sexuality' (Bruzzi, 1997, p.202). Bruzzi makes a distinction between this form of androgyny and the 'gender-bending antics' of glam rockers (Bruzzi, 1997, p.205). Citing Jarvis Cocker as lang's 'androgynous male counterpoint', Bruzzi argues that this androgyny is 'unconcerned with boundaries and difference or the moments of change, tension and confusion' (Bruzzi, 1997, p.205). Crucial for Bruzzi is the loss of lesbian desire and female difference that follows masculinisation.

Leblanc's discussion takes a comparable tone. She recognises the rejection of the 'femininity game' through the adoption of male style as a 'punk mode of self-presentation', although the lack of feminine expression within this leads Leblanc to reject androgyny as a descriptive label (Leblanc, 2002, pp.150-151). She weighs instances where punk women were often mistaken for men with examples of women who rejected the masculine dominance of the scene by retaining expressions of femininity (Leblanc, 2002, pp.152-153). Through these contrasting approaches, Leblanc contextualises 'acting feminine' as a strategy to counter the 'confrontationalism that connotes some of the masculinity' in punk subculture (LeBlanc, 2002, p.153). Leblanc claims that women in the subculture were 'given little choice but...to negotiate between punk and femininity' because masculinity dominated (Leblanc, 2002, p.154). Like Bruzzi, Leblanc aligns androgyny with the masculinisation and loss of femininity, and in the context of her discussion, the concept is associated with the expression of masculine identities.

The tension between male and female androgyny is addressed by Auslander through a shift in the theoretical framework of his argument. Whilst he considers androgyny a key strategy in the transcendence of rock's sexual ideology in glam music, he demonstrates how the genre was still 'typical of rock in its exclusive emphasis on male participation and concerns' (Auslander, 2006, p.195).<sup>17</sup> He explores the gender politics of glam by assessing Suzi Quatro's role in the genre. Owing to the complexities of glam's gender politics, Auslander interprets Quatro's performances alongside Halberstam's theory of female masculinity, rather than androgyny. He argues that whilst Quatro's music does the same ideological work as her male

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<sup>17</sup> Auslander details the 'behind the scenes' contribution of women in the creation of glam, citing the importance of June Bolan and Angela Bowie in the development of their husbands' — Marc Bolan and David Bowie respectively — style (Auslander, 2006, pp.195-196).

counterparts, a different approach is needed if the struggles she experienced as a female artist are to be appropriately acknowledged. By focussing on the presentation of female masculinity, Auslander counters arguments that claim artists like Quatro ‘disappear behind her material to become only a replication of a male image and attitude’ (Auslander, 2006, p.212). In shifting his theoretical framework, Auslander emphasises that Quatro’s performance of masculine and feminine gestures ‘form an unstable compound’ and ‘neither signification absorbs or negates the other’ (Auslander, 2006, p.213).

The conceptualisation of male and female androgyny in popular music studies mirrors the debates of the 1973 MLA conference, and reflects what Weil refers to as the ‘three phases’ of androgyny’s reception in feminist discourse (Weil, 1992, p.145).<sup>18</sup> Mapping these stages provides further context on the examples above, whilst showing how the work of Hilderbrand, Gardner and Laurie move beyond the classification of male and female androgyny.

The first phase — inspired by Woolf’s writing — called for the ‘co-presence of male and female within the individual as within the institution’, integrating androgyny ‘into a fight for psychological and sociopolitical equality between the sexes’ (Weil, 1992, p.145). The second phase was orientated around a separatist agenda, rejecting androgyny as a strategy for equality and framing the concept as a ‘deceptive’ shield for male privilege (Weil, 1992, p.145).<sup>19</sup> Influenced by French feminism, the third phase emphasised the body and the ‘ever-changing boundaries between sexes and sexualities’ to construct the ‘dream of hermaphroditism’ as a new

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<sup>18</sup> The three phases correspond to Kristeva’s ‘three generations of women’, and in representing a ‘signifying space’ are neither chronological nor progressive (Weil, 1992, p.146).

<sup>19</sup> From the MLA conference and its associated publication, contributors whose work falls under the first phase include Heilbrun, Bazin, Freeman and Greene; second phase contributors are Gelpi, Secor and Harris.

ideal through which to redefine sexual difference' (Weil, 1992, p.145).

The study of male and female androgyny in popular music research connect to the first and second phases identified by Weil. The work of Walser, Reynolds and Press, and Whiteley link expressions of male androgyny to liberation and freedom from gender definition. To varying degrees, each scholar associates androgynous expression with the critique of — and emancipation from — social expectations of gender. Where normative gender categories prescribe attitudes and behaviours, androgyny is seen to dissolve gender hierarchies by creating a space where the social, cultural and political investment in gender categories are explored through popular music performance. The examples of male androgyny cited above accentuate the positive potential of androgyny by focussing on the challenged posed to the authority of masculinity and the re-writing of masculine expression. These affirmative views on androgyny become increasingly tense when considered alongside the explorations of female androgyny. Here, the discourses of Weil's second phase reflect Bruzzi's and Leblanc's scepticism concerning the significance of androgyny for women.

Within the structure of male androgyny, expressions of femininity occupy precarious territory, being appropriated as a strategy to help male performers disrupt the norms and expectations of masculinity. There are questions about the value of this disruption and what the different forms of appropriation accomplish for women. In the broader debates of the second phase these questions are prioritised, and in focussing on the theoretical structure of androgyny, the concept's historical association with male privilege was considered a weakness. Second phase debates are fuelled by the rise of gyno-criticism and the need for female traditions that are not locked to male histories. As a strategy for women's emancipation, androgyny was considered problematic because it was part of a literary tradition where male-identified heroes

were centralised.<sup>20</sup> In these traditions, femininity is positioned as a transformational force that enables man's accomplishment of totalising consciousness. This form of spiritual elevation was reserved for the male subject, and although femininity was valorised for making this progress possible, the feminine was subsumed and granted no expressive autonomy.

This tension permeates the explorations of male and female androgyny in popular music studies. Bruzzi and Leblanc are explicitly uneasy about what happens to femininity when female artists adopt androgynous identities. Much like the discourses of the second phase androgyny debates, they are concerned about the erasure of female difference and what this articulates about the role of women socially, culturally and historically. To a degree, their concerns are validated by the way female *maschisma* is treated by Reynolds and Press. Their discussion regards female androgyny as inauthentic when compared to their male counterparts, and they read the adoption of masculine characteristics by female performers as a tactic to access a male-dominated industry. In their explorations of male androgyny, Walser and Whiteley extol the potential of the concept for disrupting normative masculinity, although they acknowledge the complex political territory evoked by these expressions, particularly for women. Auslander similarly recognises these difficulties, and whilst he does not refer to the appropriateness of androgyny for female artists, his shift in theoretical framework when reading Quatro's performance highlights the limitations of the concept when reading the political lives of women in music.

The interpretation of androgyny as the affirmation of patriarchal power shows how the concept is historically attached to notions of heterosexuality and essentialised

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<sup>20</sup> Refer to Gelpi (1974) and Secor (1974) who were concerned that the androgyne is historically associated with feminised males and not masculine women. Engaging and expanding upon the examples offered by Heilbrun, Gelpi traces this tendency in Greek myth, Judeo-Christian traditions, the Kabbala through to images that appear in the work of Blake and Shelley.



gender. Gardner and Hilderbrand take a different approach to other examples I have discussed, evoking androgyny as part of a wider strategy of gender ambiguity, rather than focussing on male or female androgyny. Gardner contextualises androgyny as a strategy used by Jones to ‘upset the lines between the feminine and the masculine’ and destabilise the colonial, male and aged gazes (Gardner, 2012, p.68). She engages the reception of Jones as automaton, cyborg and android to consider how her performativity contextualises a space beyond gender. Within this, androgyny is a key narrative in Jones’ transgression of the boundaries created by binary systems.

In a similar vein, Hilderbrand contextualises androgyny as a strategy of queerness intended to blur demarcated boundaries, whether between sexualities or musical genres. He draws on cultural context to interpret androgynous expression in an artist’s performance style, and by focussing on the materiality of Prince’s and Grace Jones’ aesthetic, his account resists categorisation as male or female androgyny. Like Gardner, Hilderbrand is concerned with society’s minority groups and the affective powers of music for self-expression, however in finding a distinctly queer year in pop music he identifies forms of gender ambiguity that interrogates binary structures in general, whether they are male/female, gay/straight, black/white, rich/poor. This frames androgyny as a queering tactic in the transgressive and fluid expression of selfhood within a historical moment where pop music moved from potentiality to the actuality of being queer (Hilderbrand, 2013, p.431).

Gardner’s and Hilderbrand’s work align with discourses in the third phase of the androgyny debates. The discursive field in this phase counter those in phase one in that they reject the ‘ideology of wholeness’, but they were also critical of the idea of ‘real difference’ found in phase two debates (Weil, 1992, p.153). Broadly, third phase debates orientate around the idea that the ‘categories of male and female are

themselves false' (Weil, 1992, p.153). Weil provides an overview of key thinkers in this stage, citing Kristeva's theory on the bisexuality of all subjects, Cixous's formulation of bisexuality as a 'multiple and constantly changing sexuality', and Irigaray's promotion of an 'indifference' that 'denies any possibility either for simple opposition or for completed union' (Weil, 1992, pp.153-155).<sup>21</sup>

These approaches are connected by the rejection of metaphysics and the idea of 'différance', which emphasises that 'identity is only constituted in language by what it is not, by what is absent or excluded from it' (Weil, 1992, p.154). Weil mobilises the key themes of this third phase through an analysis of Woolf's novel *Orlando*, demonstrating the redefinition of androgyny through the reconceptualisation of both 'sexual and textual identity' in anti-essentialist terms (Weil, 1992, p.156). Exploring key narratives and themes, Weil shows how Woolf challenges 'the opposition of male and female, and hence the patriarchal construction of woman as different from man', allowing sexual difference to become more than choosing a side or fighting for one political standpoint (Weil, 1992, pp.156-159).

As Weil develops these arguments, she explores how androgyny interacts with other strategies of sexual difference, for instance mimicry, parody, irony and cyborg theory. Third phase debates emphasise contradiction and an understanding of embodiment where 'binary thinking collapses', and in being integrated within these discourses, the meaning of androgyny moves from a vision of utopia that serves the patriarchal agenda to an undefined, multiple and fluid ambiguity (MacLeod, 1998, p.19). Gardner's and Hilderbrand's work align with these principles and help us to think about 'androgyny in a new key', where the possibility of multiple blurrings is

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<sup>21</sup> Weil notes some inconsistencies in these debates, particularly in the work of Cixous and Irigaray. Whilst these scholars fall within the third phase debates, Weil notes that their theories are formulated with reference to woman's different sexuality and consequently, slip into a form of essentialism reminiscent of phase two debates (Weil, 1992, p.155).

not the attempt to deny difference but is an ‘attempt to redraw and mix up the lines of differences in new energizing ways’ (Suleiman, quoted in Weil, 1992, p.144).

Despite finding conceptual expansion in the third phase debates, androgyny became unfashionable in feminist and gender theory, and by the end of the 1980s was considered a ‘sign of retro-feminism’ (Stacey, 2015, p.263). A possible reason for this is the emergence of queer theory in the 1990s, which developed more progressive approaches to questions of sexuality and gendered identities. Another factor is ‘androgyny’s specific history’ and the effect this has upon how the concept is imagined (Stacey, 2015, p.264). Laurie’s work on the gendered aesthetics of K-pop shows how the complexities of androgyny’s history can be drawn into an examination of the subversive potential of androgynous expression. He draws together the debates surrounding androgyny, exploring male androgyny, female androgyny *and* androgyny as a strategy of gender ambiguity. His arguments examine how androgyny works to create idealised images, but also shows how performers can use these images to enact subversion by cheating the codes of gender signification and audience expectation.

The examples above represent the story of androgyny in popular music research. Together they show the continued significance of the concept for understanding gendered expression beyond the debates of the twentieth century. The persistent presence of androgyny in research on gender and performance in popular music highlights conceptual possibilities, the understanding of which can be expanded by considering the limitations in existing approaches.

Work that explores androgyny in popular music does so from contrasting perspectives and with differing levels of intensity. As illustrated above, some directly engage the difficulties of androgyny, others contextualise androgyny amidst wider

strategies in exploring gender politics. Despite these differences, they are connected by similarities in methodological approach, which inhibits how the interpretation of androgyny is set to work in popular music research.

To characterise and unpack the problematic nature of this method of analysis, it is useful to refer to Jarman-Ivens' work 'Notes on Musical Camp' (2009). Jarman-Ivens notes that whilst camp has received substantial attention in visual and written cultures, the 'ways in which music might be camp' has received comparatively little interest (Jarman-Ivens, 2009, p.189). She argues that whilst there are 'camp associations with certain pieces of music', academic texts dedicated to camp and popular music are 'often only nominally "about" music, focussing on videos or other visual elements that exist alongside the musical' (Jarman-Ivens, 2009, pp.189-190). Identifying the lack of a committed musicological perspective, Jarman-Ivens accounts for camp expression in music by analysing the musical and cultural context of songs from multiple genres. Her aim is to 'identify whether there are musical and performance gestures relevant to what camp might be in music' (Jarman-Ivens, 2009, p.190).

Jarman-Ivens' work corresponds with the consideration of androgyny in popular music studies, where androgynous expression is associated primarily with image and the visual elements of a performance or subculture. The examples discussed above all orientate androgyny around visual elements and each attend to the manipulation of appearance — in music videos, live performances, album artwork — as the core of their discussions. This focus is problematic because it depends upon the binary representation of masculinity and femininity. In some discussions — for instance Hilderbrand, Gardner and Laurie — tracing the complexities of these expressions exposes a form of gender ambiguity that is difficult to associate with

binary logic, and so transgression of this structure occurs. More generally, however, androgyny is associated with a visual tapestry of masculine and feminine elements — demonstrated in the work of Walser, Reynolds and Press, Whiteley, Bruzzi, Leblanc and Auslander — identifiable in the normative binary structure of gender.

In itself, this is not a problematic approach. Androgyny has a visual history dating from Ancient Greece, and the figure of the androgyne is ingrained in our social and cultural consciousness. Yet — and as Jarman-Ivens has noted of camp — the discussion of androgynous expression in popular music is often only nominally about the music, and when music is discussed the focus tends to be on the manipulation of genre, including the roles of instruments within genres, lyrical content of a song, vocal style of the artist, or a combination of these elements. To this nominal degree the examples above all discuss music. For instance, Walser works to account for the musical setting of lyrical content and attempts to identify musical characteristics of androgyny but is unable to find this expression without the orientation of the androgynous visual style (Walser, 1993, p.127). Reynolds and Press detail musical characteristics of rock subcultures and at various moments refer to the lyrics of a song to support their reading. Whiteley refers to elements of a song's musical structure; for instance, in a discussion of The Rolling Stones track 'Sing This Altogether', she outlines how key changes in the song provide a 'musical metaphor for movement', but what these key changes are and how they might connect to the expression of Jagger's sexuality is not explicated (Whiteley, 1997, p.79). Bruzzi attends to vocal delivery and the manipulation of genre to support her interpretation of lang's androgyneity, though analysis of lyrical content dominates her reading. Auslander considers the manipulation of genre and vocal technique in glam's creation of queer identities. Hilderbrand, Gardner and Laurie all refer to sonic aspects of androgyny, but beyond

the fusing or manipulation of genres, or pointing out moments where male voices become feminised and female voices become masculinised, a more comprehensive account of the sound of androgyny is not offered. In each case, discussions of androgyny beyond the visual image of a performer, or the lyrical content of a song, is secondary.

These interpretative trends point to a popular music model of androgyny that references a method for analysing the presence of androgyny. This model attends to the visual image of an artist, the manipulation of genre, lyrical content, and vocal style and technique. Naming this the ‘popular music model of androgyny’ refers to a commonality of approach and is not intended to account for how popular music research engages androgyny as a theory of gender, nor do I claim this as a monolithic approach. Rather, it helps identify a specific trend in the configuration of androgyny and attests to the need for a musicological perspective to show how the musical expression of androgyny is under-theorised compared to readings that are sociologically and visually orientated.

The analytical approach to androgyny as it is expressed in musical content has developed little over the decades. For instance, the approach to music analysis taken by Walser is comparable to that taken by Laurie. These examples span two decades, consider different genres and sociocultural contexts and yet, the methods of analysis used to uncover the textual expression of androgyny remain the same. The wider field of popular music studies employs a range of analytical methods and incorporates more musical-theoretical techniques when exploring the complexity of gendered expression in music. Referring to the overview of texts I provided at the start of the chapter, McClary, Burns and Whiteley ask how gendered expression is musically constructed and communicated to the listener. These studies do not disregard the significance of

extramusical context, the importance of performance style, or how an artist is marketed, rather they draw these debates together to consider how the macrocosmic world of gender politics is reflected in musical conventions.

This is similarly expressed by Jarman-Ivens as she works to identify ‘what camp might be in music’ (Jarman-Ivens, 2009, p.190). Analysing the ‘fabric of the music’ for significant musical moments — for instance harmonic structure, melodic motifs, manipulation of tempo, gradation in dynamics, vocal delivery, use of attack and decay — alongside contextual and performance elements support the identification of camp in music (Jarman-Ivens, 2009, p.203). The methodologies employed in the study of androgyny orientates discussions of musical elements primarily around a range of visual identification. The question about androgyny’s expression in the musical fabric of a song has been initiated by the popular music model, with considerations of vocal delivery, genre and instrumentation commonly incorporated in discussions. Yet, the question of how androgyny permeates the fabric of the music — or if it can — is unexplored territory.

Asking questions about androgynous expression in musical gestures expands and enriches existing research, as well as androgyny’s general conceptualisation. While androgyny maintains a relevance in popular music, the concept is nevertheless troubled by its own controversial history, and these contentious threads run through the examples discussed above. Walser, Whiteley, Bruzzi, Leblanc and Auslander all express concern about the relationship between male and female in androgyny, where Gardner and Hilderbrand read androgyny as an important strategy in performances that transgress the boundaries of binary logic, and Laurie finds a way to positively navigate the complex relationship between historical controversy and expressive potential. This complex history cannot be undone or erased, and whilst some of the

examples cited here — including the narratives of the androgyny debates — demonstrate the difficulties of androgyny, others emphasise conceptual possibility by reading androgyny through queer theorisations of gendered identity.

These contrasting perspectives persist and working with androgyny involves the negotiation of these complexities. Focussing on the musical expression of androgyny through musical elements opens conceptual limitation to possibility. McClary's work demonstrates how established musical conventions shift under the influence of attitudes prevalent in any given historical moment. Asking questions about how androgyny permeates the fabric of music creates an opportunity to revisit the discourses of androgyny in new contexts, to consider a conceptualisation beyond visual stylistics and to enrich the existing research on the theorisation of androgyny in popular music.

By tracing the engagement of androgyny in popular music studies I have identified common trajectories and methodological approaches. Representative of the wider field of study, the examples of Walser, Reynolds and Press, Whiteley, Bruzzi, Leblanc, Auslander, Gardner, Hilderbrand and Laurie detail approaches to androgyny in different genres and periods in popular music. I divided these approaches into three categories — male androgyny, female androgyny and androgyny in the strategies of gender ambiguity — which I mapped to the three phases of androgyny debates in the twentieth century. Drawing parallels between popular music research and debates surrounding androgyny in feminist and gender theory shows the interaction between the two disciplines and the effect this has upon the formulation of androgyny. These phases reveal androgyny's contentious history, demonstrating how positive and negative responses influence the interpretation of androgyny in popular music studies.



Whilst the academic theorisation of androgyny waned during the nineties, the continued interest in androgynous expression in popular music studies suggests there is more to say. Laurie's work on K-pop, for example, shows that it is possible to theorise androgyny in new contexts, whilst engaging the complexities of history and the asymmetry of gender relations. The difficulty in these approaches arises from the emphasis placed upon the visual presentation of androgyny. Studies often focus on an artist's appearance, on-stage behaviours and analysis of music videos, with only cursory discussions of the music. Where the music is addressed there is a common method highlighting a model of analytical and interpretative approach. Whilst developments in gender theory have influenced how androgyny has been interpreted in popular music, analytical approaches towards the interpretation of androgynous expression in musical content have not advanced. This reveals both a limitation and a gap in current research. By asking questions about how androgyny is expressed in the fabric of the music, it is possible to enrich and expand existing methodological approaches. This thesis is my attempt to work through these complex debates; to negotiate the complex history of androgyny, draw on existing methods of research and engage new interpretative contexts and methods of analysis, so that I may explore the expression of musical androgyny in popular music.

To close this chapter, I will discuss my practice of 'listening out' as an approach to the musical interpretation of androgynous expression. I will provide further details on why I prioritise listening as an interpretative strategy and what this approach can bring to the wider conceptualisation of androgyny.

### ‘Listening out’: Lending an ear to androgynous expression

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the study of gender and sexuality in popular music, incorporating into my discussions several case studies that address androgyny. My aim was to establish broad methodological and theoretical approaches, whilst accounting for those specific to androgyny. In doing this, I demonstrated the dominance of androgyny’s visual presence in interpretative strategies and showed how the discussion of musical elements — limited to the manipulation of genre, lyrical content and vocal style — are contextualised by these visual stylistics. My aim in this thesis is to listen to androgyny in a song’s musical content to expand and enrich existing interpretative approaches. To do this, I will prioritise ‘listening out’ as a strategic approach that allows me to focus on the presentation of androgyny in the musical fabric of a song. Here, I offer an impression of ‘listening out’ to show why practices of listening are important for deepening the understanding of androgyny’s conceptual potential.

Historical narratives of androgyny, even those concerned with the psychological and spiritual benefits of the concept, are dominated by the primacy of sight. This links androgyny to the historical ‘standard of vision’ in Western philosophical tradition, a trajectory connecting knowing with seeing, and knowledge with truth (Kramer, 2019, p.8). With roots in Ancient Greek philosophical thinking on the experience of reality, these ideas have had a lasting impact on the correlative relationship between vision and perception, initiating a historical preference for sight.<sup>22</sup> Writing on the phenomenology of sound, Ihde argues that the preference *for* vision parallels a reduction *to* vision (Ihde, 2007, p.6). This reduction is not the result of deliberate cultivation, rather the reduction of experience to the visual points to a

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<sup>22</sup> Refer to Jay (1994) for further reading.

historical moment that reflects the ‘glory of vision that already lay at the center of the Greek experience of reality’ (Ihde, 2007, p.6). Ihde claims that the Ancient Greek preference for vision initiated a generative discourse, creating a way of speaking and writing about experience that valorised vision. Consequently, Ihde argues, visualism has led to the ‘gradual distinguishing of the senses’ and has become the ‘root metaphor for thought’ (Ihde, 2007, pp.7-8).

This division is present in the approach to androgyny in popular music studies, where the interpretative strategies are orientated around the concept’s visual presence and any discussion of musical content follows visual identification. Consequently, androgyny is legitimated by a system of visual verification. This results in the inattention of scholars to the wide-ranging phenomena that informs and creates experience, which amounts to a form of purification where the ‘richness at the source’ is belied (Ihde, 2007, p.13). Ihde encourages the deliberate cultivation of listening as a way to move away from ‘taken-for-granted beliefs about vision and experience, and step by step, to move toward a radically different understanding of experience’ (Ihde, 2007, p.15). I found this strategy particularly influential as my research progressed, because it allowed me to bring dominant traditions of androgyny alongside an exploration of the concept’s more obscure expressive aspects.

The potential of listening lies in the openness of its conceptual connotations and its resistance to clear classification. Listening can refer to auditory experience, but it also connects to more abstract associations such as ‘listening to your body’ to perceive coded signals of ‘condition or needs’, or ‘gesturing to listening as a mode of consciousness that reaches beyond the merely auditory’ (Rice, 2015, pp.100-101). Listening invokes an ontological relationship between the voice, ear, body, sound and music; an interplay of the senses that emphasises experience, attention and a subject’s

involvement with their environment. This highlights the complex relationship between perception and experience, creating a space where meaning resists definition and specificity. The nomadic nature of listening intersects with different levels of response, and when drawn into the interpretative approach to androgyny dislodges the safety of meaning generated by visual presentation. This allows androgyny to become affected by the abstract context of listening as an involved practice.

In addition to Ihde, Nancy's theory of the listening subject (2007) and Feld's work on acoustemology (2012, 2015) were also influential upon my strategy of 'listening out'. For Nancy, listening is receptivity to sonorous presence characterised by the resonance of reflective, interpenetrative referrals and deferrals of the self opening to the world. Listening is not an ascent towards meaning or signification; it marks the presentation of self to presence as an infinite unfolding, 'coming and passing...extending and penetrating' (Nancy, 2007, p.13). Crucially, listening is not a 'metaphor for access to self' but is the 'reality of this access' (Nancy, 2007, p.12). The listening subject resonates in a space of constant referral and deferral; of stretching out towards self and self in relation to others, whilst carrying the echoes of past encounters. Listening opens a space of shared resonance, marking the experience of the sonorous as methexis; the sharing of begins and the evocation of spatial communality.

Feld considers listening part of an acoustic epistemology he calls acoustemology (Feld, 2012). He contextualises listening as a network of knowing, an inquiry into 'what is knowable and how it becomes known' (Feld, 2015, p.12). Feld offers a theorisation of the audible that sees the world as 'constituted relationally, by the acknowledgement of conjunctions, disjunctions, and entanglements among all copresent and historically accumulated forms', and this contextualises listening as

‘knowing-in-action’ (Feld, 2015, p.12). Feld emphasises the between-ness of listening, which creates a state of ‘existential relationality, a connectedness of being...built on the between-ness of experience’ (Feld, 2015, p.13). In the structures of Feld’s theorisation, knowing is produced through relationality, and this works against the notion that knowledge is acquired, claiming instead that one comes to know through an ‘ongoing cumulative and interactive process of participation and reflection’ (Feld, 2015, pp.13-14).

Nancy’s and Feld’s theories of listening support an approach to conceptual engagement that promotes the interpreter’s immersion into the life of androgyny; ‘listening out’ for the concept with an open ear and responding to the experience as it unfolds. Also influential in this regard is Woolf’s work on practices of reading. Where Nancy and Feld write about coming to knowledge in an open, responsive and interactive manner, Woolf advocates a developmental relationship between text and reader (Woolf, 2003). In this relationship, neither party control the production of meaning, and reader and text contribute as distinct yet connected aspects of the same reading experience. Like Nancy’s listening subject and Feld’s acoustemology, Woolf’s practice of reading asks that reader and text engage respectfully in an exchange of give and take. All three approaches emphasise the importance of attentive, active processes of textual engagement, so interpretation becomes a form of dynamic active play, rather than the striving towards definitive meaning. As Nancy considers listening the opening of self, and Feld places listening within a wider network of knowing, Woolf sets reading in a mediating role between the self and the world.

In the historical narratives of the senses, sight and sound, or vision and listening, are often placed in a dialectic relationship. Just as the meaning of androgyny

is associated with assumed differences between masculinity and femininity, so too vision and listening are attached to specific attributes and characteristics. Sterne calls this configuration the 'audiovisual litany' (Sterne, 2003, pp.15-18). These attributes detail the effects of vision and listening upon the perception of reality, describing their impact upon configurations of time, space and experience. Accounting for the differences between sensorial perception in theoretical work is not an immediate problem. The division between sight and sound arises because the experiential possibilities of the individual senses are predetermined by expectations placed upon their configurative differences. It is the assimilation of these expectations into theoretical work that functions as the limiting condition.

Exploring how androgyny presents in musical content provides a counterpoint to the dominance of androgyny's visualism. It is important to note that my aim is not to erase the visualism of androgyny's history; it is to engage listening to enrich the understanding of androgyny's expressive capacity. Part of this is accepting how academic readings are specific in orientating analytical strategies around visualism. Drawing upon this tradition aids in the recovery of the concept's wider expressive and experiential richness. I am aware that exploring the potential of listening for androgyny's conceptual development will evoke the historical tension between vision and listening, and in many ways this is inevitable. Lending an ear to androgynous expression works to resist the immediacy of androgyny's visual legacy and the critical formulations that have arisen as a result. It does this by exposing conceptual meaning to a 'network of crossing paths, some diverging, some converging, on which the senses do not so much bind us to the world as release us into it' (Kramer, 2019, p.9).

Listening is an abstract approach to conceptual engagement. Making definitive or declarative statements about how 'listening out' informs meaning is a complex

interpretative act because it draws into its surrounding debates enunciations of unpredictable combinations. As a practice, listening asks questions about how we listen, what we hear, what response sound generates, and how this experience becomes meaningful to us as interpreters and listeners. Because listening opens a space where meaning cannot be claimed, ‘listening out’ for androgyny opens the concept to invention; what one interpreter perceives, another may not, but this ambiguity brings creativity and imagination to the interpretation of androgynous expression. This allows the disruption of closed readings, where the stasis in androgyny’s historical reception can be challenged and opened to new contexts.

Whilst my thesis will focus on a comparative study of Woolf’s *The Waves* and Bush’s *A Sky*, these texts were not initially my primary focus. I, the listener, did not approach either text to make a claim for androgynous expression; the connection between *The Waves*, *A Sky* and androgyny happened unconsciously and without intervention. My initial intention was to offer a reading of theatrical androgyny in the early works of Bush, supported by an analysis of Woolf’s novel, *Orlando*. Whilst I always intended to explore the musical expression of androgyny, the shift in focus came as I was tracing the narratives of the concept during the twentieth century. Woolf’s formulation is central in these debates, and as I studied her conceptualisation in *A Room of One’s Own*, I was fascinated by the work of scholars — specifically Moi and Ryan — whose attention to textual expression challenged the concept’s association with the denial of difference.

As part of these explorations, I was rereading *The Waves* to examine the existing connection in academic work that claimed the character Bernard as the representation of Woolf’s androgynous writer. Running parallel to these studies, I was researching Bush; surveying existing literature, mapping existing connections to

androgyny and repeat listening to her back catalogue to get a sense of her artistic aesthetic, so that I could initiate a relationship between her and Woolf. During these early stages, listening to *A Sky* was part of a broader strategy that allowed me consolidate Bush's performance style; it was to provide background context, and more honestly, it was pleasurable to revisit an album I had not heard since it was first released but remembered vividly. Reading *The Waves* and listening to *A Sky* in the same space, at the same time, with ideas about the meaning of androgynous expression percolating persistently in the background led to a sudden realisation: that *A Sky* expresses androgyny and *The Waves* is the route to uncovering the details of this expression.

To use Woolf's terminology, this 'exceptional moment' — a revelatory moment that provides insight into something valuable (Woolf, 1982, pp.82-84) — signalled the opening of an exchange that encouraged the 'reading' of *A Sky* and the 'listening' to *The Waves*. This was crucial because it revealed the experience of androgyny through my experience of the texts. This immediately detached androgyny from normative considerations and created a new space for conceptual exploration. This moment was the basis for my practice of 'listening out' because the condition in which it occurred showed the interpretative path to follow and the attitude with which to proceed.

The context of this moment was not typically scholastic. It happened outside in late Spring where the 'hum of the world' was the same as that in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, and a diagnosis of tinnitus was forcing me to create a new relationship with sound and listening.<sup>23</sup> The intention of that moment was 'getting to know' Woolf and Bush.

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<sup>23</sup> 'The hum of the world' is the title of Kramer's recent publication, where he explores the meaning of sound through a philosophy of listening (Kramer, 2018). The book is orientated around two core ideas: 'the first is that sound is the measure of life', and the second is that the 'animating power of sound acts as a general background to sense perception' (Kramer, 2018, p.1).



Developing the relationship between androgyny, *The Waves* and *A Sky* was a process of combining slow, tentative excavation with an open ear, and the practice of listening encouraged a perpetual state of openness and attentiveness, to listen freely and joyfully to all sensory information that passed. This is the condition in which androgynous expression was revealed, and as I worked to account for these experiences amidst the wider condition of androgyny, repeat listening and reading continued to reveal details that were not discernible in previous moments.

It would be remiss of me to provide a portrait of ‘listening out’ to androgyny that tells solely of the romance of the relationship. Listening demands effort, calling for attention but not grasping, seeking a respectful exchange between all contributors in the research environment. Listening and interpretation occupy a tense space, because even when something seems significant its meaning is not immediately declared. Similarly, questions about presentation and representation were a ubiquitous concern, specifically, how could I productively account for my experience of listening to androgyny and communicate this to others without resorting to abstract language or enforcing meaning.

At its core, this thesis is the story of one listener’s relationship with androgynous expression and musical androgyny, of first hearing androgyny, of making sense of my perception and making it matter for androgyny’s conceptualisation. In the chapters that follow, I work to account for the relationship I heard between *The Waves* and *A Sky*. More broadly, I seek to enrich the conceptual possibilities recognised in popular music studies, setting to work androgyny’s troubled history by presenting alternative forms of conceptual engagement. ‘Listening out’ for androgynous expression allowed me to create an interpretative environment that supported these intentions, and in doing so, I hope I have further complicated an

already complicated concept.

As a guide to the reader of this thesis, I will close with a brief outline of the chapters that follow and the topics I explore.

In chapter one, I provide an overview of Woolf's androgyny as presented in *A Room of One's Own*. Exploring a range of critical responses, I show how attending to her textual strategies shifts the focus from the androgyne as a specifically sexed/gendered body. I then turn to a discussion on Bush, and by surveying academic research I focus on her music to establish her existing connection to androgyny. Drawing parallels between Woolf's and Bush's creative aesthetic, I will consider methodological approach. Examining transmedial method, I will discuss the potential of ekphrastic study, and the importance of incorporating musical-theoretical techniques into the study of popular music.

I develop the dialogue between Woolf and Bush in chapter two by drawing parallels between *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Here, I focus on similarities in framing contexts, including the importance of artwork accompanying each text, shared themes, form, structure and approaches to narrative. I consider how androgyny is implicated in these elements, and how the creative contexts of each work support 'listening out' for androgynous expression.

In chapter three, I identify a decentred, unstable expression of subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I explore the textual strategies underpinning this expression of subjectivity and their interpretative impact upon the myths of unity dominating androgyny's history. Moving through questions of who speaks to who listens, I interpret the creative worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as the expression of a choric community sustained by the interaction of multiple subjects.

In chapter four, I complicate androgyny's association with binary logic by

exploring *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of androgyny's material life. I examine the importance of artistic practice for subject formation to consider how the internal worlds of each text reimagine conceptual meaning. I close by tracing a series of exceptional moments in *A Sky*, which I interpret as the generation and eventual release of androgynous *jouissance*.

## Chapter One

### Virginia Woolf, Kate Bush, Androgyny Initiating a Dialogue

The previous chapter gave an overview of approaches to androgyny in popular music studies. By characterising interpretative trends, and connecting these to the broader reception of androgyny, I identified the possibilities and limitations of existing research. Popular music research highlights androgyny's conceptual complexity and its continuing significance in the exploration of gendered subjectivity in musical performance. These studies, however, emphasise sociocultural readings orientated around the visual presentation of androgyny, with discussions of musical content focused on genre manipulation, lyrical content and vocal delivery. I introduced my practice of 'listening out' as an interpretative method through which to recognise androgynous expression in a song's musical content and enrich our understanding of androgyny's conceptualisation.

To support the comparative analysis of Woolf's *The Waves* and Bush's *A Sky* that is the focus of this thesis, this chapter introduces both artists by detailing their reception in academic research. I will focus on Woolf's androgyny as presented in *A Room of One's Own*, engaging critical responses to her formulation to show how textual strategies shift the focus from the sexed/gendered body of the androgyne to an expression of multiplicity that collapses the binary structures associated with the traditional understandings of the concept.<sup>24</sup> From here, I consider Bush's performance aesthetic. By organising my discussion around voice, stylistics of performance and creative control as lines of inquiry, I explore the reception of Bush in academic research and her existing connection to androgyny. I will establish creative parallels

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<sup>24</sup> I will refer to *A Room of One's Own* as *A Room* from this point.

between Woolf's and Bush's artistic approaches and expressions of androgyny to further emphasise the importance of textual strategies when interpreting androgyny. I close the chapter with a discussion of methodological strategy, exploring ekphrastic approaches to the transmedial study of literature and music, and the importance of musical-theoretical techniques for popular music research. Through these discussions, I establish a methodological framework to support my practice of 'listening out' to the textual expression of androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

#### *A Room of One's Own: Recovering a Woolfian androgyny*

Published in 1929, *A Room* is one of Woolf's most explicitly feminist essays, and it is in the final chapter that she introduces her formulation of androgyny. The text's central thesis is presented as 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction', and to explicate this perspective Woolf explores the historical, social and cultural subjection of women within literary traditions (Woolf, 2001, p.2).

Presented as a lecture, Woolf introduces a lecturer and narrator to explore the question of women and fiction. Speaking first, the lecturer opens mid-sentence: 'But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction — what has that got to do with a room of one's own?' (Woolf, 2001, p.1). Believing there cannot be a satisfactory answer to the question, she hands the lecture to a fictionalised, unnamed narrator who is charged with unravelling her thesis. Through this, Woolf blurs the lines between fact and fiction, and empowers the audience/reader to seek the truth in the lies they hear (Woolf, 2001, p.2).

The narrator suggests that the audience and reader call her 'Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please – it is not a matter of any importance' (Woolf, 2001, p.2). In doing this, Woolf marks a distinction between

herself as the author and Mary as the narrator. From here, she adopts a ‘free associative method’ to express the experience of Mary as she grapples with questions concerning the past, present and future of women and fiction (Marcus, 1997, p.45). The narratives of the lecture are contextualised by Mary’s thought processes, the immediacy of her research question and her reaction to the information she finds. In unravelling the complexities of why women writers are historically invisible, the audience and reader are granted access to different facets of Mary’s intellectual and physical life.

Through intersecting narratives, Mary tells the story of how the lecturer came to conclude that money and a room of one’s own are essential if a woman is to write fiction. These narratives begin with cogitations upon the privilege of white men in the higher echelons of education and the absence of women within these ranks. Mary considers the consequences of poverty upon the mind, ‘the safety and prosperity of one sex and of the poverty and insecurity of the other’, the literary creations of male writers, and the lack of a literary tradition for women (Woolf, 2001, p.19). She researches the social and political climate of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to understand why many great literary works are written by men, but comparably few, by women. To weigh the impact of women’s social inferiority upon the creation of literature, Mary imagines William Shakespeare had a sister of comparable talent, Judith. Mary believes that had Judith existed, her talent would have been quelled by the inequalities of her time, and she would have died by suicide.

The parable of Judith Shakespeare shows how the bias in the development of the literary canon connects to the social and economic conditions of historical moments. In *A Room*, Mary finds herself pushed to imagine the experiences of talented women because she is unable to find texts that detail the lives of women.

Mary draws on this as her research progresses into the nineteenth century, and she identifies instances where women writers have attempted to penetrate and resist the dominance of male traditions in literature. Here, she argues that the techniques available to writers, from language, narrative device, genre and style are determined by the opinions, perspectives and experiences of men. She finds textual evidence to show how women writers internalise these traditions, developing a writing style that invokes a language imbued with expressive inadequacies, manifested through angry, distorted sentences; when wielded through the pens of women, male language inhibits the flow of creativity and impedes the integrity of the mind. Seeking a response to these traditions, Mary calls for the cultivation of new modes of literary expression and the forging of a new literature, one that accounts for women's different experiences without defaulting to language created through a male value system. In claiming that women writers have long been hindered by the lack of their own writing tradition, Woolf — through Mary — encourages women to search for their truth in history, so they may cultivate, create and write from their own previously silenced experience.

Mary considers the first novel of fictitious writer, Mary Carmichael, believing that her work demonstrates the necessary breaking of male tradition by writing without anger of her situation. Mary's discussion of this fledgling writer's work draws together the narrative threads of *A Room* and provides context for the discussion of androgyny in the final chapter of the essay. She considers the vastness of experience and what has been lost from literature by focusing on one sex. Mary Carmichael's interjection in these traditions comes with the phrase 'Chloe liked Olivia' and the exploration of previously undocumented female friendship (Woolf, 2001, p.70). The narrator, Mary, emphasises that the unprecedented advancement of Carmichael's text, *Life's Adventure*, is that the author 'wrote as a woman, but as a woman who has

forgotten that she is a woman, so that her pages were full of that curious sexual quality which comes only when sex is unconscious of itself' (Woolf, 2001, p.80).

Woolf's formulation of androgyny provides the culminating narrative thread in *A Room*. The audience/reader joins Mary as she contemplates the future of fiction and the 'development by the average woman of a prose style completely expressive of her mind' (Woolf, 2001, p.82). Androgyny emerges through Mary's description of a crowded London street. She presents this part of her narrative with an intricate level of detail, describing her surroundings and drawing her intellectual preoccupations into the scene. She attends to the shifting energies on the street as the 'nonchalance of hurrying feet' gather and peak at a point of stillness, a suspension where 'nothing came down the street; nobody passed' (Woolf, 2001, pp.82-83). She notices a 'single leaf detached...from the plane tree at the end of the street' and falling from the tree within this moment of stillness Mary considers the leaf a 'signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked' (Woolf, 2001, p.83). She notes how the leaf directs her attention along the movement of the street, which she likens to a river, drawing together separate energies and making new connections. A new point of contact comes as a young man and woman approach a taxicab from opposite directions of the same street. They both enter the vehicle and are 'swept on by the current elsewhere' (Woolf, 2001, p.83). This leads Mary to contemplate the unity of the mind, as the convergence and divergence of energies suggests there can be 'no single state of being'; the mind thinks both apart and with others (Woolf, 2001, pp.84-85).

Here, Mary considers the state of the creative mind by returning to some of her previous considerations. She determines that the fertilised mind needs the disparateness of multiple perspectives to be fully creative, including those states which may be uncomfortable (Woolf, 2001, pp.84-85). Inspired by the approach of the



man and woman, and their joining in the taxicab, Mary considers the satisfaction of cooperation between men and women, and perhaps, if there are ‘two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body’ then they need to be ‘united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness’ (Woolf, 2001, p.84). In this state of being, the male part of a female brain and the female part of a male brain live in harmony, ‘spiritually co-operating’ (Woolf, 2001, p.84). This leads Mary to identify androgyny as a state of mind that is fully fertilised and creative:

If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties (Woolf, 2001, pp.84-85).<sup>25</sup>

Mary considers the androgynous mind to be ‘resonant and porous...it transmits emotion without impediment...it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided’ (Woolf, 2001, p.85).

Mary turns to a book by a well-respected writer, Mr. A, who is fictional but representative of contemporary fiction. She considers the effect of the suffragette movement upon Mr. A’s writing, and after reading some chapters she is struck by a shadow falling across the page, ‘a straight dark bar shaped something like the I’ (Woolf, 2001, p.86). Mary begins ‘dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it’ but given the shadow cast by the ‘I’ is unable to do so: ‘in the shadow of the letter ‘I’ all is shapeless as mist’ (Woolf, 2001, p.86). This assertion of authority communicates the power of the male subject, demonstrating how the rigid identification with ‘I’ has ‘blocked the fountain of creative energy’ (Woolf, 2001, p.86). She compares Mr. A’s writing — which is ‘shored...within narrow limits’ — to the work of Coleridge, where one sentence explodes in the mind and ‘gives birth to all

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed explication of Coleridge’s androgyny see Watson (1983).

kinds of other ideas' (Woolf, 2001, pp.86-87).

Mary's research leads her to conclude 'that it is fatal for anyone who writes to think of their sex...It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple; one must be woman-manly or man-womanly' (Woolf, 2001, p.90). To speak consciously of sex, to 'lay the least stress on any grievance; to plead even with justice any cause' results in the creation of unfertilised literary works that cannot grow in the minds of others (Woolf, 2001, p.90). An androgynous mind is wide open, capable of communicating experience with perfect fullness (Woolf, 2001, p.90). The work of the androgynous mind is written without impediment and 'that is the only sort of writing of which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life' (Woolf, 2001, p.87).

Woolf's formulation of androgyny is at the centre of the twentieth-century androgyny debates I outlined in the previous chapter, and consequently, it has received sustained critical attention. The conceptual presentation of androgyny in *A Room* is complex, not least because Woolf does not comprehensively detail her formulation, nor does she expand upon her theorisation in her later work. Whilst the discussion of androgyny is limited to three paragraphs, Woolf constructs several narratives in *A Room* that provide interpretative context as the text moves towards the presentation of the androgynous mind. Androgyny is contextualised as an explorative and creative concept amidst Woolf's exploration of the social and economic processes that inform notions of sex and gender. As scholars have found themselves grappling with questions of definition, the lack of a clear thesis has caused several interpretative issues.

Criticisms of Woolf's androgyny stem from a contradiction between two central arguments in *A Room*. Whilst Woolf promotes the development of a women's

literary tradition, she argues that sexual division inhibits creativity and promotes the androgynous mind as the path to creative freedom. Important in the reception of these arguments is the difference between androgyny as balance and fusion, which Farwell claims is crucial if the critical value of androgyny is to be adequately assessed (Farwell, 1975). In androgyny as balance, male and female interact without dominance or subsumption, and rationality and intuition — considered by Farwell the counterpart of male and female in Woolf's work — are equal ways to knowledge; one perception does not prevail over the other (Farwell, 1975, p.435). This dialectic suggests the widening of perception defined by multiple ways of knowing. Androgyny as fusion, however, suggests the merging of two people, perceptions, or principles, attesting to a unitary mode of knowing where one half is subsumed by the other.

Given the social dominance of men, Farwell concludes that in Woolf's formulation of androgyny women are the subsumed half (Farwell, 1975, pp.435-436). She argues that Woolf's declaration of women's uniqueness and her call for a literary tradition that records undocumented lives is betrayed by a 'concept of androgyny in which the woman writer is asked to bury those elements which make her identifiable' (Farwell, 1975, p.436). Whilst Woolf asserts that both male and female personalities contribute vital experiences of reality, the following statement is problematic for Farwell:

If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her (Woolf, 2001, pp.84-85).

Farwell interprets Woolf's use of 'intercourse' as a retreat from the vision of equality she promotes throughout the text, implying instead that women are validated by their interactions with men. Farwell claims that androgyny as balance *could* be a revolutionary state, although Woolf's retreat serves to reinforce traditional models of

androgyny as an ideological state of fusion where the subject returns to and preserves a single perspective.

Tracing the contextual and historical analysis of *A Room*, Farwell concludes that Woolf's model of androgyny articulates the reconciliation of the sexes, a connection which is problematic for feminisms concerned with the reclamation of female expression. Showalter's work contributes to these discourses, and she is critical of Woolf's model of androgyny and its appropriation by the feminist movement, because she claims it depends upon the evasion of the female body and the denial of female difference (Showalter, 2013, pp.215-243). She argues that Woolf's theorisation of the androgynous mind is the 'myth that helped her evade confrontation with her own painful femaleness' and allowed her to 'choke and repress her anger and ambition' (Showalter, 2013, p.216).

Showalter rejects the androgynous ideal as a legitimate expression of uninhibited creativity, arguing that uniting female aestheticism and androgyny creates a space that acts as a sanctuary and a prison. Interpreting *A Room* as a 'document in the literary history of female aestheticism', she argues that remaining 'detached from its narrative strategies' reveals the darker side of androgyny, and the room becomes the 'sphere of the exile and the eunuch' (Showalter, 2013, p.233). Showalter contextualises her reading of androgyny through biographical details pertaining to Woolf's life, arguing that the focus on androgyny is a consequence of the writer's now well-documented personal struggles. She concludes that Woolf's attempt to formulate a condition of creative freedom beyond the imposition of sex and gender is a failure. Echoing Farwell, Showalter's reading hinges upon the relationship between men and women, and the way Woolf presents their interaction in *A Room*. The narrative contradictions in the text leads Showalter to understand androgyny as the suppression

of difference, where female difference submits to the dominance of male experience.

Countering Farwell, Showalter and comparable responses is the work of Moi (1985) and Ryan (2015), who reconsider the potential of Woolf's androgyny by emphasising the importance of interpretative strategy. Moi's introduction to *Sexual/Textual Politics* marks a moment of change in the theoretical engagement of Woolf (1985). Responding to feminist critiques, Moi reconsiders Woolf's contribution to feminism to 'illuminate the relationship between feminist critical readings and the often unconscious theoretical and political assumptions that inform them' (Moi, 1985, p.1). Moi focusses her discussion on Showalter's response to Woolf's formulation of androgyny.

Moi positions Woolf as a forerunner of feminist theory, claiming that her modernist aesthetics and feminism are not mutually exclusive. Showalter advocates the reader's detachment from the narrative strategies of *A Room* and is critical of Woolf's use of pluralistic perspectives and multiple narrative viewpoints, because she believes that a feminist text can only wield political power if it communicates the personal experience of women. Moi argues that the structure of Showalter's critique requires a unitary subject through which experience is mediated and communicated and consequently, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, unable to move beyond the limits of its own expectations. To counter this, Moi argues that:

to remain detached from the narrative strategies of the text is equivalent to not reading it at all. For it is only through an examination of the detailed strategies of the text on all its levels that we will be able to uncover some of the conflicting, contradictory elements that contribute to make it precisely *this* text, with precisely these words and this configuration (Moi, 1985, p.10).

Moi reads the stylistic features of *A Room* as the articulation of a writing practice which 'exposes the duplicitous nature of discourse' (Moi, 1985, p.9).

Beginning with *A Room*, Moi creates a flow of discourse between Woolf's

practice of writing, her modernist aesthetics and theories of language. She supports her interpretation by drawing on the poststructuralist work of Derrida and Kristeva to identify a 'deconstructive' element in Woolf's novels (Moi, 1985, p.9). Moi characterises Woolf's linguistic experiment as the articulation of a 'non-essentialist form of writing' that suggests a 'deeply sceptical attitude to the male-humanist concept of an essential human identity' (Moi, 1985, p.9). She incorporates additional interpretative layers, focussing on psychoanalytical theories that were influential upon Woolf's understanding of subjectivity. Moi elucidates this by reading the technical experimentations of modernist literature through Kristeva's 'revolutionary' form of writing (Moi, 1985, p.11). Making this connection, Moi delves deeper into modernist practices of writing, linking textual strategy to the politics of the sex/gender hierarchy.

Contextualising her reading through Kristeva's analysis of the power of biologism and essentialism in determining binary structures of gender, Moi explicates the progressive position Woolf adopted sixty years prior to deconstructionist theories of sex, gender and identity. For Moi, Woolf's fiction illuminates the 'destructive nature of a metaphysical belief in strong, immutably fixed gender identities', and she contextualises androgyny as a step towards the deconstruction of the 'death-dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity' (Moi, 1985, p.13). Moi's methodological approach supports her rereading of Woolf's androgyny. Drawing together textual expression through an analysis of literary technique, and incorporating theoretical discourses to support her analyses, Moi advocates a practice of text engagement that does not dictate meaning to suit a pre-existing condition or expectation. Instead, she encourages conceptual expansion by creating a dialogue that moves back and forth between the textual, historical and theoretical.

Ryan's reconsideration of Woolf's androgyny is indebted to Moi, as he works

to expose the concept's theoretical agility beyond the 'play of language...the (de)construction of identity...[and] the transcendence of mind over body' (Ryan, 2015, p.61). Like Moi, Ryan returns to *A Room* to explore the textual expression of androgyny before considering its place within contemporary feminist debates. Specifically, he reflects upon the relationship between androgyny and Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity. Whilst Braidotti considers androgyny a retreat from the material concerns of an embodied female subject (Braidotti, 1994), Ryan finds similarities between the characteristics of the nomadic subject and Woolf's formulation of the androgynous mind. For Ryan, these shared features show how Woolf's androgyny is 'materially embedded and theoretically useful' (Ryan, 2015, p.62).

Ryan begins with the taxicab image from *A Room*, contrasting this scene with several others in which Woolf emphasises the differences between men and women; for instance, the difference in material circumstance and the prevalence of masculine values in shaping literary discourse. Ryan argues that through these different narratives Woolf highlights both the differences among women and the differences within each woman, without defining either as 'for or against' the patriarchy (Ryan, 2015, pp.64-65).

Echoing Moi, Ryan interprets the narratives of *A Room* as Woolf's refusal to give meaning to the words 'feminine' and 'woman'. He sees *A Room* as the critique of the patriarchal trajectories that have socially and culturally defined 'women', and interprets Woolf's continued use of terms as an acceptance of need for the sake of re-appropriation. He finds evidence of this in Woolf's manipulation of language, grammar and punctuation, as she imbues the text with ambiguity to generate difference through the construction of multiple narrators and subjects. This challenges

the categories that socially and culturally define identity, highlighting the ‘inadequacy of language to express such non-unitary subjects’ (Ryan, 2015, p.66). Ryan reads the theoretical and expressive structures of *A Room* as a critique of the limiting nature of the binary framework and its efforts to maintain a hierarchical distance between men and women. It is within the nuances of this political agenda that Ryan finds the radicalism of Woolf’s androgyny:

Her theory of androgyny is not, then, an unproblematic celebration of a subjectivity which dispenses with differences between men and women, but one which multiplies difference to create a subject that is more complicated and that is not defined by an oppositional relation (Ryan, 2015, p.68).

Ryan interprets Woolf’s androgynous subject as emergent, an interpretation exemplified by the symbolic resonance of the taxicab image in *A Room*. He considers the connections that *might* be made by the man and woman as representative of the ‘attraction of two non-fixed terms which create their own distinct meaning in their own distinct textual frameworks and material contexts’ (Ryan, 2015, p.69). As each possible interaction has the potential to include men and women in various combinations, Ryan suggests Woolf’s theory of androgyny proposes a ‘positive model of complex, nomadic, and non-unitary subjectivity’, within which multiplicity is promoted as ‘the very condition of writing sexual difference’ (Ryan, 2015, pp.69-70).

The work of Moi and Ryan responds to the problematic reception of Woolf’s androgyny during the twentieth century. As illustrated by the strategies of Farwell and Showalter, the rejection of androgyny rests upon several interconnected points. The first is a general lack of connection between *A Room* and how androgyny is interpreted. Whilst Woolf steers *A Room* towards the revelation of androgyny, the complexity of textual presentation is often overlooked in favour of broad speculations based on Woolf’s personal and political allegiances. Consequently, Farwell’s and Showalter’s analysis defaults to traditional perspectives, and the search to critically



assess the potential of Woolf's androgyny is lost amid historical expectations and assumptions of meaning. This decontextualises androgyny, limits interpretative scope and inhibits the textual context created by Woolf.

Farwell does recognise the potential of androgyny, although her insistence on the interpretation of fusion or balance results in analytical exclusivity that sacrifices conceptual advocacy. Similarly, the emphasis Showalter places upon the female body depends upon an ideology of unitary selfhood and the articulation of female-gendered identity in a female sexed body. Whilst working to promote the reclamation of the feminine, Showalter inadvertently presents an argument that is essentialist, promoting a universal category of woman dictated by physical experiences of the female body, for example, menstruation and pregnancy. The emphasis both scholars place upon the role of femininity in Woolf's androgyny ties into gynocentric critiques of androgyny during the second phase of the androgyny debates.<sup>26</sup> They interpret the androgynous mind as the elevation of male consciousness and the affirmation of female sacrifice, a dynamic common in the history of androgyny. This is problematic because it assumes the gender affiliation of characters in *A Room*.

As Moi and Ryan demonstrate, this interpretation is negated both by the formal and stylistic expression of the text, and Woolf's aesthetic ambition to show character essence without essentialising her characters. This latter point is communicated in *A Room* by the emphasis on integrity and forgetting one's self for the sake of artistic creation, the textual expression of which can be found in the multiple subjectivities and impressions that play upon Mary's mind as she realises the importance of androgyny for literary creation. In orientating their discussions around a system of binary logic, Farwell and Showalter fail to account for the textual

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<sup>26</sup> See pages 55-56 from the introduction.

expression of androgyny and consequently, their arguments depend upon the categories of which they are critical.

Countering this approach is the work of Moi and Ryan, who draw on theoretical, historical and textual analysis to tease out androgyny's presentation in *A Room*. They accept Woolf's proposal for a women's literary tradition and her presentation of the androgynous mind as interconnected narrative threads. By allowing textual expression to inform their interpretations, Moi and Ryan identify a resistance to fixed gender identities through the deconstruction of binary logic. Moi and Ryan focus on how the relationships between men and women in *A Room* open women to greater possibilities of subjective experience, and men to a world of experiences beyond the assertion of patriarchal dominance. Consequently, Woolf's expression of androgyny in *A Room* is best understood as a progression *through* the power of binary logic to its eventual collapse by the amplification of difference and the coming together and drawing away of self and other in a consistent flow of fleeting moments. Woolf presents these trajectories as inconsistent and context-bound, and as Ryan points out, she considers the differences between men and women not just as oppositional relations, or universal categories, but as agencies within groups of agencies, thereby revealing 'the multiplicity already within the androgynous subject' (Ryan, 2015, p.67).

Moi's and Ryan's reconsideration of androgyny reveals the importance of interpretative approach for enlivening conceptual meaning. They achieve this by resisting the imposition of an interpretative framework that defines, focussing instead on the complex flow of relations involved in critical analysis. At the root of both analyses is a traditional understanding of androgyny, although neither Moi nor Ryan hold androgyny to this definition. They explicate conventional understanding by

drawing on the debates surrounding the concept and attending to the textual expression of Woolf's formulation. In doing so, they establish Woolf's androgyny as a concept of ambivalence characterised by the interplay of tension, conflict, multiplicity and dislocation. What is missing from Moi's and Ryan's approach is the contextualisation of androgyny as creative ideal. Both scholars focus on the textual strategies of *A Room* — citing the use of form, structure, multiple narrators, the intersection of real and fictional literary authors, the manipulation of grammar and punctuation as examples — although they focus on how these strategies complicate the heteronormative categorisation of gender. This focus is a necessity for each scholar because they are working to confront those opinions connecting Woolf's androgyny to the neutralisation of difference, whilst showing how her writing anticipated the concerns of the feminist movement.

In this thesis, I am interested in approaching androgyny as a creative ideal, of attending to textual strategies prior to the identification of binary logic in a text. This will allow me to test the limits of Woolf's androgyny, and by combining the approach of Moi and Ryan with my practice of 'listening out', enable me to explore androgynous expression in other artistic contexts, including music. Instead of identifying the sexed/gendered figure of the androgyne and then working to complicate its meaning through textual engagement, I want to *begin* with textual strategies, framing the creative possibilities of the androgynous mind as an alternative context through which to approach the interpretation of androgynous expression in literature and music.

In this discussion, I have provided an overview of Woolf's androgyny as formulated in *A Room*. By considering negative and positive responses to her formulation, I have demonstrated the importance of interpretative strategy when

approaching androgyny. Farwell and Showalter express concerns about Woolf's androgyny because they are concerned about the erasure of female experience, however their interpretations are disconnected from the textual strategies at work in *A Room*. Engaging these strategies, Moi and Ryan draw together historical, theoretical and textual analysis to demonstrate the political significance of androgyny and the importance of textuality in the production of meaning. Overall responses to Woolf's androgyny focus on *A Room*'s politics of sexual difference and androgyny's role within these discourses. Parallel to these political narratives, however, is Woolf's contextualisation of androgyny as a creative ideal. Although this context is rarely the subject of critical attention, approaching androgyny from this perspective supports the recognition of androgyny's more obscure textual presentations. Prioritising the contextualisation of androgyny as a creative ideal supports the shift in focus away from sexed/gendered body of the androgyne and frames my practice of 'listening out' to the musical expression of androgyny.

In the next section, I will turn to Bush, and by focussing on the academic response to her music, I investigate three lines of inquiry: voice, stylistics and aesthetic of performance, and creative control. Through this, I identify the existing connection between Bush and androgyny, examining how interpretative strategies overlap with the exploration of androgyny in popular music research. I will also identify similarities between Woolf's and Bush's creative ambitions, establishing parallels in their formative expressions of androgyny to further emphasise the importance of textual strategies for conceptual interpretation.

#### Eat the music: In search of a Bushian androgyny

In the previous discussion, I introduced Woolf's formulation of androgyny as

presented in her essay *A Room*. Tracing positive and negative responses to her model, I demonstrated the importance of textual expression in shifting androgyny away from the representation of a specifically sexed and gendered body, and the significance of this shift in the creation of an interpretative approach that supports ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression. Moving towards the practical application of this approach through the comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, in this section I will characterise Bush as a performing artist. I will explore the academic reception of her music to establish her existing connection to androgyny and the methodological strategies that are used. To initiate a dialogue between Woolf and Bush, I will offer some preliminary thoughts on the parallels between each artist’s expression of androgyny and their wider creative aesthetic.

Bush occupies complex territory in popular music traditions. She is a multimedia artist who exploits developing music technologies, and although her musical aesthetic cannot be aligned with a specific genre or style, her music ‘integrates intellectually challenging subject matter into complex and often experimental instrumental arrangements’ (Kruse, 1990, p.450). Sustained academic research of Bush’s music is rare, with two book-length studies to date (Moy, 2007; Withers, 2006) and several dedicated journal articles and book chapters (Cawood, 2016; Morini, 2013; Withers, 2010a/b, 2017; Gordon, 2005; Whiteley, 2005; Mayhew, 2004; Losseff, 1999; Kruse, 1990). Despite this, scholars adopt a variety of interpretative approaches, ranging from sociocultural readings (Cawood, 2016; Mayhew, 2004; Kruse, 1990), psychoanalytical interpretations (Withers, 2010b; Whiteley, 2005) to musical-theoretical analysis (Losseff, 1999), often incorporating several methodological techniques within one study.

Existing research highlights several angles from which to approach a critical

consideration of Bush and her music, from questions of nationality, class, the effect of genealogy upon her musical aesthetic, history of pop videos, commercial context and reception to creative influence. Due to the complexity of Bush's contribution to popular music traditions, it is not within the scope of any one study to adequately explore all possible trajectories. Given this, I will discuss the lines of inquiry that best serve the agenda of this thesis.<sup>27</sup> I will consider voice, stylistics and aesthetic of performance, and creative control; three trajectories which are important in gaining an understanding of gendered expression in Bush's music. To varying degrees, these research areas all feature in academic studies of Bush and are not mutually exclusive, however when considered as individual interpretative threads they establish a framework that helps unravel the complexities of her performances.

One of the most striking aspects of Bush's performances is the manipulation of vocal technique. On her debut single, 'Wuthering Heights' (released 1978), Bush demonstrated a vocal quality that has become synonymous with the overall presentation of her music, despite the maturation of her voice as her career progressed. The song is based on the window scene from Emily Brontë's gothic novel of the same name, although it refers to the story's wider narratives, particularly the relationship between Catherine "Cathy" Earnshaw and Heathcliff. Bush portrays the ghost of Cathy as she recalls her earthbound relationship with Heathcliff. Losseff's interpretation of the song examines 'the interaction between meanings inherent in the music and in the lyrics', and meanings that are specifically concerned with the 'duality of the real and the Other world' (Losseff, 1999, p.227). She identifies this duality in harmonic structure and vocal timbre; the duality of tonic keys in the verse and refrain mirroring the two worlds evoked in the song's narrative, where vocal timbre 'reflects

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<sup>27</sup> Moy's study gives an overview of the main areas for study in Bush's music and is useful for providing interpretative context (2007).

the division of real and Other world', with 'registral zones' indicating in 'which world Cathy is sited' (Losseff, 1999, p.227).

To interpret Bush's vocals, Losseff draws upon Barthes' theory of the 'grain of the voice', arguing that the quality of her vocals allows her to communicate 'at the juncture of language and pure sound', transmitting 'intuitive rather than cerebral meaning' (Losseff, 1999, pp.228-229). Whilst audiences were most struck by Bush's high tessitura, Losseff identifies the range as normal for an average female voice: between e' and e'', the lowest note a-flat and the highest f-sharp (Losseff, 1999, p.229). She argues that the communicative powers of Bush's voice reside in timbre, rather than pitch, and to create the characteristic 'Wuthering Heights' vocal texture, Bush lowers the soft palette to narrow the gap at the back of the mouth, staying within the middle and head registers and never exploiting the chest register (Losseff, 1999, p.229). To understand what this communicates to the listener, Losseff draws upon Wood's work on 'Sapponics' (1994).

Wood's rubric of 'Sapponics' has 'overtones and resonances in and beyond voice production and hidden vestibules in the body' (Wood, 1994, p.27). She focusses on trained female singing voices in opera as 'embodied and acoustic' instruments, but she also writes about these voices metaphorically, as 'vessel[s] of self-expression and identity' (Wood, 1994, p.28). Crucially, Wood emphasises the 'flexible negotiation and integration of an exceptional range of registers' as the sonic space of difference and desire that challenges the social construction of gendered polarities (Wood, 1994, p.28).

Losseff expands Wood's work to highlight the different codes at play in pop genres and the alternative registers that are breached (Losseff, 1999, p.229). This difference centres on where in the register the 'strain of the voice' occurs and how

effortless the performance sounds; classical singers are trained to negotiate the natural breaks of the voice, where pop singers ‘chest up’ to higher registers (Losseff, 1999, p.229). As the articulation of a space where ‘well-defined boundaries are *crossed*’ (emphasis Losseff, 1999, p.229), Wood argues that the ‘strain’ affects the signifying potential of the voice because it pushes past its break into wider ranges and registers. Losseff argues that Bush’s performance as Cathy creates a phonic environment previously unheard in popular traditions; in not exploiting the chest register she inhibits the strain of the voice commonly heard in popular performances. The combination of technique and effect is crucial in Bush’s communication of Cathy’s other-worldly space as it creates the effect of ‘hovering inside a well-defined space rather than pushing against it’ (Losseff, 1999, p.230).

Losseff’s analysis of Bush’s vocal technique on ‘Wuthering Heights’ is one part of her methodological approach. She also maps the song’s harmonic workings, suggesting that ‘the relative functional meanings of keys and chords also have symbolic meanings’, which are illuminated by the lyrics and vocal delivery (Losseff, 1999, p.230). Over the course of a comprehensive harmonic analysis, Losseff observes irregularities in phrase length, melodic range and intonation to show how the song’s performance — from vocals to musical setting — reflects Cathy’s movement between the temporalities of life and death, and her complex relationship with Heathcliff.

Echoing the exploration of Losseff, Withers (2006) and Cawood (2016) similarly emphasise the importance of voice in the communication of character identity in Bush’s music. Withers argues that whilst Bush is famous for her ‘piercingly high vocals’, displaying ‘at times uncomfortably high pitched’ voicings on *Lionheart*, she also performs in deeper registers (Withers, 2006, p.127). Withers seeks to account



for the queerness of *Lionheart* in the absence of Bush attempting to ‘visibly cross genders and confound gender boundaries’ through the same strategies adopted by her peers, for instance Annie Lennox’s crossing-dressing as a man ‘to avoid *and* confront the sexist and stereotypical constrictions’ placed upon women musicians in the music industry (Withers, 2006, p.126). The overall purpose of Withers’ article is to demonstrate ‘how *Lionheart* as an album challenges many boundaries of gendered correctness’ (Withers, 2006, p.126).

Like Losseff, Withers draws upon Wood’s ‘Sapponics’ to interpret Bush’s negotiation of extreme ranges as the communication of muddled gender boundaries. Withers quotes a passage from ‘Sapponics’ where Wood refers to ‘sonic cross dressing’ as the ‘extreme range in one female voice from richly dark deep chest tones to piercingly high falsetto, and its defective break at crossing register borders’ (Wood, quoted in Withers, 2006, p.127). Withers argues that in sliding between pitches and registers, Bush integrates male and female voices to create a vocal space that has ‘the possibility of occupying a number of positions within a widened spectrum that stretches the two poles of the male/female binary’ (Withers, 2006, p.127). Supported by Wood’s work, Withers suggests that voice is one strategy Bush uses to force an intrusion into normative gender categories, allowing her to destabilise acceptable expressions of gender identity and enable movement into alternative spaces of characterisation and subjectivity.

Focussing on the title track from Bush’s album *Hounds of Love*, Cawood explores how Bush’s ‘popular appeal was widened into a genuine acceptance of her idiom by cultural commentators’ (Cawood, 2016, p.41). Exploring multiple versions of the song, Cawood’s intention is to provide a contextualised explanation by adopting a multidisciplinary methodological approach. Voice is one of the main trajectories in his

exploration, and he contextualises his discussion of Bush's vocal delivery by describing the musical setting in which the lyrics are performed. He establishes the importance of rhythm and drones, identifying three recurring chords that underpin the emotional state of the song. Cawood argues that Bush's vocal performance contributes to the mood of the song and without it 'the track is nothing but rhythm and drone' (Cawood, 2016, p.51). Like Losseff, Cawood draws on Barthes theory of the 'grain of the voice', and he considers the different techniques Bush has adopted throughout her career — from singing in a disused swimming pool, stimulating mucus by consuming dairy products, to singing in challenging keys — to show how she creates environments that support her vocal performance (Cawood, 2006, p.52).

Cawood contrasts the vocals on 'Hounds of Love' with the higher pitched soprano performances of her previous releases, noting the 'deliberate lowering' of her voice (Cawood, 2016, p.52). He identifies the same emotional abandon in 'Wuthering Heights' and 'Hounds of Love' but notes the sense of foreboding communicated by the latter song's lower register. Here, Cawood refers to Losseff's comment that the distinctiveness of Bush's voice owes to timbre rather than pitch (Cawood, 2016, p.52). Taking this to 'Hounds of Love', he notes that the delivery of early lines in the song succeed in communicating a 'strange, other-worldly, duality', resonant on some words in the phrase and rising to soprano wails on others (Cawood, 2016, p.52). This, he argues, creates 'narrative friction' between the 'refined enunciation of lyrics' and a delivery that is 'highly erotic and disturbing' (Cawood, 2016, pp.52-53).

Cawood's analysis continues as he considers how Bush's vocal delivery alters between the track's remixes. He points to the reworking of song structure, the manipulation of phrase length, instrumentation, and Bush's visual presence on the album artwork and in TV performances to position her as artist and performer. Cawood

connects each stage of his analysis to Bush's wider role in the music industry, highlighting the different ways she retains artistic freedom whilst gaining popular appeal and commercial success.

The work of Losseff, Withers and Cawood shows how voice is one part of a complex series of expressive methods employed by Bush. Consequently, voice is a constitutive aspect in the second line of inquiry I want to discuss: stylistics and aesthetics of performance. The creation of multiple subjectivities, and the telling of their stories, underpins Bush's performance style highlighting an aesthetic driven by theatricality. Many of Bush's songs are concerned with fictive scenarios and characters, and rather than communicating her personal experience — a tradition associated with the female singer/songwriter movement — she adopts character personalities to imagine their lives. This approach inspires her songs and influences compositional practice, production techniques and her final performances. Some of her most famous examples take inspiration from literature, for instance 'Wuthering Heights', based on Emily Brontë's novel of the same name, 'The Sensual World', inspired by Molly Bloom's soliloquy from James Joyce's *Ulysses*, and 'The Red Shoes', a re-telling of Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale with references to the 1948 film by Michael Powell. In addition to these better-known tales, Bush creates other characters, placing them in specific situations, locations and scenarios, and formulating performances around developing narratives of subjectivity. Within these narratives, Bush envoices multiple subjects to create a consistently shifting tide of personas, stories and experiences.

These strategies are crucial in Losseff's, Withers' and Cawood's interpretation of Bush's voice, as each scholar contextualises vocal delivery amidst a performance aesthetic that incorporates multiple expressive trajectories. The contrasting approaches of these scholars attests to the complexities of Bush's vocal delivery, specifically as she

manipulates and transgresses convention to create a song's interior world and communicate its story to her listeners. To expand these narratives, I would like to briefly consider Gordon's interpretation of 'The Red Shoes' (2005), adding some additional insight from Withers' work on *Lionheart* (2006).

Gordon focusses her exploration on Bush's retelling of the fairy-tale 'The Red Shoes' (2005). She is concerned with how Bush subverts the meaning of the original text through a complex practice of storytelling. Bush's storytelling is not straightforward recitation; rather, the combination of composition, presentation and performance forms a sonic world, into which the listener is invited (Gordon, 2005, p.48). Gordon is further concerned with the possibilities of this space for female performers and characters. Offering a detailed analysis of the song's composition, lyrics, production and album artwork, Gordon argues that Bush's performance aesthetic 'spins an old story into a powerful performative gesture' (Gordon, 2005, p.49):

By rewriting a fairy tale that uses dance to punish and isolate one girl because of her feminine excess as a dance tune that encourages a relinquishing of bodily control, Bush overturns the original violence done to Karen (Gordon, 2005, p.49).

Drawing on discourses concerned with the materiality of music and its 'excessiveness to speech', Gordon reads Bush's retelling as an expression of the problematic representation of women in artistic traditions (Gordon, 2005, p.49). She argues that Bush's approach to performance, including her practice of music-making, opens a space for reclamation and for thinking about the creative autonomy of the female body and voice.

The association between the aesthetics of Bush's performances and the interrogation of gendered identity is also explored by Withers (2006, 2010). Whilst I have already considered the importance of voice in Withers' examination of queer subjectivities on *Lionheart*, she places vocal expression within a wider performance

aesthetic that can be traced throughout Bush's career. Withers' reads Bush's musical output as a continuing exploration of 'gender roles through music, performance and dramatization' (Withers, 2006, p.125). Like Gordon, Withers highlights the 'restrictive boundaries' created by the enforcement of patriarchal gender roles and the designation of 'permissible sites from which the female sexed subject can speak or sing' (Withers, 2006, p.125). She argues that to traverse the 'impasse of sex and gender' Bush creates an 'autoerotic female subject that enable[s] new subject positions for the female sexed subject to emerge' (Withers, 2006, p.125).

Withers highlights the theatrical nature of Bush's performance style — within which the creation of multiple subjectivities is a vital aesthetic — to contextualise an expressive space that challenges 'gendered correctness' through 'freedom of performance' (Withers, 2006, p.126). She reads the 'theatrical ambience' of *Lionheart* as an articulation of camp performance that resonates with gay cultures and communities by accentuating a 'twist of vocal and subjective transvestism' (Withers, 2006, p.131). This twist allows Bush to be a 'woman performing as a man who in turn is adopting, parodying and inhabiting female characteristics' (Withers, 2006, p.131). Drawing upon Isherwood's concept of 'high camp', Withers argues that the stylistics and aesthetics of *Lionheart* is a combination of histrionic performance and complex musical score that does not make fun *of* but makes fun *out of* the supposed naturalness of gender: 'embracing artifice is thus a key to engaging, challenging and changing the world around us' (Withers, 2006, pp.132-133). Reading the sociocultural implications of Bush's storytelling, manipulation of voice, compositional practice, production and image, both Gordon and Withers find a performance aesthetic that deploys strategies of resistance to challenge and subvert normative articulations of gender identity.

The first two lines of inquiry discussed above contribute towards the third:

creative control. Bush is a rarity in popular music traditions — particularly for a female artist emerging in the late 1970s — because she has succeeded in securing and maintaining control of both her professional management and artistic freedom. Her emergence in the music industry was unusual. David Gilmour of Pink Floyd brought Bush's demo tapes to the attention of record label EMI, who signed the then sixteen-year-old, giving her money to hone her performing skills. Her first single reached number one in the UK charts, and a series of similarly successful singles proved Bush's commercial profitability. This combined with Bush's unique sound and style, and EMI's unwillingness to 'tamper with a successful formula', gave her the power and freedom to make artistic and executive choices (Kruse, 1990, p.454). She was granted significant margins of freedom by EMI, an uncommon scenario in the music industry, particularly in the production and marketing of female pop stars.<sup>28</sup>

This control extends to the recording studio, where Bush has acted as sole producer of her albums since 1982.<sup>29</sup> Her role as self-produced artist speaks to ongoing debates about the absence of women in music production. Writing for the *Journal on the Art of Record Production*, Wolfe explores gender and technology in relation to the creation and production of music (2012). Her aim is to examine the experiences of women working within the industry to understand how relations of power are generated and maintained. Wolfe explores several pathways to explain the social reasons underpinning the absence of women as producers. In doing so, she highlights a structure of power that favours male creativity and control, arguing that developing from singer-songwriter to self-produced artist is a bold feminist statement. This development comes

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<sup>28</sup> Refer to Kruse for a discussion of Bush and the making of her success in the music industry (1990). Kruse also considers the intersection of Bush's early career with contemporary record label marketing strategies.

<sup>29</sup> For her 1980 release, *Never for Ever*, Bush acted as co-producer alongside Jon Kelly. On her following album, *The Dreaming*, Bush took control as sole producer.

with a caveat: female artists need access to developing technologies and a recording studio.

For Bush, the stylistics and aesthetics of her performances denote a commitment to self-creation, a point that Wolfe links directly to the narratives of self-determination from Woolf's *A Room*. Drawing on the central tenets of *A Room*, Wolfe highlights how history is repeated in the creative industries through the maintenance of gender hierarchies. One of the most significant questions asked in these explorations is how the transfiguration of a room of one's own into a studio of one's own contributes towards an understanding of women's absence in producing and the subsequent impact upon women's creative output.

Wolfe examines the attitudes and working practices of several women artist-producers, Bush being the highest-profiling and most commercially successful example. The creative control Bush wields over her recordings owes to her artistic vision, which she supported through the installation of her own private home studio. The possibility of a creative retreat where an artist is free to develop a slower, more considered approach to composition and production garners the technical experience and knowledge called for by Woolf. Wolfe links the potential of creative solitude — and the space required for its cultivation — to *A Room*'s discussion on the mental state most propitious for creativity:

For a woman to have such a state of mind as one that believes that she has the *right* to a creative life, a *right* to seek, find and develop her voice may also mean surmounting social inequalities that go beyond gender and encompass issues within society that go beyond the music industry (Wolfe, 2012).

Bush's creative control shows how she has forged a path into masculinist traditions, developing an expressive space of her own by ensuring that the presentation of her music corresponds to her vision. The techniques Bush engages in the production of her music links to the narratives in *A Room*, and thus, contextualises her career as an

example of the creative fertility called for by Woolf. Whilst Wolfe does not make this connection, the overall context of her exploration suggests this claim: self-production equates to self-creation, an exclamation of independence and freedom from the expectations of male-dominated traditions.

Withers' recent article considers Bush's production techniques in her albums *Director's Cut* (2011) and *50 Words for Snow* (2017). Withers explores the tension between analogue and digital recording technologies in Bush's production techniques, noting the manipulation of 'temporal qualities of recorded music to create the conditions for self-reflexive internal time consciousness to emerge within the listener' (Withers, 2017, p.98). She reads these strategies as the encouragement of perceptive acts of listening, designed to embroil the listener in the 'practice of listening itself' (Withers, 2017, pp.98-99). Withers does this by exploring how structures of listening have changed over the course of Bush's career, identifying a 'contemporary structure of the digital' that engenders 'shuffle-based, discontinuous listening' (Withers, 2017, p.99). Withers argues that Bush's later works are at odds with this structure because they demand an 'attentive, unfolding of the listeners' consciousness' (Withers, 2017, p.99). She characterises these albums as 'conceptually analogue', a hybrid between the possibilities of digital recording and the aesthetic potential of analogue recording (Withers, 2017, pp.99-101).

Withers further claims that this hybridity encourages listening as a reflective temporal process. As a result, in *Director's Cut* memory is transformed into a 'resource of listening' and songs become 'stretched temporal containers' where the listener is encouraged to create new 'interpretative-perceptive' acts (Withers, 2017, p.103). Withers identifies a similar condition in *50 Words for Snow*, where the analogue-digital hybrid method gives time back to the listener to support a 'self-conscious immersion in



and of sound' (Withers, 2017, p.107). Where Wolfe explored Bush's technological autonomy for its interrogation of male dominance in the music industry, Withers shows how the recording techniques of her later works shape a practice of listening where the listener is invited to 'extend, concentrate, wander and be present within a slow-paced unfolding narrative' (Withers, 2017, p.109).

Whilst Bush is not widely studied in academia, existing research shows the complexities of her performance style. Considering her music through three lines of inquiry — voice, stylistics and aesthetic of performance, and creative control — breaks down this complexity to create an understanding of her musical style. Methodological approaches to her music are varied, ranging from musical-theoretical techniques, sociocultural interpretations and analysis of lyrics and image. Despite this, she is an artist associated with the transgression of boundaries. Her music interrogates ideologies of normative gendered identity, expressing an intricate plethora of subjectivities that resists straightforward classification. Yet research directly connecting Bush and androgyny is rare. In the following discussion, I will consider two instances from academic research that connect Bush to androgynous expression. I will then establish links between Woolf's and Bush's expression of androgyny, and their overarching artistic ambitions.

Reynolds and Press (1995) and Withers (2010) connect Bush to androgyny, although the intensity of engagement differs with the latter providing the most significant contribution in academic literature. Reynolds and Press reference Bush at several points during their exploration of women in rock traditions (1995). In one discussion, they refer to strategies where women musicians celebrate 'female imagery and iconography', using femininity as a 'wardrobe of masks and poses to be assumed' (Reynolds and

Press, 1995, p.233). Reynolds and Press note that through these strategies, musicians such as Bush discovered their own 'turmoil', 'demons' and 'Dionysian fire' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.235). The discussion of Bush and androgyny comes in an exploration of female masochism, where women musicians imitate male rebels to 'define themselves against the limitations of femininity' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.236). Reynolds and Press compare Bush to Patti Smith and Chrissie Hynde to highlight the difference in artistic approach; where Bush pushed her femininity to the fore, Smith and Hynde cultivated a tomboyish image (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.241). They note that whilst Bush did not adopt a male style, she wanted to make music that was antithetical to the representations of women she saw in pop and consequently, identified as male to write music (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.240). They connect this to the recurring image of Peter Pan in Bush's music, who they argue is 'best understood not as a boychild but as a genderless androgyne of prepubescence' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.241).

Reynolds and Press emphasise Pan's 'refusal to grow up' and his 'evasion of adult sexuality and gender divisions' as that which allows him to root experience in 'childish wonder and playfulness' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.241). In this state, Pan has no gender, and in being both male and female represents an indeterminate state free from the dictates of normative gender categories. They parallel this with the experience of Wendy, who, in Barrie's novel, is restricted by the conventions of the Victorian age, eventually marrying, and becoming a mother and grandmother. Reynolds and Press read Bush's use of Pan as a symbol of her need for free imagination, with Wendy representing the constrictions she was trying to avoid (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.241). They identify these narratives in the lyrics of Bush's early songs, citing 'Kite' (1978) and 'In Search of Peter Pan' (1978) specifically. As their text progresses, Reynolds and Press point to Bush's later works and the reclamation of 'feminine speech' in her

album *The Sensual World*, noting a shift away from her earlier identification with male idols (Reynolds and Press, 1995, pp.379-380).<sup>30</sup>

Withers' exploration of Bush and androgyny (2010a) forms part of an overarching narrative, incorporating her earlier 2006 work on queer subjectivities in *Lionheart*. In Bush's music, Withers identifies the Bushian Feminine Subject, the BFS (2010a). She claims that Bush's enactment of shifting subject positions and multiple personalities constitutes the movement of the BFS across albums, music videos and performances. Charting these movements, Withers connects Bush to theoretical discourse to explore the 'impressive terrain of codes and sources' contained within her performances (Withers, 2010a, p.1).

Withers engages androgyny during her discussion of *Lionheart*, claiming that the 'gendered flavour' of the album is androgynous (Withers, 2010a, p.44). She argues that androgyny propels the movement of the BFS through the narratives of the albums (Withers, 2010a, p.44). Withers' discussion begins by highlighting the front cover of *Lionheart*, which features Bush wearing a lion's costume that 'conceals the contours of her body' (Withers, 2010a, p.44). She argues that the 'use of make-up' and exaggerated hair crimping recalls the 'heyday of the glam era' where 'male performers feminised themselves through the use of costume' (Withers, 2010a, pp.44-45). Withers claims that 'the crossing of gender boundaries and the communication of camp' is textually embedded in *Lionheart*, and she considers Bush's manipulation of vocal registers a 'vital tool of negotiation and creation' that allows her to 'depart from gentle, stereotypically feminine music' (Withers, 2010a, p.45). Here, Withers connects her earlier 2006 research on queer subjectivities in *Lionheart* to expressions

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<sup>30</sup> See Whiteley for an analysis of Bush's childlike femininity and the opening of debates surrounding the word 'girl' in popular music traditions (Whiteley, 2005, pp.65-83). She also draws upon the figure of Peter Pan in Bush's music, referring directly to the observations made by Reynolds and Press.

of androgyny, supporting her interpretation with Wood's classification of 'Sapphonic' vocality (Withers, 2010a, p.45).

Having established the androgynous nature of *Lionheart*, Withers, like Reynolds and Press, attends to Bush's evocation of Peter Pan. Withers reads this as a further indication of how the 'inevitability of stereotypical gendered fates' are stalled in Bush's music (Withers, 2010a, p.46). Her interpretation echoes the observations of Reynolds and Press in that she identifies a dialectic between the complexities of adulthood and the freedom of childhood. Withers develops this, claiming that the BFS privileges a version of an androgynous Pan, who suggests the 'possibility of indeterminate gender' by having the 'advantage of experiencing both genders' (Withers, 2010a, p.46). Analysing the different characters in Bush's song 'In Search of Peter Pan', Withers finds resistance to heteronormative structures of identity, an interpretation she expands using Halberstam's work on queer resistance (Withers, 2010a, p.47). Tracing Pan's androgyny, Withers finds a space for the emergence of transgendered subjectivities and the transformation of gendered identity through fluid movements across multiple sites of gender (Withers, 2010a, p.48). Highlighting the 'campy, theatrical artifice of the BFS', Withers connects androgyny to an expression of gender ambiguity that resists and critiques 'restrictive hetero-normative and patriarchal gender roles' (Withers, 2010a, p.48). Androgyny is thus 'saturated with the pain of binary gender's limitations' and the need to escape or move beyond its power (Withers, 2010a, p.48).

The approaches taken to Bush's androgynous expression by Reynolds and Press, and Withers reflects the strategies of conceptual engagement in popular music studies. Reynolds and Press' use of androgyny emphasises the binary structure of gender and Bush's resistance to the social and cultural expectations placed upon women composers. In this sense, the connection they make, whilst limited to one song, can be associated

with the male model of androgyny in the wider study of androgyny in popular music research. In channelling a male creative persona, Bush steps outside the restrictions of popular music performance in the 1970s, where there was a stylistic expectation placed upon female singer/songwriters who played the piano. Reynolds and Press draw upon the symbolic and metaphorical significance of Peter Pan to reveal Bush's resistance to stereotypical representations of women musicians, focussing instead on her creative strategies and imaginative thinking.

Reynolds and Press could have expanded their reading of androgyny by returning to Bush's strategies of reclamation through the celebration of female iconography (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.233). Whilst they note an aesthetic shift, they do not account for Bush's developing creative approach, or its significance for androgyny. This is problematic because they offer observations of Bush's performance style, but do not join these together into a comprehensive account of her creative aesthetic. Consequently, their interpretation of androgyny — as the transcendence of sex and the desire to maintain a pre-sexed desire — is determined by the specific reference to Peter Pan in one song.

This draws upon androgyny's controversial reception history, specifically the association with a patriarchal value system and the privileging of male consciousness.<sup>31</sup> This reading is supported by Reynolds and Press' work, because whilst they draw upon the image of the 'genderless androgyne' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.241), they bookend this in their text by emphasising both the significance of male idols for Bush's creative process and her desire to escape the domestic trap into which Wendy fell. This implies that it is not masculinity that prevents creative imagination but femininity, and in this regard, their work engages the female model of androgyny in popular music

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to pages 14 and 49-56 from the introduction.

studies, where critics are concerned about the politics of appropriation and the erasure of female difference. Again, engaging this conflict in more detail, perhaps by attending to the fluidity of gendered expression throughout Bush's albums, and analysing meaning beyond a focus on lyrical content, would have allowed a more critical engagement of gender politics in Bush's career and music.

Withers' work on androgyny in *Lionheart* responds to these limitations in several ways. Her approach is comparable to examples from popular music studies that contextualise androgyny amidst wider strategies of gender ambiguity, in addition to resonating with the third phase of androgyny debates as outlined in the introduction of this thesis.<sup>32</sup> From the outset of her discussion, Withers recognises androgyny as the crossing of gender boundaries. Identifying qualities of sonic crossing-dressing in Bush's vocals, she accounts for the presence of masculine and feminine identities, showing how the album's extreme vocal registers intrude upon the assumed stability of normative gender categories. From here, Withers aligns androgyny with explorations of transgendered and queer strategies of expression, within which androgyny is engaged as a tactic of queering that interrogates and resists the binary structure of gender.

Drawing on feminist and queer theory, Withers places her reading of androgyny in a political framework of resistance, with movement across multiple sites of gendered expression. Identifying interconnected narratives of androgyny, queer resistance, camp and parody, Withers shows how Bush reveals the constructed nature of gendered identities to challenge the notion of natural, stable subjectivity. Crucially, Withers connects the theoretical implications of Bush's performance strategies to her songs as musical texts, and she works to find the multiple levels in which these

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<sup>32</sup> Refer to pages 57-59.

expressions occur. Her approach, however, prioritises visual imagery, analysis of lyrical content and vocal style. In this respect, her methodology is typical of the study of androgyny in popular music because she orientates her discussion primarily around androgyny's visual presentation. Despite this, her research presents a starting point through which to account for androgyny's more obscure musical moments.

Withers' work is the most significant contribution connecting Bush to androgyny. It is limited in methodological approach only by an orientation around the visual presentation of androgyny, and a focus on vocal delivery and lyrical analysis. The work of Reynolds and Press, and Withers shows how Bush relates to all three models of androgyny — male androgyny, female androgyny and androgyny as gender ambiguity — explored in popular music studies. Taking these examples to the wider academic study of Bush, it is possible to establish comparable features with Woolf's androgyny and the textual strategies of *A Room*. Considering these points of overlap recontextualises existing approaches and allows me to shift the focus to the interpretation of androgynous expression by 'listening out' to textual strategies.

The most obvious connection between Woolf and Bush is in the central arguments of *A Room*: that 'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction' (Woolf, 2001, p.2). I touched upon this point when discussing Bush's creative control in the production studio earlier in the chapter, though its significance cannot be overstated. Woolf considers creative space and economic freedom material necessities for any woman involved in artistic production. Bush has achieved both economic success and control over her artistic freedom, and whilst she works with a close creative team, she exercises executive power in the technological aspects of recording and producing (Moy, 2007, p.76). In 2011, she set up her own record label, Fish People, released two new albums — *Director's Cut* and *50 Words*

*for Snow* — and issued remasters of her previous albums. This level of artistic freedom realises Woolf’s call for a woman’s literary tradition, and whilst Bush is a musician there are parallels between the dominance of male traditions in literature and in popular music.<sup>33</sup> In this respect, the narratives of *A Room* are specific and overarching, because the examination of women’s absence in literature is set amidst an exploration of the wider socio-economic disadvantages impacting equality. Bush’s career stands out in popular music history because she has maintained control over her artistic vision and self-management, whilst gaining commercial success and negotiating the gendered politics of the music industry. Other women musicians have followed in her footsteps — for instance, Tori Amos and Björk — however Bush’s accomplishments since the late 1970s were exceptional in the music business and were not the norm.<sup>34</sup> Having a recording studio of her own and economic independence, however, are not the only ways in which Bush realises Woolf’s aims for women’s creative freedom.

The security of material means and creative space in which to produce art represents one of *A Room*’s narrative strategies. Equally important is the mind of the artist in approaching artistic production. Woolf’s model of the androgynous mind begins with the meeting of male and female parts of the brain, which she represents by the taxicab image. In 1978, Bush expressed a similar sentiment in an interview for *Melody Maker*:

When I’m at the piano writing a song, I like to think I’m a man, not physically but in the areas that they explore. Rock ‘n’ roll and punk, you know, they’re both really male music... When I’m at the piano I hate to think that I’m a female because I automatically get a preconception.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> I explored this in the overview of popular music and gender studies in the previous chapter, and it is a recurring dynamic in the reception of androgyny, both in popular music research and in feminist and literary discourse.

<sup>34</sup> Moy provides a detailed discussion of auteur theory in Bush’s career through a comparative analysis of Bush’s, Madonna’s and Björk’s approach to authorship (Moy, 2007, pp.72-88).

<sup>35</sup> [www.gaffa.org/reaching/i78\\_mm2.html](http://www.gaffa.org/reaching/i78_mm2.html), accessed 22/08/2018, 13:59.



This quote highlights expectations of women in the music industry and the styles associated with female performers, indicating the effect of these assumptions upon Bush's creative process. Reynolds and Press use this quote to contextualise the significance of Peter Pan in Bush's music, and it leads them to suggest she was trying to avoid a life of domesticity where imagination and freedom are sacrificed (Reynolds and Press, 1995, pp.240-241). The context of *A Room* expands the potential meaning of Bush's comments, because it highlights the covert and overt mechanisms that influence women who write or compose. Decades apart, Woolf and Bush articulate the same sentiment: thinking of one's sex is fatal because it conjures expectations that limit creativity. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this has proved controversial in the reception of Woolf's androgyny, particularly for scholars concerned about the neutralisation of female difference. Similarly, in taking Bush's comment literally, Reynolds and Press overlook the correlations between her statement and the nuances of her creative approach. Neither Woolf nor Bush seek to renounce femininity, rather they are highlighting how social expectations of gender influence the creation of art and the importance of opening to a greater range of subjective experience.

This is further supported by the expressive content of Bush's songs. In the academic study of Bush, scholars highlight the complexity of character creation and the expression of multiple subjectivities. The power of binary logic is amplified by multiple character positions, and her comments on thinking like a man when composing are recast by the context-bound world of her songs. Moi (1985) and Ryan (2015) highlight the importance of textual context in *A Room*, and they emphasise a movement between characters that collapse and synthesise binaries in different

contexts.<sup>36</sup> Withers attends to this in her exploration of androgyny in *Lionheart*, beginning with Bush's challenge to binary logic through the manipulation of vocal registers, gradually exposing this polarity to more abstract conceptualisations of selfhood. In doing so, she highlights how the idea of men and women are ideological constructs and unstable sites of gendered expression. Woolf similarly presents a polarised vision of gender to challenge and complicate its logic through the introduction of multiple experiences and perceptions.

Woolf technically realises this expression in *A Room* through pluralistic perspectives, multiple narrative viewpoints and manipulation of grammar and punctuation, textual strategies that have similarly been identified in Bush's music. All the scholars I have discussed in this section highlight Bush's manipulation of musical convention. This might be in irregularities of song length, the fusion of musical genres, the interruption of expected harmonic progressions, unusual instrumentation, the incorporation of melodies and rhythms from non-popular music traditions; or in the lyrics, creation of multiple characters, the retelling of well-known stories from film and literature, the album artwork; or it may be in Bush's creation of audiovisual experiences. Each of these aspects have featured in the academic study of Bush, and in being reflective of Woolf's strategies in *A Room*, are significant for understanding a Bushian-inspired androgyny.

Excavating the textual possibilities of androgyny in *A Room*, Moi writes that Woolf's linguistic experiment articulates a 'non-essential form of writing', suggesting a 'deeply sceptical attitude to the male-humanist concept of essential human identity' (Moi, 1985, p.9). The same statement could be made of Bush's music. The complexity of her vision and her creative worlds makes it difficult to claim an essence that is

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to pages 85-91 of this chapter.

associated with a male or female composer or character identity. Bush's creative strategies interrogate the ideology of stable selfhood, and like Woolf, she deconstructs heteronormative structures of sex and gender. This, combined with the emphasis on creative approach, makes Bush's music the perfect environment through which to consider androgyny's potential as a creative ideal. As Woolf contextualises the androgynous mind as a state of fertilisation, Bush's focus on creating and performing imagined worlds, her focus on the power of imagination and her placing herself into the personality and perspective of characters speaks to the condition of androgynous mind as an interconnected whole, creating multiple points of convergence and divergence in a song's interior and exterior worlds.

In this discussion, I have explored the academic study of Bush to gain an understanding of her performance aesthetic. This has shown the breadth of subject matter in existing research and has highlighted the methodological strategies typically applied to the interpretation of her music. These explorations led me to consider Bush's connection to androgyny, and although studies that interpret a Bushian androgyny are rare, interpretative strategies employed mirror those from the wider field of popular music studies. Readings of androgynous expression in Bush's music focus on the blurring of binary gender, whether through lyrical content or visual style, specifically in her early work. These approaches are valid, supporting the agenda of each study and emphasising the transgressive nature of Bush's expression of gendered identity. The wider academic study of Bush, however, incorporates a broader range of analytical techniques, including musical-theoretical approaches and strategic practices of listening. In this respect, Withers' work on perceptive listening and temporal consciousness in Bush's later albums is particularly important, because it demonstrates how listening practices can enrich our understanding of Bush as a

composer and performing artist.

Beyond setting a precedent for my practice of ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression, surveying existing literature also allowed me to draw parallels between Woolf’s model of androgyny as presented in *A Room* and Bush’s creative approach. Bush’s career intersects with Woolf’s understanding of the material requirements necessary for women to create art, and her music reflects the forging of a creative tradition. Her approach to music making similarly reflects the conceptual characteristics of the androgynous mind and its textual manifestation. Woolf writes of a mind that is resonant and porous, open to multiple experiences and perceptions. Bush’s performances are centred upon the creation of a character and the telling of their story, the recitation of which is encoded within several layers of musical and non-musical gestures. In tracing these similarities, I have established a dialogue between Woolf, Bush and androgyny that acts as the foundation upon which I will base my practice of ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression. To develop this dialogue, in the next section I explore the practicalities of analytical method. Discussing the difficulties of transmedial study, I will consider how ekphrastic techniques support the comparative analysis of literary and musical works. I then examine the importance of musical-theoretical techniques for ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression in popular music.

#### Approaching transmediality: Ekphrasis and musical-theoretical method

In my previous discussion, I explored the performance style and compositional practice of Bush by surveying existing academic studies of her music. I orientated this around three lines of inquiry — voice, stylistics and aesthetic of performance, and creative control — to consider the complexity of Bush as a performing artist, and to

examine the different methodological approaches taken by scholars. In doing this, I found two studies that recognise androgynous moments in Bush's music. I examined the possibilities and limitations of these considerations, contextualising their approach amidst broader methodological strategies in the discursive field of Bush studies. I closed the discussion by drawing parallels between Woolf's textual presentation of the androgynous mind and Bush's career and performance style. My purpose was to initiate a dialogue that would support the practice of 'listening out' to androgynous expression in the musical content of a song.

As I intend to apply my strategy of 'listening out' through the comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky* — a novel and a song cycle — questions occur concerning appropriate methodology when analysing texts from different artistic mediums. Similarly, 'listening out', a practice that seeks androgynous expression in textual strategy, raises questions about analytical method and how to account for the perception of androgyny once it is heard. With these issues immediately at hand, in this discussion I will consider how an ekphrastic approach can help mediate the difference in medium. I close the chapter by exploring the benefits of musical-theoretical techniques when interpreting androgynous expression in popular music.

Critical approaches to the relationship between literature and music can be organised into the following three questions (Thompson, 2014, pp.208-209):

- 1) 'How is music like language?'
- 2) 'How do/can text and music relate within a work?'
- 3) 'How can a work of art in one media be "translated" into another media?'

Whilst there is overlap between these approaches, the third perspective — denoting an ekphrastic approach — is most pertinent for supporting the comparative analysis of works from distinct mediums and for developing the dialogue I have initiated between Woolf, Bush and androgyny. The ekphrastic approach attends to the communicative

potential of artistic forms by asking questions about the movement *between* artistic mediums.

Ekphrasis is a historical idea referring to the ‘verbal representation of visual representation’, or how a picture is verbally communicated and expressed (Chapin and Clark, 2013, p.16).<sup>37</sup> The classic example of ekphrasis is Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield in the *Iliad*. As one of the earliest instances, this passage offers a detailed description of the forging of the shield and the circles of imagery which adorn it; the description verbally represents the imagery. The rhetoric of this passage comments on the questions preoccupying the ekphrastic approach, namely the authenticity of the original representation, the potential and problem of secondary representation, and the difficulties that arise when communicative signs share and swap their representative capacity.

Goehr engages these issues to consider the possibilities of a musical ekphrasis and uncover the productive potential of ekphrasis within the arts (2010). She establishes a developmental relationship between the ancient description-based view of ekphrasis and the modern work-to-work view, the first occurring when ‘a piece of descriptive speech or writing brings an image or scene of music before the imagination’, and the second, when ‘a musical work re-presents a poem, painting, or sculpture’ (Goehr, 2010, p.389). At the centre of ancient ekphrastic expression was a speech act that gave imaginary presence beyond artistic domains. This developed into a modern understanding of ekphrasis concerned with ‘*works* that bring other *works* to *aesthetic* presence...within the domain of the arts’ (Goehr, 2010, p.397).

The difference between the ancient and modern view is best articulated by returning to Homer’s description of Achilles’ shield:

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<sup>37</sup> *Ekphrasis* derives from the Greek, *ekphrazein*: “to recount, to describe”, *ex-* “out” and *phrazein*: “to speak”.

The ancients focused on the actions and events represented by the shield and on how those actions and events are brought through description dynamically to imaginary presence for listeners. The moderns tended to focus on what it means for the shield to be a fixed, painterly representation and on how a painterly representation can be re-presented by a work that is not a painting (Goehr, 2010, p.398).

Through analysing key moments in the development of ekphrasis, Goehr argues that reintroducing ancient and modern approaches opens the interpretative possibilities of musical ekphrasis. This, in turn, enables the consideration of music in relation to other sensory phenomenon involved in the experience of art. Supplementing the work-to-work view of the modern approach with the description-based perspective of the ancients, Goehr explores instances of musical ekphrasis, where music re-presents the work of other mediums; for example, Morton Feldman's *Rothko Chapel* (1971), Arvo Pärt's *Lamentate* (2002), and Luciano Berio's *Ekphrasis* (1996) (Goehr, 2010, pp.405-406).

Several instances of ekphrasis occur in Bush's back catalogue. One is the retelling of Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, where Bush condenses key moments of the story's narrative. A second example comes from her album *The Sensual World* (1989), where the title track presents a musical reworking of Molly Bloom's soliloquy from Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). Bush wrote the song's lyrics based upon her interpretation of the essence of Bloom's word — having been refused permission from Joyce's estate to quote the original text (Thomson, 2015, pp.238-239) — drawing on the overall context within the novel. In 2011, Bush released *Director's Cut*, featuring rerecorded, restructured and remixed songs from her earlier albums. Having been granted permission to use Joyce's original text for this recording, Bush retold 'The Sensual World' under the name 'Flower of the Mountain'. In its entirety, *Director's Cut* is a music-to-music example of ekphrasis, although the original recording of 'The Sensual World' offers a literature-to-music re-presentation of Bloom's

characterisation. 'The Flower of the Mountain' rerecording leads to a cycle of re-presentation between Joyce and Bush, and Bush and herself. The music videos and artwork accompanying *The Sensual World* and *Director's Cut* also contribute towards the re-representation of Bloom's soliloquy functioning as instances of *notational ekphrasis* (Goehr, 2010, p.408).

In addition to music's re-presentation of other artistic mediums, Goehr explores instances where music *is* the re-presented medium. Here, she focuses on examples of musical ekphrasis in literature — for instance E.M. Forster's *Howard's End* (1910) and Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947) — where 'music is brought to aesthetic presence through imaginary performance or through the sheer power of description' (Goehr, 2010, p.407). However, there is a broader connection of ekphrastic expression within modernist cultures, of which Woolf is a key part.

Historically, the modernist period is associated with experimentations of artistic limits alongside practical investigations into the potential scope of literary expression. Within the development of modernist culture, the matrix of literature and music represents wider aesthetic concerns about the potential of representation. These concerns led to an evolving aesthetic narrative within modernist literature, as writers appealed to music as an 'art which transcends referential or lexical meaning' (Bucknell, 2001, p.1). In turning to music, literary modernists were searching for practices of art that allowed expansion into new levels of meaning. This aspect of modernist culture is associated with several points of crisis in artistic disciplines. By questioning the connection between art and its mimetic capacity, the crisis of representation challenged assumptions about *what* could be represented and *how* it might be represented, thereby impacting the 'content and form of artistic representation' (Lewis, 2007, p.2). The experiments of literary modernists questioned



the possibility of ‘music as a model for narrative’ articulating the ‘desire to incorporate musical principles into the construction of the narrative text’ (Prieto, 2002, p.ix). By adopting thematic and semiotic functioning of music into the construction of literary texts, writers were able to advance non-verbal expressions through verbal representation. The interaction of literature and music, specifically as an articulation of the limits of the verbal, raised questions about how meaning is made in art, how it is mimetically engaged and what is subsequently articulated about its cultural context.

Despite critiquing the history from which it developed, modernist literary aesthetics did not break with the past, and their ‘urge to be radically new is itself part of an ongoing history’ (Bucknell, 2001, p.15).<sup>38</sup> This history evolved alongside developments in the aesthetics of expression, which considered the various interactions of artistic mediums with their social, cultural and creative context. Where poetry and music are historically associated with voice and performance, the aesthetics of literary modernism engaged a ‘mode of thought’ (Prieto, 2002, pp.10-11). Considering musical composition alongside ‘abstract principles of pattern and proportion’, a ‘supplementary layer of meaning over whatever direct, literal meanings the words may have’ was created (Prieto, 2002, pp.10-11).<sup>39</sup> This articulates a metaphorical association between literature and music, breaking the historical ties binding poetry, words and music to vocal performance. Music has provided a thematic

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<sup>38</sup> For a comprehensive study on the theoretical and conceptual issues at play within the modernist experimentations in literature and music, including a survey on the historical narratives affecting the relationship, refer to Bucknell (2001) and Prieto (2002).

<sup>39</sup> In his essay ‘The Music of Poetry’ T. S. Eliot writes of the ‘musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, indissoluble and one...the sound of a poem is as much an abstraction from the poem as is the sense’ (2009). In shifting the focus to sound and sense, Eliot challenged the traditional association connecting poetry and music with being spoken aloud. He proposed a metaphorical consideration of music and poetry’s relationship, relating linguistic signs to the logic implied by the sounds. This mentalist approach considers abstraction, patterns and connotations, rather than literal meaning.

and inspirational focus within literary traditions for centuries, yet its metaphorical engagement by modernist writers re-presents its formal processes as a model for narrative structure. Crucially, metaphorical engagement does not determine the role of music in the development of modernist literary culture and is but one part of a complex relationship between text and expression (Bucknell, 2001, pp.3-5).<sup>40</sup>

Woolf's own relationship with music, and its influence upon her writing style, has received much critical attention, and in recent years has become an area of dedicated interdisciplinary study.<sup>41</sup> In the introduction to a collection of essays exploring Woolf and music, Varga, the editor, categorises the research in her volume into three perspectives:

1. Contextual – the importance of music in the Bloomsbury milieu and its role within the larger framework of modernism and early twentieth-century culture
2. Biographical – Woolf's involvement with music as a listener and concertgoer, her musical knowledge and aesthetics
3. Comparative – Woolf's own use of music as metaphor, motif, or trope in her writing as well as connections between classical, modernist, and contemporary music and Woolf's fictional and critical writings (Varga, 2014a, p.14).

Despite the difference in focus, each perspective considers how Woolf approaches the relationship between text and music, and the effect this has on the development of her literary aesthetics. Varga contextualises these explorations alongside two broader perspectives concerning the relationship between music, language and literature: aesthetic and comparative. The former considers the autonomy of music, with a 'meaning detached from linguistic semantics or social value', where the latter draws comparisons at points where musical and linguistic meaning intersect (Varga, 2014a, p.11).

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<sup>40</sup> For a comprehensive discussion on music in modernist narrative, including its mimetic and metaphorical role, see Prieto (2002).

<sup>41</sup> See Clements (2019, 2005a/b), Leighton (2018), Sutton (2015), Varga (2014a/b), Caughie (ed. 2013a), Frattarola (2010, 2009, 2005), Greenberg (2001), and Ondek Laurence (1991).

The short story, 'The String Quartet' (published 1921), is one of the earliest instances showing Woolf's exploration of these issues. The story is set in a concert hall and features the performance of a string quartet. The structure flows between an unknown narrator's stream of consciousness, their interaction with other concert goers and the musical performance. The story has received divergent critical attention because it articulates both the relationship between literature and music, and the role of music in the experience of everyday life.

Interpretative approaches have explored the story's narrative, claiming compositions by Mozart (Fleishman, 1980; Jacobs, 1993) and Schubert (Crapoulet, 2008) as the structural inspiration, incorporating broader contextual, biographical and comparative perspectives. Other approaches consider the story's general articulation of musical form and structure, focussing on the metaphorical influence of counterpoint upon the creation, interaction and movement of multiple voices (Gillespie, 1993). Beyond questions of its imitative capacity the story is more than an exercise in the reproduction of musical form. The story communicates Woolf's own explorations on the meaning of musical expression, and what it means to experience musical performance, both as an individual listener and as a community of listeners. The divergent interpretative approaches to 'The String Quartet' reveal the complexity of Woolf's musical considerations, whilst demonstrating the conceptual and theoretical possibilities of the text-music relationship. In this sense, 'The String Quartet' offers a microcosmic expression of Woolf's musical aesthetics, presenting a 'distillation' of her creative experiments, whilst highlighting the complexity of analytical and interpretative approach (Varga, 2014a, p.9).

The ekphrastic approach is not without theoretical and conceptual problems. Its interpretative evolution can be seen to encourage a relationship between artistic

mediums that is too open; so little is excluded ‘from the ekphrastic domain’ that art becomes ‘malleable and unrestricted’, a series of indistinguishable mediums (Goehr, 2010, p.400). Despite these issues, an ekphrastic approach to the comparative study of literary and musical works opens a space of intermediality between Woolf, Bush and androgyny, giving a way to navigate questions of medium and historical distance. As Goehr notes, the ekphrastic technique is often used by those who have ‘wanted to turn matters upside down, or...inside out’ by playing with tension and expectation (Goehr, 2010, p.390). This is demonstrated in the methodologies of Moi and Ryan, as they draw upon theoretical discourses to highlight the importance of textuality in the interpretation of androgyny in *A Room*. Similarly, academic studies of Bush attend in detail to her incorporation of gestures from multiple artistic mediums, drawing upon several disciplines, including literature, musicology, feminist, gender and queer studies. Together they articulate a network of interactive approaches that emphasise the significance of movement between disciplines in interpretative methodology.

The narrative of ekphrasis also resonates with the representation of androgyny in popular music studies, specifically the emphasis placed upon the visual presentation of the androgyne. In ekphrastic terms, interpretations are dominated by an ancient description-based view, which is re-presented verbally through scholastic engagement. Where strict adherence to the ancient view in the ekphrastic techniques limits conceptual expansion, the turning ‘upside down’ and ‘inside out’ (Goehr, 2010, p.390) that is achieved through the synergy of ancient and modern expands readings beyond the dominance of the image. This is demonstrated by the centrality of the taxicab image in the reception of Woolf’s androgyny. The description of the man and woman approaching and entering the taxicab is often regarded as the exemplification of Woolf’s androgyny (see pages 82-88). In re-reading this moment through Woolf’s

textual strategies, Moi and Ryan consider androgyny beyond its original representation, complicating conceptual meaning and expanding interpretative approach. Ekphrastically, their research represents a combination of the ancient and modern perspectives. The image of the taxicab is brought to the imagination by a descriptive passage, and their approach considers how this image is re-presented through Woolf's textual strategies. The importance of music in modernist literature, however, presents a further opportunity to expand upon these readings, because it sets a precedent for considering how Woolf's androgyny might be musically re-presented by Bush.

Ekphrasis is a valuable approach to the transmedial exploration of androgyny because it supports the expansion of the visual, description-based interpretation of androgyny in popular music research, emphasising the importance of a multidisciplinary, interpretative approach. It supports the identification of expressive overlaps between artistic mediums and individual works of art. Crucially, ekphrastic techniques are multifaceted and can be engaged to 'illuminate another artwork but sometimes to produce virtual and dynamic dramatic spaces in which all the tensions between saying and showing, concealing and revealing, are put into play' (Goehr, 2010, pp.409-410). In orientating interpretations around the image of the androgyne, it is easy to 'forget to listen' (Goehr, 2010, p.409) to the complexity of androgynous expression, because androgyny is brought to life in the mind's eye by its visual presentation. Ekphrastic techniques encourage descriptive works to 'reveal a truth that lies beyond what is directly seen, sung or said' (Goehr, 2010, p.410), and supports, therefore, the 'listening out' for androgyny as an alternative path to conceptual expansion.

The ekphrasis approach to the transmedial study of art highlights the complexity of descriptive work and the importance of ensuring movement between a range of interpretative influences, disciplines and theoretical discourses. For this thesis, it supports the developing relationship between Woolf, Bush and ‘listening out’ for a musical expression of androgyny. Having established ekphrasis as an important overarching approach to the comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, ‘listening out’ for androgyny does raise questions about what musical gestures articulate androgynous expression and how these might be engaged when approaching a piece of music. In this thesis, the musical gestures I discuss were revealed to me, as the listener, through processes of attentive listening. That is, I ‘listened out’ for androgyny in *A Sky* and worked to unravel the significance of musical gestures that struck me as important, so I could productively account for my experience of androgyny. This approach attends to the textuality of androgynous expression beyond the explicit representation of a gendered/sexed androgynous body familiar in the history of the androgyne and in popular music research.

To expand upon existing approaches to androgyny in popular music studies and to help account for my listening experience, I will draw upon musical-theoretical techniques. These techniques are common in musicological and popular musicological disciplines, but as discussed in the previous chapter they are limited in the study of androgyny. This ties into debates concerned with how music produces meaning. For additional context — and to support the ekphrastic technique discussed above — I will provide an overview of the main arguments, drawing upon the work of McClary and Burns to show why musical-theoretical methods offer important insight into

music's expressive capacity.<sup>42</sup>

Debates concerned with the formation and location of meaning within music are historically formulated around the relationship between musical and extra-musical factors. 'Absolutists' argue that meaning is found 'within the context of the work itself, in the perception of the relationships set forth within the musical work of art', for instance in the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic structures (Meyer, 1961, p.1). 'Referentialists' claim that music communicates meaning through factors that lie beyond the structure of the musical work, through the 'world of concepts, actions, emotional states, and character' (Meyer, 1961, p.1). In addition to these positions, 'formalist' and 'expressionist' represent two other aesthetic standpoints. These are affiliated with the broader position of absolutism in that music is intramusical; however, in arguing that meaning in music is fundamentally intellectual, formalism contends that the 'perception and understanding of the musical relationships' within a work is vital (Meyer, 1961, p.3). An expressionist perspective claims that the same relationships invoke emotional responses in the listener. Where expressionism is often confused with referentialism, not all expressionist perspectives look beyond the music's structure to locate meaning. Expressionists, therefore, can be subdivided into absolute expressionists who look within the music for meaning, and referential expressionists who consider expressive meaning in relation to the extra-musical.

These standpoints all draw upon tensions between musical and extra-musical properties. Historically, 'ontological, epistemological, and evaluative priority [is]

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<sup>42</sup> Goodman's work (1976) was influential upon my understanding of music's expressive capacity, particularly his insights into the flows of reference involved in the production of meaning. Goodman attends to the complexities of interpretative acts, and his theory of exemplification seeks to unravel a referential flow between 'expression' and 'expressiveness'; the former being the characteristics of a piece, and the latter being the listener's understanding of those events. I also recommend Newcomb's article 'Sound and Feeling' (1984) for an exploration of music's referential capacity through philosophical discourses and expression theory.

given to the musical', and whilst the formalist approach is no longer the dominant paradigm its ideologies are still influential (Goehr, 1992, p.187).<sup>43</sup> In the study of popular music, the historical antagonism between musical and extra-musical properties is a significant presence, and whilst there is consensus that the music should be discussed, there is some disagreement over how this should be done. At the centre of the debates is the suitability of musical-theoretical discourse, and whether formal techniques of analysis and notation are appropriate for the study of popular music.

McClary's research intersects with these debates, and in addition to advancing musicological approaches to the study of gender her work attends to the cultural interpretation of 'the music itself' (McClary, 2002, p.x).<sup>44</sup> McClary identifies a historical trajectory in Western music where analysts focussed on 'structural issues, appealing to the concept of autonomy to secure music's exemption from cultural criticism' (McClary, 2002, p.x). She notes a different approach in ethnomusicological methodologies where musical procedures and philosophies are considered articulations of social ideologies, and she works to bring these ideas to Western models of musical interpretation (McClary, 2002, p.xi). Consequently, McClary weaves sociocultural and historical readings with the analysis of musical construction, including comprehensive interpretations of character creation, melody, harmony, rhythm and form. McClary studies music from several time periods, and in her readings of performance artists and popular musicians — cited examples include Diamanda Galas, Laurie Anderson and Madonna — she incorporates interpretations

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<sup>43</sup> See Goehr's article 'Writing Music History' for a detailed overview of the historical relationship between musical and extra-musical features in the development of music theory (1992). She also considers the correlation of the musical and extra-musical dichotomy in music's role as an aesthetic and historical entity. She is inspired by the work of Meyer (1961), Dahlhaus (1989) and Treitler (1989), musicologists who developed methodological approaches that reject a linear reading of history. Goehr's article is useful in providing historical context on the often antagonistic relationship between musical and extra-musical features in the advancement of musical-theoretical discourse.

<sup>44</sup> See pages 17-20 from the previous chapter for an overview of her book, *Feminine Endings* (2002).



of live performances and music videos into her formal analyses to further show how music produces and expresses complex relationships between gender, power, desire and resistance.

A similar approach is taken by Burns in her contribution to *Disruptive Divas*, where the focus is explicitly on popular music traditions of the 1990s (2002).<sup>45</sup> Before commencing her analysis of the chosen artists, Burns provides a comprehensive introduction to her approach, engaging wider debates concerning the appropriateness of music theory for studying popular music. Burns' work is particularly useful for providing an overview of the debates following the publication of McClary's *Feminine Endings* in 1991. She traces discursive threads from those who are concerned that formal approaches to popular music claims an essential core to music (Bohlman, 1993) to those who worry about the limitations music theory might impose upon the formation of meaning (Shepherd and Wicke, 1997). Burns identifies a common concern amongst critics of music theory in popular music studies where formalism 'preclude[s] a creative listening/interpretive experience' and does not account for broad context or sociocultural concerns (Burns, 2002, p.35). Burns acknowledges the limitations of formalism if it is rigidly applied, however she advocates the incorporation of musical-theoretical methods for what they can reveal alongside the reshaping of its discourse. She argues that formalism, in 'working towards the systematic explanation of a composition...the music itself...*is* the focus of the enterprise' (Burns, 2002, p.37). To support her stance, she draws on debates that defend the potential of traditional analytical methods.<sup>46</sup>

Those defending the use of music theory and the analytical techniques

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<sup>45</sup> I give an overview of the text on pages 20-22.

<sup>46</sup> For example, Agawu (1997), Burnham (1997), Guck (1994), Everett (ed.) (2000) and Hubbs (2000).

underpinning the ‘doing’ of analysis encourage the relationship between theorist and music. This relationship becomes a practice of intimate knowledge that stresses the importance of listening, although Burns notes that incorporating musical-theoretical techniques raises a practical communicative challenge relating to the expertise of the reader/listener. Theoretical terminology and notation belong to dedicated disciplines within musicology, and there will be variance in the technical abilities of the readers/listeners. Burns considers responses to this challenge, from those who feel that theoretical music analysis is necessary for a full appreciation of the music (Everett, 2000), to those who emphasise accessibility and the reinvention of conventional methods for ‘optimal transparency and illustrative effect’ (Hubbs, quoted in Burns, 2002, p.38).

In her analyses, Burns incorporates several approaches to account for the complexities of the song’s she studies, setting analytical notation and transcription alongside description. She argues that to ‘eliminate substantive content in order to achieve total accessibility for all readers’ has a negative effect upon the conception of cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary work (Burns, 2002, p.39). Burns’ descriptive passages engage technical terminology from the discipline of music theory, although she incorporates these different methods with an awareness of the adjustments needed for the application of formalist techniques to popular music.<sup>47</sup> Navigating the complexities of this, Burns adopts an approach that resists fixed meaning through a consistent reference to the context in which musical events are placed within the overall structure of the song. Her approach recognises that all elements of a song interact, ‘and although an analyst may illuminate a particular feature, it is with an

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<sup>47</sup> Here, Burns’ work is indebted to the advancements made in popular music theory by Middleton (1990, 1993), Moore (1993) and Walser (1993).

understanding that meaning is affected by all parameters simultaneously' (Burns, 2002, p.42). Her strategy situates a formalist approach (musical) alongside lyrical interpretative (extra-musical) to consider the different ways gender is negotiated through song.

Burns' analytical method focusses on the linear and vertical domain of harmonic structure. In each analysis she considers how 'vocal melody interacts with the harmony to create a contrapuntal structure' that animates lyrical meaning (Burns, 2002, p.45). This analysis is a detailed examination of the 'association of a harmonic or contrapuntal event with a specific textual idea' (Burns, 2002, p.45). Voice-leading analysis, therefore, is central to Burns' method, but she supports this with the interpretation of 'rhythmic/metric, timbral, and textual layers of musical expression' (Burns, 2002, p.46). In addition to these musical parameters, she considers lyrical form, story, narrative voice and perspective, vocabulary and thematic content, and figures of speech. To support her content analysis, Burns draws upon feminist theoretical discourse, highlighting the strategy of reform through rereading and reinterpretation common in feminism and gender studies. The combination of these different elements leads Burns to an approach that values creativity in interpretative method, where the imagination is positioned as an 'intellectual tool' in the reinterpretation of musical discourse and musical experience (Burns, 2002, p.37).

McClary's and Burns' work demonstrates the relevance of musical-theoretical approaches in the study of popular music, highlighting the potential in adopting a multifaceted approach driven by the listener's relationship with the musical text.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Musical-theoretical techniques are regularly incorporated in musicological research. My focus on McClary and Burns acknowledges their influence on my own analytical approach. The introduction to this thesis contains other examples where formalist methods are used.

Where existing research into the study of androgyny draws upon several of the interpretative trajectories employed by McClary and Burns, attention to musical gestures is more limited. Inspired by the possibilities of McClary and Burns approach, I bring some techniques from music theory to my research into androgyny, and I am particularly influenced by the role of listening in musical-theoretical techniques. As McClary writes, ‘for the study of music, music itself remains the best indicator’ (McClary, 2002, p.30). She notes that ‘what usually motivates a project is that an odd musical detail catches [her] attention’ and explaining the relevance of that detail in the wider context of her agenda requires ‘extensive historical excavation’ (McClary, 2002, p.30). Burns writes of a similar experience, where aural engagement is fundamental in musical-theoretical analysis (Burns, 2002, pp.37-38).

Techniques from music theory give a way to account for the auditory perception of androgyny, and whilst I focus upon the expression of androgyny in musical moments that have caught my ear, I do so through the frames of Woolf’s *The Waves* and Bush’s *A Sky*, drawing upon extra-musical gestures including lyrical content and accompanying artwork, sociocultural context and theoretical discourse. I will use a combination of descriptive passages, transcribed notation, and tabular analysis to represent my analyses and interpretations. At this point, I will not formally present the specific musical elements that will be discussed. Instead, the actualisation of androgyny’s musical possibilities will become clear as each chapter unfolds.

### Concluding Remarks

This chapter has provided an overview of Woolf’s formulation of androgyny, and by examining negative and positive responses to her model, I have established the importance of textual strategies for interpreting the concept’s expressive capacity

beyond the focus on a sexed/gendered body. I then considered the academic study of Bush and explored her connection to androgyny to establish gaps in existing interpretative methods. By considering the wider academic characterisation of Bush's career and music alongside the textual attributes of Woolf's androgyny, I found expressive similarities in both style and approach. These similarities provide a foundation for expansion, allowing me to explore their significance for androgyny in different artistic contexts — *The Waves* and *A Sky* — and to develop existing interpretative methods in popular music studies. To build upon the relationship between Woolf and Bush, I considered methodologies that would both support transmedial study and allow me to discover androgynous expression in compositional qualities and musical gestures. I explored how incorporating ekphrastic techniques and musical-theoretical methods into my interpretative approach can support the practice of 'listening out' for androgynous expression, whilst helping me communicate my experience to readers and listeners.

Drawing together these different elements, in the next chapter I will begin the comparative analysis of Woolf's novel *The Waves* and Bush's song cycle *A Sky*. I will introduce both works, and to establish expressive coherence will draw parallels between their thematic material and shared characteristics, whilst exploring their significance for androgynous expression.

## **Chapter Two**

### ***The Waves meets A Sky* **An Intertextual Beginning****

In the previous two chapters, I laid the foundation for the comparative analysis of androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky* that is to follow. I considered the possibilities and limitations of existing research on androgyny in popular music studies and established an interpretative approach that prioritises ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression in a song’s musical content. To support this approach, I explored the textual expression of androgyny in Woolf’s *A Room* and found comparable expressive traits in Bush’s performance style and compositional practice. Having initiated a dialogue between Woolf and Bush, I considered the benefits of ekphrastic techniques for transmedial study and explored the value of musical-theoretical methods in communicating and accounting for the experience of listening to androgynous expression. I will now draw these different elements together by spending the next three chapters ‘listening out’ for androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

To help me think about the texts in parallel, I will begin with a short synopsis of each work. I will then discuss the creative background of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, exploring the significance of the artwork accompanying Woolf’s original book publication and Bush’s album release. I then consider the importance of form, genre and narrative, before closing the chapter with an examination of pastoralism, a central theme in both works. Throughout the chapter, I will explore how the stylistic, thematic and structural traits I identify can be interpreted as expressions of androgyny and the different ways they intersect with the broader history of the concept.

*The Waves and A Sky: a brief synopsis*

*The Waves* explores the lives of six friends: Bernard, Susan, Rhoda, Neville, Jinny and Louis. The novel is structured around nine soliloquies, each of which traces a significant moment in the character's lives. A seventh character, Percival, is known to the reader through the soliloquies of his friends. Beginning in childhood, the soliloquies progress from adolescence to late adulthood. Where the first eight soliloquies feature all character voices, the final one is told from Bernard's perspective. The soliloquies are interspersed with nine interludes, describing the diurnal movement of the sun across the sky. The interludes have no marked narrator, detailing in the third person naturally occurring changes within the landscape.

*A Sky* follows the interactions of several prominent, but unnamed characters over the course of a twenty-four-hour-period. Consisting of nine component tracks, the song cycle begins at dawn and gradually introduces the listener to the main characters, although the events unfold primarily from the perspective of the narrator. In awakening to the sound of birdsong in the dawn chorus ('Prelude'), the day gradually begins to unfold ('Prologue'). The narrator watches a pavement artist work with shifting patterns of light ('An Architect's Dream'), until the rain comes and makes of the painting, a sunset ('The Painter's Link'). Immersed in the sunset as the day draws to a close ('Sunset'), the narrator converses with a blackbird ('Aerial Tal'), and approaching twilight occupies a liminal space between wakefulness and sleepfulness ('Somewhere in Between'). In a dream sequence, the narrator bathes in the sea under the light of the moon ('Nocturn'). The twenty-four-hour cycle culminates in the start of a new day ('Aerial').

### Establishing Context: Creative background and accompanying artwork<sup>49</sup>

In this section, I explore the creative background of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Beginning with *The Waves*, I will detail Woolf's initial intentions for the text, before considering how the dust jacket artwork of the original publication establishes the text's primary themes. I then discuss the compositional background to *A Sky*, and its role as one half of the album *Aerial*, focussing on the interpretative context provided by the album artwork. I will close with some observations on the similarities between Woolf's and Bush's creative ambitions and the thematic context they establish for *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

Published in 1931, *The Waves* is Woolf's most ambitious experiment and is considered a 'representative text of modernism', embodying concerns that preoccupied modernist aesthetics, from the

alienation of the self from its immediate world, from traditional frames of value, and form itself; with the ironic scrutiny of art as well as the defence of art; with the dramatization of consciousness as the medium of fictional 'action'; and with the redefinition of fictional forms in terms of pattern, image, and symbol (Graham, 1976, p.13).

Graham traces the 'history of its creation' in his transcribed edition of two holograph drafts, finding Woolf's private vision for the novel mediated through her public meditations upon literature (Graham, 1976, pp.15-14). He isolates an essay on De Quincey, originally published by the *Times Literary Supplement* in September 1926, titled 'Impassioned Prose', where Woolf identifies a condition in the contemporary novel form that limits the impressions of the mind. Exploring De Quincey's style, Woolf is intrigued by the possibilities of the world he creates:

But draw a little apart, see people in groups, as outlines, and they become at once memorable and full of beauty. Then it is not the actual sight or sound itself that matters, but the reverberations that it makes

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<sup>49</sup> In the early stages of research, I was influenced by Derrida's theory of parergonality, particularly his understanding of the different ways frames manifest and the effect this has upon the interpretation of art (1987). I also found Heller-Andrist's work on parergonality in literary works useful (2012).



as it travels through our minds. These are often to be found far away, strangely transformed and it is only by gathering up and putting together these echoes and fragments that we arrive at the true nature of our experience (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.15).

Woolf found a sense of solitude in De Quincey's work which she believed exposed 'that side of the mind...its thoughts, its rhapsodies, its dreams' that were often ignored (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.15). Graham finds similar words and images resurfacing two weeks after the article's publication, in a diary entry describing the visionary moment from which *The Waves* emerged:

I wished to add some remarks to this, on the mystical side of this solitude; how it is not oneself but something in the universe that one is left with. It is this that is frightening and exciting in the midst of my profound gloom, depression, boredom, whatever it is. One sees a fin passing far out... I hazard the guess that it may be the impulse behind another book (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.16).

After completing two drafts of the book, the first in 1930 and the second in 1931, Woolf returns to the image of the 'fin passing far out', writing that she had 'netted that fin in the waste of the water' (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.16).<sup>50</sup>

The emergence and netting of the fin becomes a wider metaphor for the creative processes underpinning the writing of *The Waves* (Graham, 1976, p.16). Through her diaries and letters, Woolf documented each developmental stage, from initial sketches to writing, editing and redrafting. One of Woolf's earliest sketches imagines *The Waves* as the story of a woman's life:

Why not invent a new kind of play; as for instance:

Woman thinks...

He does.

Organ plays.

She writes.

They say:

She sings.

Night speaks

They miss

I think it must be something on this line – though I can't now see what. Away from facts; free; yet concentrated; prose yet poetry; a novel and a play (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.17).

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<sup>50</sup> This image continues into *The Waves* and is a leitmotif associated with Bernard and Neville. The presence of the 'fin in a waste of waters' denotes an exceptional moment that reveals the condition of being.

Woolf became haunted by the telling of this life, which she imagined being told all at once, thereby obliterating time: ‘One incidence – say the fall of a flower – might contain it’ (Woolf, quoted in Graham, 1976, p.16).

Between this preliminary conception in 1927 and the beginning of the first draft in 1929, Woolf continued to work on other projects, most notably *To the Lighthouse*, *Orlando* and a series of essays, and yet *The Waves* remained a preoccupation. In 1927, she gave the book a working title, *The Moths*:

Lay out all day in the new garden, with the terrace. There were blue tits nested in the hollow neck of my Venus. Slowly ideas began trickling in; and then suddenly I rhapsodised and told over the story of the Moths, which I think I will write quickly: the play poem idea; the idea of some continuous stream, not solely of human thought but of the ship, the night, &c, all flowing together: intersected by the arrival of the bright moths. A man and a woman are to be sitting at a table talking. Or shall they remain silent? It is to be a love story: she is finally to let the last great moth in (Woolf, 2008d, p.230).

This diary entry offers several important points of context through which to frame an approach to *The Waves*. The first is that Woolf was not intent on exploring a specific idea through the creation of narrative discourse. These ambitions develop from her dissatisfaction with traditions of prose fiction and its creative limitations. Her vision combined with her critical work on literary tradition places *The Waves* at an intersection between expression and technique. She became preoccupied with creating a literary form that could sustain the complexities of life, and the patterns of interaction in her sketch indicate the expressive and creative environment she sought. Woolf situates the coming of her vision within the wider scope of experience, thereby demonstrating a multitude of human and nonhuman experiences. The intersection of private thought and public utterance combined with the tension between two contrasting realities contributes towards the expression of experience. The structural oscillation between two environments — soliloquy and interlude — is evident in Woolf’s earliest conception of *The Waves*.

Woolf's early ambitions for the novel's thematic structure is similarly expressed in the connotative meanings of the text's title. Acknowledging the diverse meaning of 'the waves', Whitworth specifically emphasises the language of science and scientific perspective, 'wave theories of matter' and 'scientific accounts of the creation of the earth' (Whitworth, 2005, p.180). Similarly, waves refer to wind waves occurring on the surface of bodies of water, sound waves made by the vibration of particles, but also the physical gesture of waving as a communicatory sign. Whitworth contextualises the different connotations amidst philosophical, religious and scientific traditions which would have been familiar to Woolf (Whitworth, 2005, pp.180-188). These different contexts share the condition of transference of energy, and this provides early commentary on the textual environment Woolf creates in *The Waves*.

Whitworth suggests that the abstract study of waves in physics of the mid-1920s connects to the environment Woolf creates within *The Waves*. He claims that the characters are 'conscious that the world does not exist independently of the means that we use to observe and describe it' (Whitworth, 2005, p.181). This connects to Woolf's creative ambitions for the novel, with the earliest sketches on its conception demonstrating the difficulty she had in rendering her vision into literary form. Describing the world as a 'collection of finite particles' does not account for the disturbance caused by the 'waves that flow through the particles' (Whitworth, 2005, p.182). Attempting to account for the influence of unseen forces upon the perception and experience of the world, Woolf incorporates the rhythmic qualities of wave oscillation into literary form so she may explore the impact of these disturbances. She does this through splitting and reforming the characters, exploring how this disrupts the dynamic of the group and alters their perceptions of their environment. Similarly, Woolf sought to keep 'the sound of the sea & the birds, dawn, & garden

subconsciously present, doing their work underground' (Woolf, quoted in Goldman, 1998, p.187).

As an overarching narrative thread, the connotations of the waves and its contribution to framing context extends to the dust jacket — designed by Woolf's sister Vanessa Bell — of the original publication (Figure 1). Bell was a great influence upon Woolf's creative life, being a source of inspiration for her characters, stories and own literary experiments. Woolf often used 'painterly analogies' when discussing her writing with Bell, seeking literary representation for the expression of colour and light that is possible in painting (Goldman, 2010, p.70).<sup>51</sup> Bell's designs 'work at a deeper

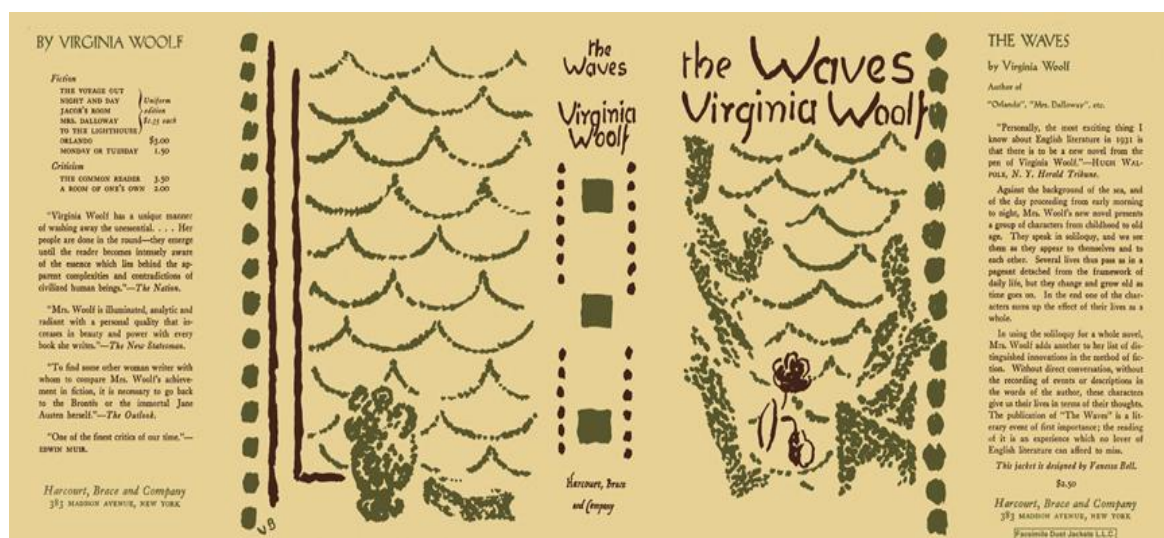


Figure 1 – Dust jacket design, 1931

level than that of mere illustration' (Goldman, 2010, p.150), contributing towards Woolf's literary aesthetic as she sought a way 'behind the words' (Woolf, quoted in Goldman, p.150). Bell and Woolf share a preoccupation with trying to 'show non-physical experiences as formal realities...[and] communication between people as

<sup>51</sup> For further reading on Woolf's and Bell's relationship see Hancock (2012), Bradshaw (2010), Gillespie (2010), Goldman (2010, 1998) and Humm (2002).

material events' (Goldman, 2010, p.150). This manifests as a desire to 'create art out of the intense experiences of everyday life', gaining inspiration from their respective verbal and visual mediums (Gillespie, 2010, p.136). Upon reading *The Waves*, Bell wrote to Woolf, commenting that she had become 'completely submerged' in its overall design, that it 'made one's human feelings into something less personal' (Bell, quoted in Gillespie, 2010, p.135). Bell was not always familiar with the work she was illustrating: for *To the Lighthouse* (1927) Woolf provided a brief description and what she wanted for the cover design (Bradshaw, 2010, p.295); her familiarity with the form and aesthetic of *The Waves* makes the cover design an important interpretative factor.

Bell's image shows two figures with featureless faces against a background of waves. One faces outwards towards the sea and draws the crest of wave; the second faces the reader, resting upon one knee. Separated by a purple flower — recalling Woolf's early impetus to tell the story of a life in the fall of a flower — the figures are silhouetted in green against a background of gold.<sup>52</sup> The back of the dust jacket looks through a window upon the waves; a jar of flowers and a book rest upon the windowsill. The images on the front and reverse of the dust jacket represents the juxtaposition of two contrasting realities as expressed in Woolf's second sketch on the gestation of the waves (see page 138). The motifs are typical of Bell's paintings, being semi-abstract, including panels and perpendicular angles. The image also reflects the creative evolution of *The Waves*, from the influence of De Quincey upon Woolf's artistic ambitions (the reverberations passing between outlined figures) to the connotative significance of the title and the representation of waves within the text.

The creative background to *The Waves* and its representation in the dust jacket

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<sup>52</sup> For further reading on the significance of this colour palette as an expression of Woolf's feminist aesthetics, particularly its evocation of the suffragette movement, see Goldman (1998).

artwork provides crucial context for interpreting the textual expression of androgyny. It is evident in the novel's gestation that Woolf was preoccupied with exploring the complexities of perception, whilst finding a literary form capable of expressing multiple experiential realities. Woolf's focus on the development of experimental textual strategies — including the incorporation of techniques from other artistic mediums — recalls the narrative threads of *A Room*, particularly the discussion on the forging of literary traditions. Similarly, the condition of being Woolf was keen to express in *The Waves* evokes the moment where Mary recognises the condition of the androgynous mind as an ideal state for artistic production.<sup>53</sup> The focus on the convergence and divergence of energies in *A Room* is evident in the gestation of *The Waves*, and tracing the timeline of the novel's development above indicates that as Woolf worked on *A Room* — published in 1929 — she was wrestling with how to technically realise her vision for the novel. These overlaps are important because they establish a connection between the Woolf's formulation of androgyny in *A Room* and the creative context of *The Waves*. Similarly, outlining Woolf's intention for the novel establishes symbolic, thematic and metaphorical threads that are fundamental for the interior worlds in *The Waves* and for their technical expression.<sup>54</sup>

Having established the creative context surrounding *The Waves*, I will now turn to *A Sky*, and taking a comparable approach I will explore the background to the song cycle's composition, and the significance of the album's physical presentation and the accompanying artwork. My agenda here is to cultivate a relationship between the two texts by identifying parallels between Woolf's and Bush's artistic choices and creative visions. Spending some time with *The Waves* and *A Sky* as individual works facilitates

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<sup>53</sup> Refer to pages 80-82 from the introduction.

<sup>54</sup> I will explore some of these threads later in this chapter, and in future chapters.

the recognition of preliminary connections between the texts, whilst highlighting the importance of creative context for identifying aesthetic similarities.

Released in 2005, *Aerial* is Bush's eighth studio album and is comprised of two subtitled discs, *A Sea of Honey*<sup>55</sup> and *A Sky of Honey*.<sup>56</sup> The first disc features a series of seven unrelated songs. Thematically diverse, their subject matter ranges from a musing on celebrity personified by the character of Elvis Presley ('King of the Mountain'), a meditation upon the complexities of emotional response elicited by simple tasks of domesticity ('Mrs. Bartolozzi'), a retelling of the myths surrounding Joan of Arc ('Joanni'), to an exploration of grief inspired by Bush's own experience following the death of her mother ('A Coral Room'). *A Sky* is a conceptual piece, where all nine songs are connected by musical and non-musical themes.<sup>57</sup>

Where Woolf's letters and diaries provide a comprehensive account of the gestation of *The Waves*, there is much less information detailing Bush's ambitions for *Aerial* and *A Sky*. This is partly due to Bush's gradual withdrawal from the public eye following the mixed critical reception to her 1993 album, *The Red Shoes*, and its accompanying film *The Line, The Cross and The Curve*. During her twelve-year hiatus, Bush was subject to significant media scrutiny regarding what was commonly perceived as her self-enforced hermitage. Drawing on interviews with Bush and her close colleagues, biographer Graeme Thomson details several factors that contributed to the artist's gradual withdrawal from the public eye (Thomson, 2015, pp.283-288).

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<sup>55</sup> I will abbreviate *A Sea of Honey* to *A Sea* going forward.

<sup>56</sup> Since the initial release in 2005, *Aerial* has been reissued several times. In 2010, it was made available for the first time in a digital format. That same year, Bush re-released *A Sky* as one continuous track, retitled *An Endless Sky of Honey*. In 2011, *Aerial* was re-released on Bush's own record label, Fish People, and was then remastered in 2018. In 2014, Bush returned to the stage for a series of concerts at the Hammersmith Apollo in London, titled *Before the Dawn*. As part of the set list, Bush performed *A Sky* in its entirety. The 2018 remastered version of *Aerial* saw significant changes; *A Sky* was returned to individual tracks and the original vocals of the painter were re-recorded by Albert "Bertie" McIntosh, who performed the role during the residency concerts in the *Before the Dawn* tour. Any references made to *A Sky* in this thesis, including time stamps, refer to the original 2005 release.

<sup>57</sup> Refer to the start of this chapter for a brief synopsis.

He documents Bush's dissatisfaction with *The Red Shoes* and *The Line, The Cross and the Curve*, significant life changes, the ending of one relationship, the start of another, and the birth of her son, Bertie. Thomson considers the impact of Bush's changing personal circumstances upon her music-making and identifies the development of a slower compositional practice balanced by her domestic life and home recording studio (Thomson, 2015, pp.288-295). The music Bush was composing during this time would become *Aerial*.

From the composition, recording and release of *Aerial*, Bush was keen to produce a unified piece of work, and in preferring the 'glory days of vinyl' she carefully conceived each aspect of the album, including its physical presentation (Thomson, 2015, p.298). That Bush withheld the immediate release of *Aerial* in a digital format — and that the CD packaging is likely to be the listener's first experience of the album — emphasises the significance of the title and artwork in framing and informing the experience of the listener.

The title *Aerial* — from the Greek *aerios* meaning 'air' — denotes that which is air bound, but this broad definition carries a plurality of references. It can refer to bird flight, aircraft, movements in sport, the roots of plants growing above the ground, or an antenna which transmits signals in radio and television broadcasting. These connotative meanings echo those of *The Waves*, where the transfer of energy is a central evocation. The word 'aerial' similarly suggests flight, height and the movement upwards. Thomson connects the title to the album's musical style, contrasting its feeling of light and space with the over-production of *The Red Shoes* (Thomson, 2015, p.302). He identifies 'a marked reduction in backing vocals, and far less technological fuss', 'more traditional' textures expressed through the use of 'piano and guitar, natural drums, while [Bush's] voice had deepened and matured' (Thomson, 2015, p.302). For Thomson, the

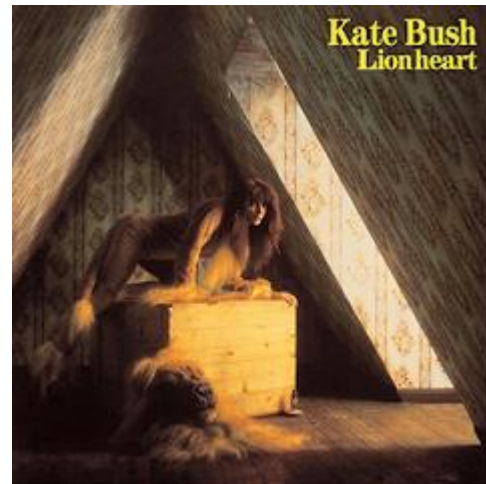


connotative sense of lightness evoked by the word ‘aerial’ manifests in a ‘sense of distillation’ in the album, which is characterised by *Aerial*’s ‘pastoral sensuality’, as themes of ‘sun, sea and sky’ permeate the music, and Bush’s vocals arc higher as the songs progress (Thomson, 2015, pp.302-303). Crucially, these connotative meanings continue into the album’s accompanying artwork, and in doing so, they help establish the subject matter and central themes of the songs on both *A Sea* and *A Sky*.

The most striking aspect of *Aerial*’s cover art is the absence of Bush’s image. Moy has claimed that *Aerial* is the first external cover not to feature Bush’s image, the reasons for which he argues are open to conjecture (Moy, 2007, p.124). I would argue



*The Kick Inside*, 1978



*Lionheart*, 1978



*Never for Ever*, 1980



*The Dreaming*, 1982

*Kate Bush*



*Hounds Of Love*

*Hounds of Love, 1985*



*The Sensual World, 1989*



*The Red Shoes, 1993*



*Aerial, 2005*



*Director's Cut, 2011*



*50 Words for Snow, 2011*

*Figure 2 – Album covers, 1978-2011*

that her absence provides important interpretative context and is more productively understood as a gradual disappearance that begins with the cover art for *The Red Shoes* (Figure 2).<sup>58</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, critical readings of Bush's work have tended to associate her style with visual mutations of character and character identity, and her ability to adopt multiple personas is considered a key aspect of her performance aesthetic. When considered in relation to the broader context surrounding the composition of *Aerial*, her dissatisfaction with *The Red Shoes* and *The Line, The Cross and The Curve*, media speculation and changes in her personal life, removing her image from the front cover can be interpreted as a strategy intended to destabilise the expectations of her audience, creating an experiential context atypical in Bush's career until this point. Where Bush fans have previously been treated to an array of different media in which the artist's visual presence has proved crucial in the expression of character identity and storytelling, the cover art of *Aerial* communicates a new performance strategy. The destabilising effects of this image are further elucidated by the context created by the artwork in the liner notes, and the thematic difference between the images accompanying *A Sea* and *A Sky*.

Commentators on Bush's career and music — for instance Cawood (2016) and Thomson (2015) — connect the themes in *A Sea* to Bush's personal experiences of family life and the birth of her son. This interpretation is supported by the subject matter of the songs, such as 'Bertie', 'Mrs. Bartolozzi' and 'A Coral Room', and their representation in the images that accompany *A Sea* in the liner notes. There are two photographs of washing blowing on the line; the first foregrounds an Elvis jumpsuit and accompanies the lyrics to the song 'King of the Mountain', and the second looks through a window upon a garden, alongside the lyrics to 'Mrs. Bartolozzi'. Where the washing

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<sup>58</sup> Withers makes a similar observation in her study (Withers, 2010a, pp.145-146).

was blowing vigorously in the ‘Elvis’ photo, the movement is more meditative in the second, reflecting the mood of Mrs. Bartolozzi as she watches a shirt ‘waving its arm as the wind blows by’ (Bush, 2005). The song ‘Bertie’ is accompanied by a photo of Bertie when he was a child, and his drawings are dotted amidst the other images. Featured alongside ‘How to be Invisible’ and ‘Joanni’ is a portrait of Bush, the only photo of her released with *Aerial* (Figure 3). The connections between song and artwork



*Figure 3 – Kate Bush*

inform the narrative structures of *A Sea*, connecting to Bush’s life without being personally revealing (Thomson, 2015, p.300). The songs address themes of visibility and invisibility, public and private life, domestic spaces, desire, motherhood, grief and loss, all connected by their expressions of everyday life.

The images accompanying *A Sky* directly refer to *Aerial*’s cover image. In lieu of a cover designed around Bush’s image is a series of silhouetted shapes forming a stylised pastoral scene: a mountain range reflecting upon the sea and backlit by the sun (Figure 4). The image is constructed from an optical soundwave of a blackbird song, and *A Sky*’s images modify this cover portrait, centralising the soundwave. The

colour palette is modified between images to reflect the changing time of day within the song cycle, connecting image to textual content. The first image accompanies ‘Prelude’, ‘Prologue’, ‘An Architect’s Dream’ and ‘The Painter’s Link’ (Figure 5); the second, ‘Sunset’, ‘Aerial Tal’ and ‘Somewhere in Between’ (Figure 6); and the third, accompanying ‘Nocturn’, features a photograph from Randy Olson’s ‘Indus Bird Mask’ series.<sup>59</sup> The original photo is digitally modified to communicate the setting of the song; the colour of the water has been darkened and stars have been added into the sky (Figure 7). In the image accompanying ‘Aerial’, the heron flies into the sound wave, and the background of clouds is replaced by the shadows of birds in flight (Figure 8). The final image features a stave with birds as musical figures accompanied by lyrics transcribed from ‘Sunset’. The stave morphs into optical waveforms, referring to the technical production of the album (Figure 9).



*Figure 4 – Album cover*

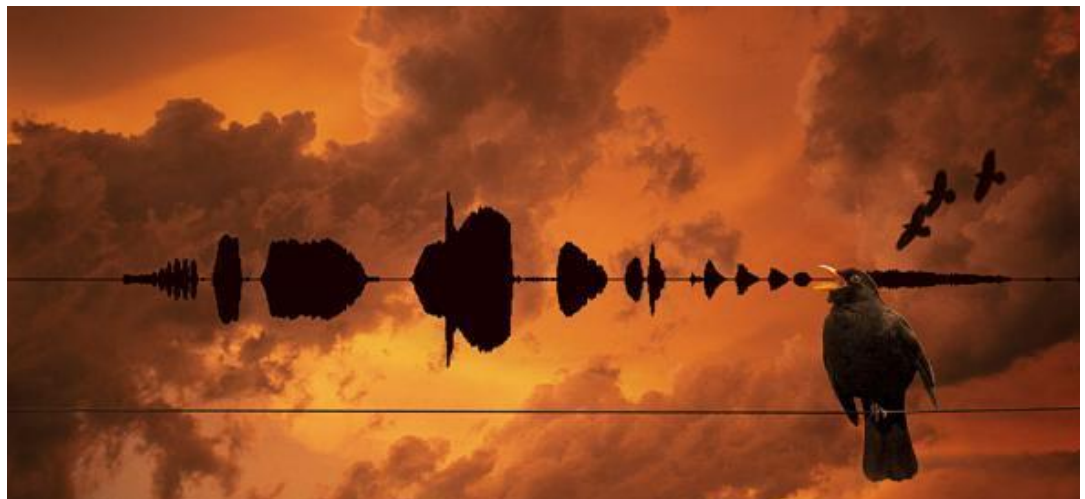
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<sup>59</sup> This image was originally featured on the cover of *National Geographic* magazine, June 2000. The images in the series depict the Mohanis fishermen of the Indus river valley who wear bird masks as a method of hunting.





*Figure 5 – Daytime*



*Figure 6 – Sunset*

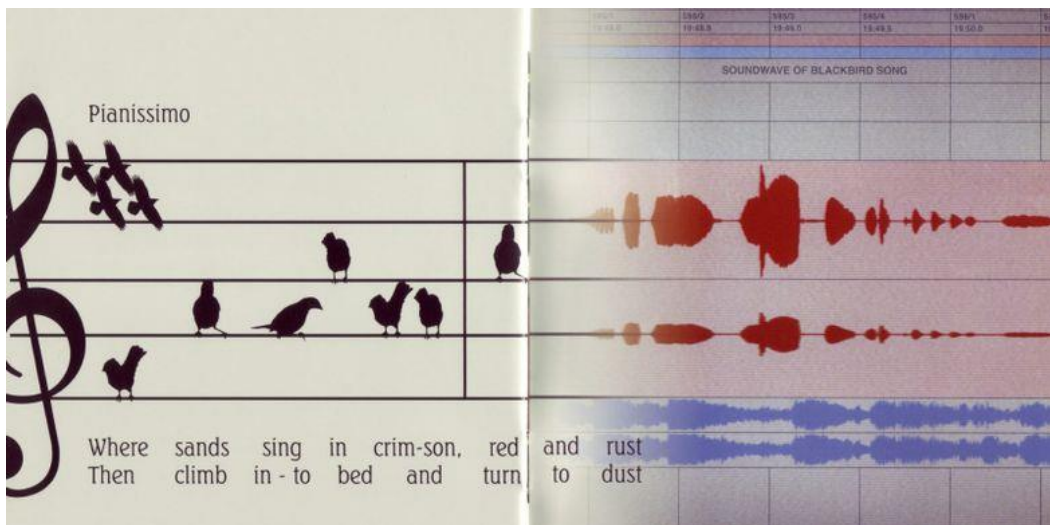




*Figure 7 – Olson photo (above), Aerial’s modified version (below)*



*Figure 8 – Aerial*



*Figure 9 – Creative process*

These images are characteristically pastoral, and their focus on birdsong and shifting patterns of light evokes the connotative meanings of *Aerial* discussed above, whilst reflecting the story of the song cycle, specifically the narrator's interactions with birds. Birdsong is a key feature of the song cycle and is present in sampled sound, vocal mimicry and imitative practices, where melodic motifs from blackbird and wood pigeon songs inspire the creation of thematic musical material. Beyond referring to key moments and musical events in the cycle, these images also highlight the influence of birdsong upon Bush's creative practices. She has expressed curiosity about the complexity of birdsong as a 'language that we don't understand', where 'it's almost as if they're vocalising light' (Bush, quoted in Thomson, 2015, p.295). She is also quoted as saying that her favourite singers are the blackbird and the thrush (Thomson, 2015, p.282). The song of the former is a significant presence in *A Sky's* artwork and in the song cycle itself.

The movement between the images associated with *A Sea* and *A Sky* is distinct, with recognisable views of every day domestic life leading to more abstract images combining optical soundwaves and an abundance of birds. This shift reflects the change in subject matter between *A Sea* and *A Sky*, but it also represents the experiential context that guides the listener's first introduction to the song cycle. This is tied to the absence of Bush from the cover image. As previously noted, until *Aerial* the combination of music and visual presentation was a defining feature of Bush's style, with the spectacle of her performances drawing on multiple mediums and media. For *Aerial*, Bush takes a distinctly different approach, releasing only one music video for the song 'King of the Mountain' — featured on *A Sea* — allowing limited print interviews upon the release of the album and making no television appearances or public performances (Thomson, 2015, p.303).



It is conceivable that the songs on *A Sea* satisfied the rumours that circulated during her hiatus, and that the personal tone gave fans insight into Bush's life without prescribing meaning or being too personally revelatory. This is communicated in *A Sea*'s artwork and the familiarity of the imagery. The movement to *A Sky*'s images and the centrality of the cover art in their composition confirms the disengagement of her public persona, creating instead a context in which listeners are asked to attend to the experience of the music. In this respect, the artwork is an important communicative strategy, steering the listener towards the experience of listening to the song cycle's story and the creative practices underpinning its expression. This is consolidated by the final image in the liner notes, which connects the thematic imagery in *A Sky*'s artwork to the processes behind the album's creation (Figure 9).

The prevalence of sound waves in the imagery associated with *A Sky* highlights the significance of listening practices in approaching the song cycle. Upon the album's release, the artwork was the only visual representation of *A Sky* available to the listener, and its imagery continually reiterates the importance of auditory experience as the primary point of engagement. Where Bush previously adopted a multisensory approach to performance, I would argue that the context she creates for *A Sky* asks audiences to cultivate an attentive practice of listening to become acquainted with the song cycle. This is supported by the format in which *Aerial* was released and its resistance to contemporary modes of listening that prioritise a shuffle based listening experience (Thomson, 2015, p.305).<sup>60</sup> The listener is asked to commit to the experience of the song cycle as it unfolds, to attend to its process, and in this context, the album artwork is a strategic frame, inviting listeners to become

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<sup>60</sup> Withers considers temporal strategies in Bush's albums *Director's Cut* and *50 Words for Snow*, and whilst she does not discuss *Aerial* or *A Sky*, much of her argument, particularly the broad context, is applicable (2017). I considered the significance of this article in the previous chapter as one of the few studies that emphasises listening practices in the experience of Bush's music.

‘embroiled in an act of perception, forged via active engagement with a piece of recorded music’ (Withers, 2017, p.98). This primary context is vital for my practice of ‘listening out’ because it supports the prioritisation of an attentive listening practice. This is reinforced by the absence of visual markers — for instance clothing, makeup, performance gestures, or behaviours — typically considered androgynous, creating an interpretative context that is not orientated around the specificity of androgyny as a sexed/gendered body. The creative background of *A Sky*, its role on *Aerial* and the artwork, therefore, establishes an experiential setting that supports the interpretation of androgyny through a framework of listening.

The creative background to *Aerial*, *A Sea*’s themes of domestic, everyday life and the polysemic, abstract nature of *A Sky*’s artwork resonates in several ways with Woolf’s intentions for *The Waves* and the dust jacket from the original publication. One of Woolf’s earliest sketches for *The Waves* — the telling of a woman’s life — speaks to the themes of domesticity on *A Sea* and the telling of the narrator’s story over twenty-four-hours on *A Sky*. Similarly, Woolf’s exploration of the tension between private thought and public utterance is explored in the subject matter of the songs of *A Sea*; for instance, ‘King of the Mountain’ details a story about isolation and fame, while the daily chore of laundry leads ‘Mrs. Bartolozzi’ into a state of reverie.

This same tension exists in *A Sky*, although the combination of overarching narrative development and the interconnection of musical themes emphasise the expression of characters reacting in and to their environment. The artwork of *A Sky* informs the listener’s perception of the song cycle’s context by reflecting the progression of the twenty-four-hour period and presenting images associated with key voices in the cycle, for instance the blackbird and the wood pigeon. Where *A Sea* offers a clearer exploration of the tension between public and private life, *A Sky*’s

expression is akin to Woolf's examination of the impact of unseen forces upon a subject's experience of the world. The interrelation of multiple character experiences — or, to quote Woolf, 'the idea of some continuous stream, not solely of human thought' but of 'all flowing together' (Woolf, 2008d, p.230) — is crucial in the development and expression of *A Sky's* narratives. This is emphasised in the creative background to both *The Waves* and *A Sky* and is exemplified by the representation of central themes in the artwork accompanying each text.

By exploring the creative backgrounds of both works, including the interpretation of accompanying artwork, I have been able to identify similarities between the expressive worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Woolf's impetus for *The Waves* and her processes of drafting and redrafting connects to textual strategies surrounding her formulation of androgyny in *A Room*.<sup>61</sup> I identified a similar aesthetic condition in *A Sky* and found an experiential context that prioritises listening. These preliminary links develop the dialogue I initiated between Woolf and Bush in the previous chapter and represents the beginning of a comparative textual analysis that focusses on the 'listening out' to androgynous expression in the worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

In this discussion, I have outlined the creative background to *The Waves* and *A Sky* and have considered how the artwork functions as an extension of Woolf's and Bush's artistic aims. Beginning with Woolf, I considered her initial aims for the novel, tracing its conception through to publication. Considering this alongside an interpretation of the dust jacket of the original publication allowed me to establish *The Waves* as a novel about the complexity of perception in everyday life. I identified a connection between the condition in which the androgynous mind was revealed to

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<sup>61</sup> Refer to page 142, where I first make this claim.

Mary in *A Room*, and the state of being Woolf sought to explore in *The Waves*. I adopted a similar approach when exploring Bush and *A Sky*. Acknowledging the significance of *A Sky*'s role as one half of *Aerial*, I considered the circumstance surrounding the album's composition, and the thematic distinctions between *A Sea* and *A Sky*. To support this, I explored the contextual significance of the images, and found that those accompanying *A Sky* offer an invitation to the listener to become involved in the unfolding of the cycle's story through a practice of attentive listening. Tracing the background to both works individually allowed me to identify an aesthetic condition that reflects the textual expression of androgyny in Woolf's *A Room*. I will use this connection as a foundation upon which to develop a comparative analysis of the texts, where I will prioritise 'listening out' for androgynous expression.

To expand upon this initial phase of dialogue, and to develop the overarching context discussed above, I will delve deeper in the textual and compositional techniques of Woolf and Bush by exploring form, genre and narrative in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

#### Play gently with the waves: Form, genre, narrative

In the previous section I explored the creative background of *The Waves* and *A Sky* and considered the significance of the accompanying artwork in establishing the overarching context and fundamental themes of both works. Through this, I identified an aesthetic condition that reflects the textual expression of androgyny in *A Room* — specifically the moment in which the androgynous mind is revealed to Mary — and established a foundation for a comparative analysis of the textual expression of androgyny. To expand these preliminary parallels, I will move from context to content by exploring form, genre and narrative. I will begin with Woolf, offering further

details on her creative ambitions for *The Waves* and how this translates to her textual strategies. I will then consider Bush's engagement with the song cycle genre, drawing parallels between the textual and compositional strategies of each works.

*The Waves* reflects Woolf's desire to represent the modern mind in literary form, experiences she felt were missing in contemporary novels. Her experiments were in response to the articulation of reality as a formalised experience, common in the literary methods of Edwardian writers, for instance Galsworthy, Wells and Bennett (Woolf, 2009b, pp.6-12). Woolf was concerned that in this form of realism, the complex entanglement of plot was neglected in favour of prescriptive techniques that described and explained experience to the reader. Woolf found this writing style materialist, 'concerned not with the spirit but with the body' (Woolf, 2009b, p.7). This distinction points to a literary style in which a writer attempts to catch the physical details of life, 'proving the solidity, the likeness to life', 'embalming the whole so impeccably that if all his figures were to come to life they would find themselves dressed down to the last button of their coats' (Woolf, 2009b, pp.8-9). Woolf was concerned about the parts of life that are not easily rendered, and she sought a creative form that would de-novelise the novel, reject authorial control and 'challenge the bounds of fiction' (Beer, 2008, p.xv).<sup>62</sup>

Woolf's dissatisfaction with the 'materialist' style expresses modernist understandings of reality and the perceptions of the mind. Characterising the experience of the mind within life, Woolf asks her reader to 'look within life':

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<sup>62</sup> Countering materialist writers, Woolf cites James Joyce as a 'spiritual' author, because he attempts to 'come closer to life, and to preserve more sincerely and exactly what interests [him], even if to do so [he] must discard most of the conventions commonly observed by the novelist' (Woolf, 2009b, pp.9-10). This quote represents Woolf's discussion of changing literary habits and conventions, and describes the work of several modernists, of whom she claims Joyce is the 'most notable' (Woolf, 2009b, pp.9-10).

Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls different from of old (Woolf, 2009b, p.9).

Considering how these impressions might be expressed in literary form, Woolf envisioned a ‘new, flexible, labyrinthine prose’, free from plot, where the ‘materialist’s buttons have not disappeared so much as found themselves swept up’ with myriad other fragments (Goldman, 2010, p.52). These ambitions led Woolf to the lyrical experimentalism of poetry, as she incorporated poetic techniques into prose. Through fusing genres, Woolf sought to create a form of poetic prose to support the expression of a subject’s complex emotional responses, whilst embracing the ‘new human experiences of modernity’ (Goldman, 2010, p.52).

Poetic sensibility was a key influence for Woolf as she wrote *The Waves*, and she was particularly attracted to Eliot’s theory of impersonality (1982). At the core of Eliot’s theory is the transformation of the poet’s mind into a ‘shred of platinum’ (Eliot, 1982, p.40). Accomplished by exorcising personal emotion and subjective response, Eliot argues that the dissociation of sensibility enables an artistic mindset that is constantly ‘amalgamating disparate experience...forming new wholes’ (Eliot, quoted in Farwell, 1975, p.448). For Eliot, the poet’s job is not to discover new emotions; it is to condense and intensify ordinary emotions through poetry. The poet’s ‘escape’ from emotion and personality enables artistic creation, which Eliot recognised as the elaboration of tradition; new modes and methods alter the context in which the past is considered (Eliot, 1982, p.42).

In writing *The Waves*, Woolf was drawn to poetry’s ‘capacity to express intense feeling’ (Flint, 1994, p.229), to ‘eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity: to

give the moment whole' (Woolf, quoted in Flint, 1994, p.229).<sup>63</sup> In this respect, poetry widened Woolf's expressive palette and gave her a way to respond to the creative limitations of realism, where reality was articulated by controlling the formal elements of a novel. These features — which would have been well known to contemporary readers — included

a recognisable narratorial voice, usually a 'third person' narrator, though sometimes 'first person'; characterisation which assumed a natural relation between internal psychology and external appearance, and similarly between motivation and action; storylines which...made all major events and actions intelligible (Whitworth, 2009, p.116).

For Woolf, these formal arrangements resulted in linear and prescriptive novels, and represented a subject's relation to 'real' objects, rather than questioning the meaning of the relation. Combining poetry and prose allowed Woolf to 'effect' a technical and aesthetic 'transformation of the novel form', thereby expanding the literary representation of reality (Goldman, 2010, p.55). This reflects the recognition and alteration of tradition in Eliot's theory of impersonality, highlighting the importance of perception in Woolf's creative practice.

In modernist aesthetics, reality and perception are conjoined experiences, and Woolf's exploration of literary form focusses on the oscillation between the representation of a 'meaningful world' and a 'world in which human beings are blown aimlessly about' (Hussey, 1986, p.96). This raises questions about how a subject acquires and perceives knowledge. The complex form of *The Waves*, specifically its incorporation of multiple genres, creates a form of subjective idealism, where the existence of the world is 'an idea in the mind of each of the subjects who perceive it' (Whitworth, 2005, p.116). Woolf was keen to transfer the function of 'fact-recording

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<sup>63</sup> I draw attention here to the similarity between Eliot's language and Woolf's description of the androgynous mind in *A Room*: 'the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotion without impediment; that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided' (Woolf, 2001, p.85).

power' common in contemporary fiction to the expression of character feelings and experiences (Graham, 1976, p.19). This manifests in *The Waves* through the juxtaposition of internal processes of consciousness (the soliloquies) and the external world of knowable objects (the interludes). By finding overlaps between the perception of internal and external spaces, Woolf explores the 'endless modalities of human being' (Hussey, 1986, p.97).

As part of her experiments, Woolf sought alternative ways to generate narrative momentum. Where this traditionally occurs in story-line development and narrative perspective, Woolf sought a nameless narrator, 'free to think backwards and forwards', 'closely resembl[ing] an omniscient author', whilst 'figur[ing] as a *persona* in the book' (Graham, 1976, p.26). To sustain this newly configured narrator, Woolf created a structure of two streams, each consisting of scenes that would resist 'transitions, climaxes, or the general sense of narrative progression' (Graham, 1976, p.27). The idea of the narrator in *The Waves* offers a sense of unity, and whilst the direct marker of speech — said — indicates which character is speaking, the multiple voices incorporated into each soliloquy compromises this stability. Similarly, each character is associated with themes, motifs and images that are introduced in the first soliloquy and recur as the soliloquies progress. This includes the swapping and sharing of motifs amongst characters, which complicates the relationship between the direct marker of speech and the themes associated with individual subjects.<sup>64</sup> This also establishes the effect of others upon the self as a central theme in *The Waves*. The six contrasting yet entwined perspectives questions a dominant world view, and by fracturing the concept of united narrator into several characters, each with their own stream of perceptions, Woolf disturbs the conventions of narrative progression and

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<sup>64</sup> See Table 1, appendix 1 for a tabular analysis of *The Waves*, including key themes and character motifs.



plot development.

Contributing to this is the lack of dramatic impetus throughout *The Waves*. The stylised, impersonal language of the soliloquies creates a sense of unlimited space, an amalgamation of the disparate nature of the physical world. Narrative drive in *The Waves* is not the description of a series of events, or character response to these events. The reader can ascertain key moments in the life of each character, but Woolf does not prioritise these external events, and they are often disguised by similes, metaphors, themes, images and motifs. Similarly, the reader is not given a character's emotional reaction to these external factors. Regardless of how traumatic an event might be in *The Waves*, for instance Percival's death and Rhoda's suicide, the characters stand back to observe their own responses. In each soliloquy, the characters respond to a plethora of stimuli, and in seeking to put these experiences into words, Woolf grants the reader unmediated response to the 'incessant shower of innumerable atoms' as they fall (Woolf, 2009b, p.9). This is expressed through the 'deployment of language' (Flint, 1994, p.220) and a fragmented writing style: 'short sentences strung loosely together by semi-colons, the juxtaposition of nouns, its patterns of repetition' (Minow-Pinkney, 2010, p.167).

This alternative approach to narrative momentum is supported by the permeation of rhythm throughout the text. In 1929, Woolf wondered if it was possible for the 'waves to be heard all through', and late in 1930 her musing on structural rhythm continued: 'Suppose I could run all the scenes together more? – by rhythm, chiefly – so as to make the blood run like a torrent from end to end. I want to avoid chapters' (Woolf, 2008d, p.263, 292). She claimed to be 'writing *The Waves* to a rhythm not a plot' (Woolf, quoted in Goldman, 2010, p.65). Structurally, this is expressed through the oscillation between soliloquies and interludes, and the shifting

between character voices, but thematic, symbolic and linguistic rhythmic effects similarly recur. Minow-Pinkney observes the rhythmic qualities in *The Waves* as that which ‘weld[s] the book into a unity’ (Minow-Pinkney, 2010, pp.174-175). She emphasises recurring images and patterns of ‘in/out, up/down, rise/fall’, both in the interludes and in the language of the soliloquies (Minow-Pinkney, 2010, p.174). She cites the following example from Neville, whose sentiments echo Woolf’s own literary aesthetic: ‘Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm; words that have lain dormant now lift, now toss their crests, and fall and rise, and fall and rise again’ (Minow-Pinkney, 2010, p.174). This pulsing ‘fall and rise’ is characteristic of Woolf’s representation of the character’s speech; ‘rhythmically punctuated by the repeated stilted formula for marking direct speech (‘said’) ... stylised representation of speech, which only very rarely seems to approach a dialogue between the characters’ (Goldman, 2010, p.65).

The form, genre and narrative structure of *The Waves* is complex, yet representative of Woolf’s wider literary ambitions. The fusion of fiction, poetry and prose supports the central themes explored in *The Waves*, which can be broadly characterised as an examination of individual and collective subjectivity, exterior life and interior perception. Through the manipulation of form, genre and narrative convention, Woolf reimagines the literary representation of the mind and the perception of ‘innumerable atoms’ that form and reform experience. Where central images are established — for instance waves, water, light and birdsong (see table 1, appendix 1) — their mutability imbues the text with the inconsistencies of reality, and it is through this ever-changing environment that the characters mediate their perceptions and impressions of life.

I will attend to the significance of form, genre and narrative for androgynous

expression after I have explored *A Sky*, but before I do that, I want to offer some brief comments on the significance of impersonality for understanding Woolf's androgyny.

Impersonality is a guiding aesthetic in *The Waves*, particularly in the textual expression of subjectivity, although the unification of sensibility has proved a stumbling block in the reception of Woolf's androgyny. This is demonstrated in Farwell's and Showalter's critique of the androgynous mind in *A Room* — discussed in the previous chapter — where the emphasis Woolf places upon objectivity and freeing the mind from emotions is seen to reinforce patriarchal discourse. I have explored the problematic nature of this interpretation, and by engaging the work of Moi and Ryan have demonstrated its disconnection from the textual strategies Woolf employs throughout *A Room*. The influence of impersonality upon the writing of *The Waves* further attests to the significance of textual strategies, and the theoretical emphasis placed upon the elaboration of tradition gives a new context through which to consider androgyny. As Woolf was wary of the prescriptive tendencies of some literary traditions, androgyny is tied to readings that capture, render and define a specific physicality. Elements which may escape capture are lost amidst these interpretative strategies, however allowing the complex aesthetic of impersonality to resonate with androgyny enables the elaboration of existing interpretative approach. The form, genre and narrative of *The Waves* combines to expand tradition and consequently, exploring androgyny within this space initiates conceptual expansion, creating a space for experimentation that develops from and expands Woolf's original formulation in *A Room*.

To develop this understanding, I will now explore form, genre and narrative in *A Sky*, identifying similarities with *The Waves* and exploring the significance of these parallels for 'listening out' to androgynous expression.

To explore the form, genre and narrative of *A Sky*, in this section I focus on how Bush's compositional strategies intersect with the song cycle genre.<sup>65</sup> I will offer a broad definition of the song cycle, before exploring how *A Sky* reflects key characteristics of the genre. Where appropriate, I will make structural and thematic comparisons with *The Waves*, closing this section with some comments on how the expressive environment of each work impacts the interpretation of androgyny.

A song cycle is broadly defined as a group of songs connected by overarching themes and showing 'some sort of coherent compositional plan and correlation between narrative and music' (Kaminsky, 1992, p.39). This definition, however, belies the complexity of the genre. As there is 'no conventional pattern of movements', a cycle can have any number of songs, each of which can be performed as an individual piece (Tunbridge, 2010, p.1). Similarly, there are no structural demands for the organisation of the songs and their composition. Despite this, the idea of coherence is an important stylistic and aesthetic trait in the historical reception of the song cycle, the approach to which can be split into two main trajectories. The first interprets the song cycle as a unified object, valuing the 'sense of totality, wholeness, progress [and] development', where the second focusses on the 'ways in which moments in the music query those claims of coherence' (Tunbridge, 2010, p.14).<sup>66</sup> Despite the contrasting approaches to the idea of coherence — and I will return to the significance of this contrast for androgyny shortly — both trajectories highlight the importance of recurring themes, ideals, compositional processes and organisational

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<sup>65</sup> Classifying the genre of *A Sky* is not straightforward, and other studies have referred to the album as a song suite (Thomson, 2010, p.300; Withers, 2010a, p.146, Moy, 2007, p.128). In an interview with Tom Doyle following the release of *Aerial*, Bush herself struggled to find an appropriate term: 'We used to call it a concept...Because as a working title, what do you say? You can't keep saying, Oh, *the suite*. What do you call it? My rock opera!' (Bush, quoted in Doyle, 2005, p.86). For reasons I will explore, I find *A Sky* more closely affiliated with the song cycle, although I acknowledge intersections with other genres, particularly the concept album, and would suggest this as a topic for future research.

<sup>66</sup> These different trajectories are not mutually exclusive, and their approaches depend upon one another. For further discussion see Tunbridge (2010).

strategies in the history of the song cycle.

One of the most important technical aspects of the song cycle and its development is the relationship between music, words and the setting of poetry to music. The status of the song cycle underwent a significant shift during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries — with Austria and Germany being dominant influences — developing from a modest to serious genre (Tunbridge, 2010, p.1).<sup>67</sup> Part of this rise in status was due to the influence of the lyric-poem, specifically its emphasis on the ‘lyric-I’ and its historical association with singing (Tunbridge, 2010, p.2). These poems were often written in first person and demonstrated a preoccupation with the exploration of a character’s ‘inner motivations’ (Tunbridge, 2010, p.2). This created a connection between the ‘voice of the poem’ and authorial voice, which emphasised the interpretation of text into a musical setting (Tunbridge, 2010, p.2).<sup>68</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, ‘song cycle’ represented several different types of song collections focussed on a range of different themes, with an

obvious association with nature – with life cycles, the passing of seasons...with attendant ideas of truth, unity, wholeness, progress, even purity. Often they were based around a poetic topic: the months of the year, a collection of flowers or colours; the experience of wandering; a sequence of emotional states; or an examination of particular imagery, such as the forest (Tunbridge, 2010, pp.1-3).

The connection of songs by overarching theme contrasted with a more self-conscious approach to song ordering, which was influenced by the genre’s general interaction with narrative literary forms, for instance the *Liederspiel* and poems originally included within novel forms (Tunbridge, 2010, p.3). These different approaches

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<sup>67</sup> It is beyond the scope of my study to account for the complex history of the song cycle, and I point the reader to Tunbridge’s work for a detailed examination of the genre’s history, including analyses of key works and composers (2010).

<sup>68</sup> During this period, the Aristotelian notion of poetry as imitation was challenged and replaced with an understanding of poetry as a ‘language of feeling’ (Tunbridge, 2010, p.2). With this changing attitude, music was ‘endowed with poetic significance’, and Romantic writers considered music a ‘superior vehicle for conveying the inexpressible’, affording music a ‘power beyond language’s grasp’ (Tunbridge, 2010, p.2).

assumed an underlying coherence which prioritised a cycle's internal narrative.<sup>69</sup> In the musically composed model of the song cycle, there was increased experimentation in compositional practice — from text setting to experiments in form, arrangement, harmonic language and voice leading — to create musical environments that would better reflect the meaning of a text.

There are common practices in the musically composed model of the cycle that connect the exploration of self-expression and subject construction to the setting of text and music.<sup>70</sup> Single vocalists with instrumental accompaniment were common, and composers experimented with more fluid, expressive vocal lines, developing organising strategies that established musical coherency to support the expression of narrative and music. Studying the popular album as song cycle, Kaminsky lists these traits as

- the cross reference of a motive, harmonic progression or harmonic/contrapuntal complex;
- the use of cross references and/or pattern completion at strategic points to define formal boundaries, often coinciding with parametric changes or narrative events;
- a logical key succession, specifically when corresponding with the narrative and/or with the internal tonal progression of individual movements;
- the association of key and character, or, of musical character with the ongoing progress of the work;
- the use of mode for expressive (and often ironic) effect;
- cyclic closure by means of pattern completion, summary statement, or other means (Kaminsky, 1992, p.39).

This highlights the complexity of coherency, for whilst the list above reflects common thematic and musical characteristics, they also point to the developmental, diverse

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<sup>69</sup> The question of whether music has narrative capability is highly contested. At the root of the debate is the difference in conception between musical structure, interpretation and meaning, which is connected to controversies concerning aesthetics and analytical methodologies. Discussions have tended to focus on instrumental rather than vocal music, with the addition of text further complicating interpretative strategies. Accepting the complexities of these debates, I broadly support the view that music has narrative capability, and for finding points of connectivity between *The Waves* and *A Sky* an open approach to music's narrative potential is a necessity. Due to the focus of my research, I am unable to engage these debates and point the reader to the following key texts Nattiez (2013, 1993), Negus (2012), Nicholls (2007), Kramer (1991, 1989), Abbate (1989) and Karl (1997).

<sup>70</sup> The development of the song cycle reflected a change in the ideals of musical modernity, and given its prevalence throughout Europe, stylistic markers vary between historical periods and countries. Whilst I am unable to account for these variations here, I appreciate that there is no monolithic form and would point the reader to Tunbridge's text for a more detailed explication, including suggestions for further reading (2010).

nature of song cycles, both as whole works and as a genre.

*A Sky* intersects with these features in several ways, and these points of connection are important for drawing parallels between Woolf's textual strategies in *The Waves* and the interpretation of androgynous expression.

Through the telling of its story, *A Sky* expresses several of the common themes in the history of the song cycle. An overarching theme is the exploration of subject construction and the effect of others upon self-expression. This is mediated through several smaller interwoven themes, including the processes of artistic creation, language acquisition, consolation in nature, birdsong and the passing of time; the latter functioning as a framing narrative in *A Sky*. These themes are emphasised in both lyrical and musical content.<sup>71</sup> The listener can discern events in *A Sky*'s plot from the lyrics, and whilst they do not directly recount a story, they orientate the listener's ear towards the cycle's narratives, particularly the impressionistic references to light, sound and colour. Given the abstract depiction of narrative events in the lyrics, the story-telling capacity of the cycle depends upon the interaction of words and music.

Bush's compositional strategies align *A Sky* with the musically coded model of the song cycle, and several features from Kaminsky's list are identifiable. Most important is the 'cross reference of a motive, harmonic progression or harmonic/contrapuntal complex', and these properties incorporate several other strategies within the cycle, for instance, 'logical key succession' and 'cyclic closure' (Kaminsky, 1992, p.39). In the opening track, Bush sets the scene for the cycle, introducing key characters through motifs.<sup>72</sup> In the early stages of the cycle, the

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<sup>71</sup> Table 2 in appendix 1 details key information about each song, including musical and non-musical elements. The columns mirror those of table 1 to demonstrate both the thematic similarities between *The Waves* and *A Sky*, and the creative approaches adopted by Woolf and Bush. I also point the reader to appendix 2 for transcribed examples of *A Sky*'s character motifs.

<sup>72</sup> Appendix 2 includes transcriptions of character motifs and examples of their variations.

characters can be identified by vocal texture, timbre, instrument or sampled sound, however as the songs progress these motifs undergo a series of alterations, and the security of their initial presentation is disrupted by processes of melodic and rhythmic diminution and augmentation. Supporting the key theme of subject construction and the effect of others upon self-expression, specific motifs — or their timbral, textural, melodic and rhythmic qualities — are then swapped, shared and combined to express the complexity of character interaction. Similarly, the motifs are incorporated into the instrumental accompaniment and the arrangement of the songs. Narratively, this is important because it disrupts the notion of dominant narrator in the cycle — I will return to this in more detail in the next chapter — focussing on multiple affective perspectives to create an environment where the characters are persistently present.

Harmonic language provides a further point of connection in *A Sky*, as the cycle is dominated by c-sharp minor totality. The cycle opens and closes strongly in c-sharp minor — reinforced by segues between songs — but despite this dominance, the tonality is not secure. Seventh and added tone chords, as well as the manipulation of chords positions, are characteristic in *A Sky*, and this creates a sense of wandering in the harmonic language. There are moments of conventional, expected harmonic progressions in some songs — see appendix 1, table 2— but even during these sections there are consistent references to the tension between tonic and seventh tonalities. This harmonic language creates instability within stability and is exacerbated by other common musical features in the cycle, such as suspensions, ostinatos, inconsistent rates of harmonic progression, and manipulation of section and phrase length. The sense of roaming created by the harmony reflects the narrator's wandering in the cycle, focussing on the unravelling of experiences and perspectives. This reinforces the tension between self and others, and the construction of the subject



as central themes in *A Sky*.

Lyrically and musically, each song in *A Sky* is self-sufficient, however they ‘gain significance through association with the other songs in the sequence’ because they build upon ‘the cycle’s store of poetic images by mixing the colours of its harmonic palette’ and by developing its macro and microcosmic themes (Tunbridge, 2010, p.27). Repetition is a key feature, although the sense of coherence it creates is disturbed by Bush’s compositional practice and the variation of repeated material. This is exemplified by the variation of character motifs throughout the cycle. Whilst textural, melodic and rhythmic traits are established early in the cycle, Bush adapts their individual presentations to accommodate the contrasting moods of each song as they represent new phases in the cycle’s story, and to show the impact of character interaction within *A Sky*’s narrative. The complex expression of repetition makes *A Sky* a progressive cycle, where ideas, themes and motifs are repeated with ‘the hindsight of experience’ (Tunbridge, 2010, p.18). As with tonality and harmonic language, this creates a sense that the events of *A Sky* are unravelling in real time, thereby drawing the listener into the cycle’s story.

The above discussion shows the different ways *A Sky* intersects with the complexities of the song cycle genre; from the focus on words and music, self-expression and subject construction, to the presence of overarching themes, the expression of narrative through compositional ordering strategies — such as the establishment and development of motifs, dominant tonality and recurring musical features — to engaging the tense relationship between the coherence and disruption.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *A Sky* also engages the importance of public and private spaces in the history of the song cycle, particularly in relation to gendered voices, and this is made more significant when contextualised alongside the dominant themes of *A Sea*. It is beyond the scope of my study to fully engage these interpretative threads, and I would refer the reader to Tunbridge’s work for an overview of gendered voices, and the significance of public and private — specifically domestic — spaces in the genre (Tunbridge, 2010, pp.40-63).

*The Waves* and *A Sky* express comparable overarching themes, for instance the exploration of self-expression, the construction of subjectivity, the effect of others upon the individual and the juxtaposition of internal processes of the mind with the external material world. Key to this is the relationship between the aesthetic and technical, as Woolf and Bush both exploit the techniques of their respective mediums. Crucially, this becomes an important theme in the internal worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, as both works explore the processes of artistic creation, the expressive capacity of language and the passing of time which structures the progression of interludes, soliloquies and songs. This is exacerbated by the cyclical nature of the texts, which resist closure by ending as they begin, with the waves breaking on the shore and the beginning of a new day. Whilst *The Waves* and *A Sky* indicate the passing of time — whether through the ageing of characters, or through the movement of the sun in a day — they both resist the unfolding of a linear narrative plot.

Stylistically, both texts are narratively abstract, relying upon the repetition of motifs, refrains and images in their expressions of characterisation. Characters are introduced early in each text, established through their association with a specific expressive phrase, refrain or image in *The Waves*, and through musical motifs, sounds and textures in *A Sky*. As both texts progress, the markers of specific personalities are modified and recontextualised, with the sharing of motifs becoming a common feature.<sup>74</sup> The emphasis is placed upon multiple perspectives, and the repetition of refrains, motifs and images allows the exploration of character in relation to the reality that is created. These literary and compositional strategies are vital for the reader/listener's perception of the story; for the identification of key narrative

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<sup>74</sup> For example, in *The Waves*, soliloquies four, eight and nine contain amalgamated presentations of all character refrains and motifs. A similar expression occurs in the songs 'Sunset', 'Nocturn' and 'Aerial' from *A Sky*. Please see the appendices for tabular analysis of both texts, and transcriptions of musical motifs.

developments and for understanding how a character is affected by their experiences.

Other points of comparability include pastoral settings and an emphasis on nature, with the incorporation of everyday objects and references to man-made spaces — houses, streets, and cars, and images of water, waves, light, sound and birdsong — creating synesthetic and impressionistic settings. This is exemplified in Woolf's interludes — the aurality of which surrounds the soliloquies with 'musicalized language' (Clements, 2005, p.168) — and in the musical setting Bush creates through the interaction of lyrics with synthesised suspended harmonies, melismatic vocal phrases, contrasting dynamics and the sound of sampled birdsong, waves and thunder. Both texts similarly prioritise the present tense, with brief moments of past and future tense, and engage similes and metaphors as expressive devices.

Woolf's and Bush's approach to form, genre and narrative are important for claiming *The Waves* and *A Sky* as spaces through which to 'listen out' for androgynous expression. Conceptually, the textual strategies I have identified engage and challenge understandings about what androgyny means and how it is interpreted. One of the most significant contributions to the interpretation of androgyny offered through Woolf's and Bush's creative techniques is the challenge posed to the idea of coherence. There are several ways in which Woolf and Bush create a sense of cohesion, but these methods are disrupted by persistent modifications. This disruption is crucial for androgyny because it challenges interpretations which suggest androgyny subsumes difference in the quest for wholeness and shifts the emphasis from coherency to diversity within a whole.<sup>75</sup> This recalls the context of Woolf's original formulation in *A Room*, as she moves away from the specificity of the sexed/gendered figure of the androgyne to the potential of the concept as an ideal state

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<sup>75</sup> This relates to my earlier explorations of critical responses to Woolf's androgyny.

of artistic production.

In this respect, the intricate expressive states created by Woolf and Bush are comparable to the condition of the androgynous mind described by Mary in *A Room*, particularly the emphasis she places upon convergent and divergent energies. I would argue that *The Waves* and *A Sky* supports and expands this formulation, because their abstract narratives lead the reader/listener to engage with textual strategies that favour abstraction over prescription. Expanding the creative background and context of each text, the form, genre and narrative of *The Waves* and *A Sky* demonstrates how coherence and disruption are not mutually exclusive states, and when considered as conditions of androgynous expression, the focus on textual strategy complicates the understanding of androgyny as a state where difference is erased.

In this section, I have expanded the creative background to *The Waves* and *A Sky* by focussing on genre, form and narrative. Considering each text's individual expressions allowed me to find a comparable set of overarching themes, which supported the identification of overlaps in the technical strategies employed by Woolf and Bush. By isolating the different threads running through each text, I contextualised *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressive states that simultaneously create and disturb textual coherency through processes of augmentation and repetition with difference. Building upon the dialogue between Woolf and Bush, I have developed the comparative analysis instigated earlier in this chapter by considering how 'listening out' to textual expression impacts the interpretation of androgyny.

To close this chapter, I will explore the significance of pastoralism as a central theme in both works. Engaging my practice of listening, I will consider the different ways pastoral themes manifest in the textual strategies of each work, before examining how androgyny is implicated and reconceptualised amidst these complex

expressions.

### What a lovely afternoon: Pastoralism

In the previous section, I examined form, genre and narrative in *The Waves* and *A Sky* to identify overlaps in Woolf's and Bush's technical strategies, and to contextualise each text as a space through which to 'listen out' to androgynous expression. This revealed further areas of study — for instance characterisation and the construction of subjectivity, and the significance of materiality — upon which the rest of this thesis will be based. For the remainder of this chapter, I will focus on an exploration of pastoralism, a central theme in both texts. Through this, I will explore how pastoralism intersects with the history of androgyny, and why listening out for pastoral convention equates to 'listening out' for androgynous expression. I do this by exploring the history of pastoral convention to establish key characteristics, before examining how *The Waves* and *A Sky* intersect with these traditions. I will then consider how the understanding of androgyny as an ideology of wholeness overlaps with the idealised notion of nostalgia in pastoral convention. As the discussion progresses, I will examine how the textual expression of pastoralism in *The Waves* and *A Sky* complicates traditional conceptions of both pastoral convention and androgyny.

As a genre, pastoralism has developed across centuries, countries and traditions, and has, consequently, incorporated differing national characteristics. As a literary convention it can be traced from its early beginnings in Theocritus's *Idylls* (third century B.C.), to the poetry of Hesiod in the eighth century B.C. through to Verlaine in the 1800s. In music, it develops from the poetic exchanges in the pastoral songs of antiquity to the notated traditions of the troubadour *pastourelles*, through madrigals, the development of early opera and the Arcadian movement, to Debussy,

Strauss, Vaughan-Williams, and countercultural musics of the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, defining pastoralism is difficult and there has been little historical agreement about how to classify a genre that is multitudinous in its presentation (Alpers, 1996, p.8). Notwithstanding the impossibility of a comprehensive definition, pastoralism is nevertheless associated with specific images, themes and discourses:

We are told that pastoral 'is a double longing after innocence and happiness', that it is based on the philosophical antithesis of Art and Nature; that its universal idea is the Golden Age; that its fundamental motive is hostility to urban life; that its 'central tenet' is 'the pathetic fallacy'; that it expresses the ideal of *otium*, that it is founded on Epicureanism, that in the Renaissance it is 'the poetic expression *par excellence* of the cult of aesthetic Platonism' or, alternatively, of the philosophical *vita contemplativa* (Alpers, 1996, pp.10-12).

From its early roots to its twentieth-century manifestations, pastoral convention is broadly associated with the idealisation of rural lives and rural landscapes.<sup>76</sup> Alpers argues that this trope has rendered pastoralism a catchall for any literary work that deals with rural life, and he suggests two approaches in claiming a definition of pastoral; the first must give a 'coherent account of its various features — formal, expressive, and thematic — and second, provide for its historical continuity, the change and variety within the form' (Alpers, 1996, p.13).<sup>77</sup> To combat the problematic relationship between definition, interpretation and meaning, Alpers draws upon Burke's 'representative anecdote' (Alpers, 1996, p.13).

The 'representative anecdote' is bound to what Burke describes as the search for meaningful vocabulary. By this, he means a vocabulary that enables 'faithful *reflections* of reality', developed from the '*selections* of reality' they are used to define – the anecdote (Burke, quoted in Alpers, 1996, p.13). 'Representative' has two

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<sup>76</sup> For a comprehensive study on the history of pastoralism see Harris (1980), Alpers (1996) and Monelle (2006).

<sup>77</sup> Alpers considers pastoral a mode, not a genre, a classification which acknowledges its presence in a range of traditions and genres. As my intention is to consider the significance of pastoral expression in the interpretation of androgyny, I do not fully engage this thread in Alpers argument, although I acknowledge its significance for the broader study of pastoralism in the arts.

aspects of meaning: ‘An anecdote is representative in that (1) it is a typical instance of an aspect of reality and (2) by being typical, it serves to generate specific depictions, or representations, of that reality’ (Alpers, 1996, p.13-14). Whilst Burke’s representative anecdote is drama and the grammar of human motives, Alpers extends its structure to pastoralism to challenge common mischaracterisations in its literary reception. In doing so, he emphasises the importance of taking a double perspective. For instance, elements taken to be representative of the pastoral mode may represent a deeper tension within the text, thereby complicating generalised meaning (Alpers, 1996, p.21).

This overview establishes a connection between pastoralism and androgyny, as both are confronted by the same interpretative issue; they are impacted by centuries of conceptual baggage and the mischaracterisation of generalised definition. In this sense, the relationship between pastoral and androgyny works along an axis of mutuality, establishing the significance of pastoralism in unravelling the complexity of the textual expression of androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Crucial to this is the understanding that the framing representative anecdote for pastoralism and androgyny is their own fictions. ‘Listening out’ for androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky* engages the mythologies and fictions of the concept, ‘transforming the structures and the stock of conventions provided by its previous instances’ (Alpers, 1996, p.14). This point provides important context for my thesis, because it supports the expansion of existing research into androgyny and popular music through a focus on textual strategies and compositional practice; techniques that are identifiable by ‘listening out’ to *A Sky*’s musical features and recognising comparable expressive features in *The Waves*.

Whilst there is not a universal definition of pastoral to map onto *The Waves* and *A Sky*, there are features that represent stylistic markers of the genre. These

include 'idyllic landscape, landscape as a setting for song, an atmosphere of *otium*, a conscious attention to art and nature, herdsmen as singers...and herdsmen as herdsmen' (Alpers, 1996, p.22). Alpers assembles these generalised characteristics by tracing the history of literary pastoral, and these features are identifiable in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, although the herdsmen characterisation appears in alternative guises. The pastoral setting provides a multiplicity of features, which contribute towards the *representative*; they inform the developmental content of the text, but also its interpretation.

Through the manipulation of textual strategies, Woolf and Bush create a landscape to mediate the telling of their stories in distinct but comparable ways. For Woolf, the pastoral landscape accompanies the early years of the characters' lives, and the first soliloquy is imbued with descriptions of flowers, light, weather, plants, animals; the characters' description of their surroundings place them *within* the landscape:

'Let them count out their tortoise-shells, their red admirals and cabbage whites. But let me be unseen. I am green as a yew tree in the shade of the hedge. My hair is made of leaves. I am rooted to the middle of the earth. My body is a stalk' (Woolf, 2008a, p.8).

As the characters age, this immersion in nature becomes less prominent, and they inhabit different spaces; school buildings, towns, cities, restaurants, although the pastoral themes continue prominently through the character, Susan.

Susan is the most typical representation of the herdsman in *The Waves*, and in marrying a farmer, her contribution to the soliloquies describes her rural life, the farm she works and the landscape she inhabits:

'I think I am the field, I am the barn, I am the trees; mine are the flocks of birds, and this young hare... Mine is the heron that stretches its vast wings lazily; and the cow that creaks...; and the wild, swooping swallow; and the faint red in the sky' (Woolf, 2008a, pp.78-79).



Beyond Susan's utterances, it is the interludes that represent the most obvious expression of pastoral in *The Waves*. Where a key characteristic of pastoralism is the interaction of people and landscape, Woolf manipulates convention through expressing an alternative relationship between the two. Whilst the character voices are absent from the interludes, their presence is communicated by incorporating everyday objects, such as chairs and cupboards, into the description. Light falls upon these objects and is juxtaposed with flowers, descriptions of shifting light, patterns of bird flight and the movements of the sea. The passing of time and the movements of the sea across the sky reflect the characters' progression through life; as day moves towards dusk, so the characters gradually reach old age. The soliloquies and interludes are subject to the same forces of change, and although they occupy different textual spaces, they reflect one another's experience.

In *A Sky*, Bush creates an expression of pastoral that is more typical of examples from musical traditions, and this is largely due to how she incorporates birdsong into the song cycle. When listening to *A Sky*, birdsong is one of the most striking characteristics. From its optical representation in the artwork, the use of sampled sound, its presence in lyrical content, vocal mimicry and imitation, birdsong is a crucial influence in the construction of *A Sky*'s musical themes. Bush is part of a long tradition in Western music inspired by birdsong.<sup>78</sup> The lyrics to 'Prologue' references one of the most famous examples from this tradition, *The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams. Premiered as an arrangement for violin and piano

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<sup>78</sup> Notable examples incorporating a range of techniques and approaches are: Jannequin *Le Chant des Oiseaux* (composed 1528), Mozart *A Musical Joke* (composed 1787), Beethoven *The Pastoral Symphony* (composed 1808), Vaughan Williams *The Lark Ascending* (composed 1914), Respighi *The Birds* (composed 1928), Messiaen *Catalogue d'oiseaux* (composed 1956-58), Pink Floyd 'Cirrus Minor' (released 1969), Rautavaara *Cantus Arcticus* (composed 1972), Cage *Bird Cage* (composed 1972), Laurie Anderson 'O Superman' (released 1981), Dead Can Dance 'Bird' (released 1991), Hanna Tuulikki 'Away with the Birds' (composed 2015).

accompaniment in 1920 and orchestrated in 1921, the inspiration for the composition was George Meredith's poem of the same name, published in 1881. As the poem begins, the lark 'rises and begins to round, he drops the silver chain of sound' (2000). The 'silver chain of sound', the skylark's song, is described by Meredith as a 'press of hurried notes':

Which seems the very jet of earth  
At sight of sun, her music's mirth,  
As up he wings the spiral stair,  
A song of light, and pierces air  
With fountain ardour, fountain play,  
To reach the shining tops of day

In *The Lark Ascending*, the skylark is represented by the violin, and being inspired by the words of the poem and the setting it evokes, Vaughan Williams takes a relaxed approach to metre, focussing upon a sostenuto style that incorporates cadenzas, thereby allowing the violin to ramble meditatively above languid, harmonic progressions. The influence of both Meredith and Vaughan Williams can be heard in *A Sky*, not solely in the use of birdsong, but also in its synthesised chordal harmony, its repeated use of melismatic vocal lines, the manipulation of tempo and its lack of enunciation in the delivery of the lyrics. Similarly, the synesthetic quality of Meredith's poem and Vaughan Williams' composition, is reminiscent of the impressionistic scenes created by Woolf in the interludes of *The Waves*, and the lyrical content and artwork of Bush's *A Sky*:

*As the light increased a bud here and there split asunder and shook out flowers, green veined and quivering, as if the effort of opening had set them rocking, and pealing a faint carillon as they beat their frail clappers against their white walls* (Woolf, 2008a, p.21).

Who knows who wrote that song of Summer  
That blackbirds sing at dusk  
This is a song of colour  
Where sands sing in crimson, red and rust (Bush, 'Sunset', 2005)<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Going forwards, all lyrics and transcriptions from *A Sky* are copyright Bush (2005).

Birds and their songs are also crucial in *The Waves*, and their presence is particularly important in the scenes Woolf creates in the interludes. As Meredith, Vaughan Williams and Bush explore birdsong as part of the experience of a wider pastoral scene, so Woolf charts the behaviour of birds and their response to the changing environment that surrounds them as the interludes progress. This is demonstrated in the following examples:

Interlude three:

*The birds that had sung erratically and spasmodically in the dawn on that tree...now sang together in chorus... as if conscious of companionship...Also they sang emulously in the clear morning air, swerving high over the elm tree, singing together as they chased each other, escaping, pursuing, pecking each other as they turned high in the air* (Woolf, 2008a, pp.58-59).

Interlude five:

*The birds sang passionate songs addressed to one ear only and then stopped. Bubbling and chuckling they carried little bits of straw and twig to the dark knots in the higher branches of the trees* (Woolf, 2008a, p.122).

Interlude seven:

*Birds swooped and circled high up in the air. Birds fell like a net descending on the tree-tops. Here one bird making its way alone made wing for the marsh and sat solitary on a white stake, opening its wings and shutting them* (Woolf, 2008a, p.151).

The birds' activity increases as the sun is at its highest and lessens as evening turns to dusk. In Interlude nine Woolf refers to two individual birds, but she emphasises their omnipresence within the landscape by describing the contours of the land as the plumage and wings of a bird (Woolf, 2008a, pp.197-198).

The emphasis Woolf and Bush place upon birdsong creates a space which the French call a *cadre sonore* (Alpers, 1996, p.25). A *cadre sonore*, a sound framework or sound space, is illustrative of an intimacy that sees subject and landscape in a responsive, mutually engaging relationship. Alpers characterises this space in pastoral tradition using the last line of Meliboeus's speech from Virgil's first eclogue:

*formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas* — Make woods resound with lovely

Amaryllis (Alpers, 1996, p.25). By reorganising the communicative movements between singer and landscape, a *cadre sonore* demonstrates how pastoral traditions might be opened to historical transformation:

The singer teaches the woods to sound his beloved's name; on the other hand, the actual sounding is attributed to the woods alone, so that the song is not what he utters but what he hears (Alpers, 1996, p.25).

A *cadre sonore* conceptualises a space where characters are situated within a mutually engaging landscape. This conceptualisation resonates with discourses working to theorise the relationship between sound, music and space, where priority is given to the sonic-spatiality of the everyday (Born, 2013, p.14).<sup>80</sup>

These discourses, which are broadly associated with sound art and 'live and experimental electronic and computer music', incorporates a 'heterogeneous range of aesthetic and ideological orientations' (Born, 2013, pp.14-15).<sup>81</sup> Emphasising the sonic-spatiality of the everyday, this theorisation of sound, music and space

moves out beyond the musical or sound object to encompass 'exterior' spatialities: the spatialities configured by the physical, technological and/or social dimensions of the performance event or sound work (Born, 2013, p.16).

Born subdivides the 'orchestration of space' within compositions and performances from these traditions into three overlapping trajectories: 1) works emphasise the experimentation of a performance space; 2) they seek ways to incorporate the wider sounding environment or 'acoustic ecology'; 3) and finally, they create multiple

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<sup>80</sup> Born identifies three lineages in the study of sound, music and space. The discourse I quote above is characterised as the third lineage and contrasts with the first and second. The first configures space as 'pitch space', a 'dominant formalist approach to musical spatiality' that emphasises 'score-based, visual and graphic representations and analyses of music' (Born, 2013, p.9). The second lineage sees space and music in 'diverse practices and discourses of spatialisation associated with multichannel techniques of studio recording' and appearing in musics from the 1950s onwards (Born, 2013, p.11). For a detailed survey of these lineages, including a comprehensive introduction to the study of space in sound and music studies, please see Born (2013, pp.1-69).

<sup>81</sup> Born associates this aesthetic with composers and writers such as Brandon LeBelle and John Cage, noting the influence of wider social and cultural movements, for instance anthropology, surrealism and Situationism.

shifting locations and virtual spatialities and configurations through digital technologies (Born, 2013, p.16). In this lineage, space is conceptualised as ‘multiple and constellatory’, opening exploratory paths between musical performances, the practice of music and the everyday space in which it is created and performed (Born, 2013, p.16).

This conceptualisation of music, sound and space responds to a *cadre sonore* because it allows us to focus on the situatedness of expression, which speaks to the mutually engaging environments created by Woolf and Bush in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Contextualised as examples of a *cadre sonore* — a contextualisation that is exemplified by the presence of birds and birdsong — Woolf and Bush do not spatially *place* their characters; rather, the mutability of pastoralism expresses an ‘idea of space as undergoing continual construction...through the agency of things encountering each other in more or less organized circulations’ (Thrift, quoted in Born, 2013, p.20). Space is not a ‘container within which the world proceeds’, but rather ‘space is seen as a co-product of those proceedings’ (Born, 2013, p.20-21).<sup>82</sup> Emphasising the interaction of multiple subjects, *The Waves* and *A Sky* create a spatiality that is plural and persistently mobile, yielding a multitude of unpredictable encounters that guides how the story is told to the reader and listener.

The evocation of pastoral convention is a central theme in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Pastoral images dominate the interludes in *The Waves*, where Woolf draws the listener’s ear to birdsong, connecting the exclamations to the shifting landscape as day progresses. In the soliloquies, this mutable pastoral landscape also reflects the experiences of the characters. In *A Sky*, the pastoral space Bush creates is crucial in

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<sup>82</sup> This perspective is borrowed from contemporary geography and is contextualised by Born within the conceptual framework she creates for her exploration of public and private spatialities of music and sound (Born, 2013, pp.20-24).

communicating the song cycle form, with birdsong centralised in the progression of the story and the compositional structures underpinning its expression. Whilst pastoralism is associated with the idealisation of rural life, Alpers' suggests that there is a tension often overlooked by traditional conceptions. The *cadre sonore* is one such expression of tension, one which opens pastoral traditions to historical transformation through focussing on the mutual engagement of landscape and herdsman. By 'listening out' to the textual and compositional strategies of both works —which includes Woolf's description of environmental sounds and birds, and Bush's use of birdsong, synthesised chordal harmony, melismatic vocal lines, fluctuations of tempo and lack of lyrical enunciation — I was able to identify stylistic and thematic markers of pastoral which allowed me to contextualise *The Waves* and *A Sky* as examples of a *cadre sonore*.

Having already briefly made a connection between the history of pastoral and androgyny, specifically the impact of generalised definitions and interpretative approaches, I will consider in more detail the tension in Woolf's and Bush's presentation of pastoral, and its significance for the conceptualisation of androgyny.

*The Waves* and *A Sky* demonstrate various stylistic and thematic markers of pastoral, although the complexity of this expression makes it difficult to claim this as an idyllic representation of pastoral landscape. This reflects the central thread in Alpers' study of pastoral: the idyllic representation of pastoral life belies an underlying reality that should be let into interpretative work. Woolf recognised these difficulties, and despite her 'preference for marginal geographical locations', she was wary of pastoral and landscape writing (Scott, 2012, pp.111-112). This wariness resonates with Alpers' advocacy of the double perspective, where textual characteristics considered typical of

the pastoral genre point to a hidden tension that complicates generalised meanings.

Woolf was inspired by natural landscapes because they ‘stimulated her creativity and supported a sense of freedom’ (Scott, 2012, p.112). She sought features within landscapes to incorporate their qualities into the expression of character within her novels; her diaries are similarly littered with pastoral sketches. The modernists understood landscapes as inhabited spaces, an understanding that extended to the city, as the shuttling between natural and manmade landscapes became a feature of modernist literature. World War One dramatically altered the relationship between person and land, and the idyllic representation of landscapes inhabited by shepherds in a state of carefree reverie was challenged. Consequently, the understanding of *how* subjects connect to the spaces they inhabit began to expand.<sup>83</sup> These changing attitudes were expressed in literary experimentations by emphasising the perspective of the worker (the herdsman) and how they perceived their relationship with the land. In Woolfian aesthetics, this opens two important trajectories.

Woolf considered the existing pastoral tradition static because it *specifically* represented a scene or image, without working to express experience. She sought an imaginative approach which did not simply render landscape into a scene but drew on its representation to understand character experience and perception. This attitude is reflected in the creative context for *The Waves* and the jacket design of the original publication, which illustrate Woolf’s ambition to represent reality and explore a character’s experience of their environment. An in-novel example is Susan. Her contribution to the soliloquies is dominated by her relationship with her farm and the land she works. Whilst the traditional romantic element of pastoral convention is

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<sup>83</sup> It is within this context that Vaughan Williams composed *The Lark Ascending*. This piece is often associated with a sense of nostalgia, though the broader context of its composition recontextualises romantic longing as an attempt to recover from the ruptures of war.

evident, this is balanced by the realities of Susan's lived experiences, and her communication of the physical and emotional toil of her working life.

The second problematic aspect of pastoral tradition for Woolf is its connection with nationalist identification. Incompatible with her evolving ideas on pacifism and women's rights, Woolf associated nationalism with the promotion of the patriarchy and the justification of national projects, such as war (Scott, 2012, p.114). These associations evoke the historical connection between landscape as the representation of femininity and maternity. As the industrial revolution progressed, nature was converted into a resource for the acquisition of scientific fact and the growth of industry (Hecht, 1995, pp.23-24). The destruction of the natural world reflected the 'reduction of women's social and economic power' and the shift in role from that of 'active provider and nurturer to a submissive body' (Hecht, 1995, p.24).<sup>84</sup> In this paradigm, women and nature are malleable entities within patriarchal discourse, where the representation of landscape in pastoral tradition 'reflects and reproduces ideological power', connecting social order to natural order, thereby justifying and idealising society (Hecht, 1995, pp.23-24).<sup>85</sup>

These tensions can be found in the reception of Bush's music. She is associated with an expression of Englishness that permeates several layers of her performances, from lyrical content to creative influences, biographical details and the accent in her vocal delivery (Moy, 2007, pp.58-72). Similarly, Withers claims the album *Lionheart* communicates a 'specific allegiance to England', creating a territory in the life of the Bushian Feminine Subject (the BFS) involving 'mythologizing ideas

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<sup>84</sup> See Rose *Feminism and Geography* (1993) and Merchant *The Death of Nature* (1990) for further reading. Fabricant's work on sexual rhetoric of eighteenth-century garden design provides useful context on the link between discourses of possession and control (1979).

<sup>85</sup> For further reading refer to Williams *The Country and the City* (2016), Birmingham *Landscape and Ideology* (1986), and Turner *The Politics of Landscape* (1979).



about Englishness and Nationalism' (Withers, 2010a, pp.54). Withers draws upon the political climate into which *Lionheart* was released to contextualise her interpretation of the album, claiming its 'pastoral idealisation of English identity would have appealed to the people who felt the traditional ways of English life were under threat' (Withers, 2010a, p.56). She continues her argument with a discussion of the song 'Oh England My Lionheart' and its communication of a nostalgic, 'idealised sense of home' (Withers, 2010a, p.57). Reading the story of the song, its lyrical content and its arrangement, Withers identifies purity in its expression of an 'idealised, pure, and culturally perfect England' (Withers, 2010a, p.60). Despite identifying an element of subversion that 'undermine[s] the more aggressive aspects of English nationalism that were dominant in political subcultures (the National Front) and music subcultures (fascist punk) of the late 1970s', she argues that the song is nevertheless bound to the nostalgia of its cultural context and provides 'little opposition to the status quo' (Withers, 2010a, pp.60-61).

The reception of Bush as a 'good and obedient daughter' of England permeates the reception of her music (Withers, 2010a, p.61). O'Brien describes Bush's music as 'Innocent Art – childlike rather than childish – painted in bright colours and deeply felt emotional hues', quoting EMI executive Terry Salter characterising the artist as 'the first really English girl singer for a long time' (O'Brien, 2002, p.194). Reynolds and Press make a similar characterisation: 'Bush sings in the sad voice of a child whose vast imagination is already running into the brick wall of the reality principle' (Reynolds and Press, 1995, p.242). Her music features in Young's survey on the concept of 'folk' in the soundscape of Albion as it has developed over successive generations in the British Isles (2010). Young also mentions Bush's childlike imagination, referring to the images of 'English Arcady', the 'plangent vignettes' of

‘Oh England My Lionheart’ performed by a ‘wide-eyed maid of Albion’ (Young, 2010, p.570). Beyond this song, Young connects Bush’s creative influences to differing aspects of English culture, for instance the music of Delius and Vaughan Williams, and the pastoral poetry of Tennyson (Young, 2010, p.571-572). Connecting biographical details to her creative influences and her production techniques, to her album covers and music videos, Young positions Bush’s *The Ninth Wave* as the crystallisation of themes ‘pining for the familiarities of home’ and ‘for reinstatement within a firm identity’ (Young, 2010, pp.572-573).<sup>86</sup> Young does not include *Aerial* in his exploration of Bush, which is a strange omission given the subject of his survey. The language used by Withers, Reynolds and Press, and Young is from the same tradition as the ‘childlike androgyny’ of the 1960s, which emphasised feminine passivity and receptivity as a counter to the hyper-masculinised performances of rock.<sup>87</sup>

A recent publication on music of the British landscape places Bush within a historical moment where land in Britain was being designated and the working practices of farming communities were undergoing procedural and legislative changes (King, 2019, pp.188-196). King focusses his exploration of Bush on her 1985 album, *The Hounds of Love*, beginning with the music video for the single ‘Cloudbusting’, and the site on which it was filmed, Dragon Hill, at The Vale of the White Horse in Oxfordshire, England.<sup>88</sup> King identifies several ‘contemporary signifiers of rural England’ that would have registered with viewers of the video (King, 2019, p.196):

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<sup>86</sup> *Hounds of Love*, released in 1985, is Bush’s fifth studio album, adopting the same format as *Aerial*. The first side of the album is titled *Hounds of Love* and the second, *The Ninth Wave*.

<sup>87</sup> See page 37 from the introductory chapter for further discussion.

<sup>88</sup> King’s study focusses primarily on the imagery in the music video and its evocation of pastoral tradition, and then attends to musical moments in the track, whilst my study focusses on sonic and textual elements. I appreciate that the study of music video necessitates a different interpretative and theoretical framework, and I draw on King’s study here because he recognises the complexity of Bush’s expression of pastoral. For a discussion on music video as a specific artistic genre see Vernallis (2004).

a cobalt blue sky that looms over a lustrous green hill; the fair isle cardigan Bush wears; the tweeds in which her co-star Donald Sutherland is dressed; the vintage car...driving along an empty A road. From the top of Dragon Hill the perfect square fields of arable Oxfordshire are radiant in the sunlight and extend to the horizon (King, 2019, p.196).

Despite these familiar features, he interprets 'Cloudbusting' as a 'less orthodox evocation of the rural past' and finds evidence of the reconfiguration of landscape throughout the album, as it draws upon 'resources of nature and processes them through the newly invented filter of digital sampling' (King, 2019, pp.196-199).

King attends to specific images and musical moments on *Hounds of Love*: the savaged fox on the title track; the sorority of voices on 'The Big Sky' performed by a multitracked Bush in 'what might be termed Albion throat singing'; Bush's sampled voice played backwards on 'Waking the Witch'; the sonar amidst whale song at the end of 'Hello Earth' (King, 2019, pp.201-203). Unfortunately, King does not offer an interpretation of landscape in *A Sky*, and *Aerial* remains unmentioned. Despite this, the connections he makes between Bush and landscape in *Hounds of Love* focus upon tension, rather than nostalgia. He recognises that Bush creates a landscape through the technical capabilities of production and then places her characters within that environment.

Withers, O'Brien, Reynolds and Press, and Young do not draw on the complexity of pastoral history to support or expand their readings. Withers begins to explore tension in *Lionheart's* expression of pastoral, suggesting that Bush was aware of the broader political and ideological context into which her early songs were released. Similarly, she suggests that this early identification evolves over Bush's career, particularly in the 1982 album *The Dreaming*, where the Bushian Feminine Subject tries to 'become post-colonial' (Withers, 2010a, p.88). Withers locates this shift in Bush's adoption of more diverse, creative influences, which she argues rejects the representation of landscape as it was formulated in previous albums. In failing to

account for the complexity of pastoral tradition, Withers' interpretation overlooks the tensions that are inherent in the genre, where King's interpretation recognises and engages this tension.

Both Woolf and Bush demonstrate an awareness of gendered landscapes, expressing evolving sympathies towards the interaction of people and land, and incorporating these discourses into their creative practices. The textual strategies of *The Waves* and *A Sky* highlight the tension in pastoral traditions, and in reflecting Alpers' double perspective challenges the mischaracterisation of pastoralism as idyllic and free from strain. He emphasises that whilst tensions are present throughout the history of pastoral, finding these points is the work of interpretation. He argues that the lives of the 'herdsmen' offers a 'truer idea' of pastoral, an interpretative gap that was seized by the modernist sensibility as the relationship between agent and landscape was reimagined (Alpers, 1996, pp.22). The idealisation of landscape is a fiction and reality of pastoral, where perceived limitation becomes a site for expansion. In this respect, the representative anecdote of pastoral is its fictions but also its contextualisation; the story, creative methods, and the relationship between landscape and agent that underpin its expression.

This connects the expression of pastoral in *The Waves* and *A Sky* to the female pastoral movement (Hecht, 1995; Harrison, 1991; Kolodny, 1984). Kolodny redefines American pastoral by recognising a feminist response to landscape that lies beyond its patriarchal configuration. Harrison develops Kolodny's work, exploring 'twentieth-century women writers' responses to landscape in order to determine whether they are finally able to overcome the pervasive "pastoral impulse" and establish an alternative tradition of their own' (Harrison, 1991, p.2). Hecht extends this form of pastoralism to Woolf's *Orlando*, exploring how Orlando's relationship with landscape is not 'defined

by the manifestations of power exhibited by patriarchy – possession, transformation and naming – but by a kind of mutual or egalitarian support between Orlando and nature’ (Hecht, 1995, p.26). He argues that due to this reciprocity nature is freed from its gendered association, and definitions give way to more complex modes of receiving (Hecht, 1995, p.26).

This mutually supporting environment echoes that of *The Waves* and *A Sky* where a ‘non-hierarchical and non-egotistical’ supportive relationship is a defining quality, and the instances Hecht identifies in *Orlando* are present in comparable forms in each text (Hecht, 1995, p.26). Where Orlando returns to her property, she is recognised and welcomed by the animals on her estate; so too the birds in *The Waves* and *A Sky* reflect the experiences of their human counterparts whilst maintaining their own expressive autonomy. Hecht claims that the depiction of Nature mediates Orlando’s changed relationship with ‘English culture...soothing her wounds and helping her negotiate her position as a woman in patriarchy’ (Hecht, 1995, p.26). This offers an alternative perspective on Withers’ analysis of Bush’s changing commitment to landscape, highlighting how the complex expression of pastoral in *Aerial* combines the romantic sentiments of her earlier career with the tension of *Hounds of Love* identified by King. Hecht also notes how the diversity of nature refuses to validate the Victorian ideal of the family unit and consequently supports Orlando’s struggle to negotiate the social pressure to marry. *The Waves* and *A Sky* express a similar scene of diversity within their environments, replacing dominance with a ‘near genderless landscape of mutual support and empowerment’ (Hecht, 1995, p.23). In this regard, the model of female pastoral reflects Alpers’ double perspective: seeking the tension in idyllic representations of landscape and nature transforms convention and resists the structures of normative definition.

The complex expression of pastoral in *The Waves* and *A Sky* demonstrate the genre's potential to critique and articulate its own social and cultural conditioning. In the reception history of pastoral, this is rarely considered a legitimate trait; rather pastoralism is considered self-indulgent, escapist, and callow, being a

double longing after innocence and happiness, to be recovered not through conversion or regeneration but merely through a retreat... The pastoral longing is but the wishful dream of a happiness to be gained without effort, of an erotic bliss made absolute by its own irresponsibility (Poggioli, quoted in Alpers, 1996, pp.34-35).

The historical characterisation of pastoral, and the language used to describe its meaning, reveals a kinship with androgyny and the historical link connecting the concept to the quest for wholeness. Whilst twentieth-century narratives of androgyny are informed by Woolf's model, their critical consideration is mediated through historical myths of androgyny, which has helped form modern fictions of androgyny.

Whether engaged as a model for sexual integration, liberation or rejected as a patriarchal myth, the language used to talk about androgyny centres around completion, oneness, longing for unity and totality, within which the retreat from difference is an important narrative. The historical trajectory of this language can be traced to the writings of Plato and Ovid, and the 'theosophical visions of man's original state' (Weil, 1992, p.2). These converging traditions claim the androgyne as a 'figure of primordial totality and oneness, created out of a union of opposed forces' (Weil, 1992, p.2). This language mirrors that used to characterise pastoral tradition: nostalgia, a longing to retreat from the intensities of an increasingly industrialised world and the desire to recover lost innocence. The emphasis placed upon unity is conceptually problematic because difference is subsumed and appropriated into desired totality. This has formed a key narrative in androgyny's reception history, including the interpretation of Woolf's model in *A Room*, where female experience

takes a secondary role to the male quest for a ‘totalising consciousness’ (Goldberg, 2006, pp.123-124). It also reflects the narrative of patriarchal dominance in pastoral tradition and discourses of gendered landscape. This shared vocabulary names common characteristics of androgyny and pastoral, however through repeated use they come to enforce conceptual meaning.

Alpers’ double perspective supports the recontextualisation of pastoral convention as it is expressed in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, finding tension in idyllic representations. This shift in perspective is crucial for androgyny, a concept with a historical fiction that is seen to bolster patriarchal authority and reinforce binary logic. The historical connection between androgyny and the totalisation of experience is complicated by the pastoral expression created by Woolf and Bush. Writing about female pastoral in *Orlando*, Hecht claims that the ‘landscape actively obscures the rules and procedures of a patriarchal marriage’ (Hecht, 1995, p.27). The pastoral worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* — identified by ‘listening out’ to the textual and compositional strategies of each work — similarly obscures the conceptualisation of androgyny as the marriage of male and female, and its subsequent representation in the specifically sexed/gendered body of the androgyne.

In this discussion, I have considered the significance of pastoral convention in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Developing from the context offered by the creative background and accompanying artwork, I explored the meaning of pastoralism, drawing upon the work of Alpers to identify the tension and conflict in seemingly idyllic representations of rural life and landscape. This allowed me to establish a connection between pastoral and androgyny, as both are subject to generalised definitions based upon historical narratives. ‘Listening out’ for pastoral expression in

the textual and compositional strategies in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, I characterised the creation of a pastoral environment, finding expressive parallels in technical approach and story. Through this, I interpreted *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of female pastoral, where the mutually supportive relationship between subject and nature lies beyond the gendered landscape of patriarchal discourse. Combining the complexities of Alpers' approach and female pastoral and focussing on *The Waves* and *A Sky* as worlds of multiple minute details, interactions, perceptions and overlapping experience, I reinterpreted androgyny's historical association with unity. This allowed me to interact with some of the most prominent assumptions made of androgyny's meaning, recontextualising their significance through positioning the pastoral setting as fundamental in the interpretation of androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

### Concluding Remarks

This chapter has initiated a comparative analysis between *The Waves* and *A Sky*, focussing on the textual strategies employed by Woolf and Bush, and their significance for interpreting androgyny. Beginning with an exploration of creative background, I considered how the original dust jacket cover for *The Waves* and the album artwork accompanying *A Sky* establishes crucial context for understanding and interpreting key themes in each text. This allowed me to build upon the aesthetic similarities I identified between Woolf and Bush in the previous chapter, whilst finding parallels between the specific expressive environments they create in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Moving from context to content, I explored form, genre and narrative, which allowed me to find comparisons between each text's settings, structure, character perspective, recurring themes and images, and narrative events. To



perceive these similarities, I relied on ‘listening out’ and in doing so, found that Woolf and Bush emphasise the expression of multiple character perspectives through the creation and augmentation of refrains and motifs. This centralised a tension between coherence and diversity in both texts, which I considered as both an extension of Woolf’s original formulation of androgyny as creative ideal in *A Room*, and a response to androgyny’s historical connections to ideologies of wholeness and completion. To further explore this tension, I considered in detail the significance of the pastoral setting, a central theme in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Finding connections between pastoral convention and androgyny, I found that both are connected to an idealised sense of nostalgia. I explored how *The Waves* and *A Sky* intersect with pastoral tradition, and how both texts draw the listener’s ear to the sound of their landscape. Through this, I found an articulation of pastoralism that focusses on the tension, rather than idealisation, of rural life. Identifying this tension, I invited obscurity into androgyny’s historical association with the totalisation of experience.

By ‘listening out’ for androgyny in the creative background, the form, genre and narrative, and in the pastoral setting of *A Sky*, certain musical features — for instance harmonic language, motivic development, the song cycle genre, sampled birdsong, manipulation of phrase length, metre and tempo — struck me as significant. Exploring these features has allowed me to find comparative strategies in *The Waves*, whilst giving me the opportunity to recontextualise traits which are seen to exemplify androgyny. Through this I was able to build upon existing methods from the popular music studies of androgyny, whilst identifying areas for further study. One of these areas is characterisation and the construction of the subject which, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, cannot be separated from the aesthetic or technical expression of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Given this, in the next chapter I will ‘listen out’ for

androgynous expression through the complexities of characterisation.

**Chapter Three**  
**Characterisation**  
**A Disarticulated Polyphony**

In the preceding chapter, I initiated a comparative analysis of androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. To support the identification of parallels between the two texts, I began with a brief synopsis, progressing to an exploration of the creative background and the importance of accompanying artwork for establishing interpretative context. In doing this, I found an aesthetic condition that reflects the textual expression of androgyny in Woolf's *A Room*. Developing this connection, I considered Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies by exploring form, genre and narrative. This allowed me to find parallels in the technical expression of setting, structure, character perspective, recurring themes and images, and narrative events. I attended to how these strategies were revealed by 'listening out', and how they begin to enrich our understanding of androgynous expression. Through a detailed look at pastoralism — a central theme in both texts — I expanded these initial connections, focussing on the tension of the genre as a response to the historical trajectory that associates androgyny with ideologies of nostalgia.

In this chapter, I will attend to the construction of characterisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, revealed in the previous chapter as one of the most significant expressive parallels between the texts. Asking 'who speaks?' and 'who sings?', I analyse the aesthetic and technical expression of characterisation to explore how each text establishes a formulation of androgyny that abstracts the notion of unitary selfhood by promoting a community of voices. I close the chapter with a close reading of the first interlude from *The Waves* and 'Prelude', the opening song of *A Sky*, to show how Woolf and Bush create a choric community. As the chapter progresses, I

will consider how ‘listening out’ for these textual strategies promotes an alternative context through which to engage androgyny’s historic association with ideologies of unity and wholeness.

#### Characterisation and/as subjectivity: Who speaks? Who sings?

In this section, I ask ‘who speaks?’ and ‘who sings?’ in *The Waves* and *A Sky* to ascertain the type of subjectivity communicated to the reader/listener. I will begin by exploring the importance of the subject in Woolf’s literary aesthetic to consider how her ambitions translate through the textual strategies she adopts in *The Waves*. To support this discussion, I return to the importance of musical techniques in Woolf’s creative agenda — initially discussed in chapter one — specifically, the influence of Beethoven’s compositions upon her understanding of the literary subject. I then explore how Bush creates characters through a series of musical motifs and consider what this reveals about *A Sky*’s expressive subjects. By foregrounding the complex arrangement of musical voices, I identify parallels between the formulation of subjectivity that is created and sustained by the textual strategies of each text.

The expression of a ‘newly-envisioned subjectivity’ where the subject is the ‘real story’, is crucial to Woolf’s experimentations with literary form (Katz, 1995, p.232). As I have discussed, Woolf believed that the recollection of events failed to ask to whom the events happened, and in leaving the subject’s experience an unexpressed quality did not adequately represent life (Woolf, 1982, pp.74-162).<sup>89</sup> This perspective was common in modernist literature as writers sought ways to express the

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<sup>89</sup> Whilst Woolf was writing specifically of the memoir genre, this principle extends to her critical work on the expressive limitations of fiction genres, and her subsequent experimentations with the novel form (see pages 157-162 for further discussion). I would also point the reader to Ryan’s examination of ‘granite and rainbow’, two concepts developed by Woolf in her exploration of biography (Ryan, 2015, pp.26-57).

perception of the subject within a work's narrative structures. These experimentations — particularly the 'reshaping of narrative' — raised questions about 'what shape subjectivity might possess' (Katz, 1995, p.232). Specifically, is the subject located 'beneath the shaping forces of the social world and the shaping order of conventional narrative' thereby 'proposing the self as abstracted...autonomous or transcendent?' or does the 'all-too-malleable openness' of the subject to 'impressions or conventions, mark the absence of any autonomy' (Katz, 1995, pp.232-233). This tension is implicit in Woolf's narrative exploration of subjectivity and impacts her depiction of characters, their physical rendering and life experiences.<sup>90</sup> In Woolf's writing, character becomes an explorative function within an evolving conception of subjectivity, informed by several levels of representation and abstraction.<sup>91</sup>

The problem of the subject is one of the central tenets of *The Waves*, and the textual environment — the lack of a fixed narrator, the articulation of group consciousness, the oscillation between soliloquy and interlude — underpins the formal expression of character. However, these differing aspects represents conflicting paradigms in Woolf's exploration of subjectivity. The rendering of speech does not adopt conventional patterns, nor does it allow clear delineation between characters; without the marker of direct speech, the reader is often left struggling to determine which character is speaking. The soliloquies carry the same diction, and the characters

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<sup>90</sup> The notion of biography and autobiography — which parallel the concepts of public and private — permeate *The Waves* and *A Sky* in several ways, from the context of *Aerial*'s release, to Woolf's call for a women's literary tradition, to the interrogation of androgyny's history. I have touched on this at various points in the previous chapters. Biography, autobiography, public and private evoke complex ideologies and conceptualisations of identity and experience. For a comprehensive overview of biographical approaches in relation to Woolf, see Hussey (2007). In musicological traditions, Born's work on critical phenomenology in musical publicness and privateness includes an overview of key debates (2013).

<sup>91</sup> Whilst Woolf was critical of how Edwardian techniques represented the *knowability* of characters, including their placement within social and economic circumstance, her novels and essays explore the full range of characters in association with subjectivity, including the effects of the external upon the internal (and vice versa). She was keen to examine the potential of subjectivity and through her novels offers multiple conceptualisations; for instance, in *A Room* she explores subjectivity and material means. Other examples with different conceptions include *Mrs Dalloway* and *Between the Acts*.

become distinguishable by a series of repeated images or gestures; the sharing of these ‘leitmotifs’ help support evolving narratives.<sup>92</sup>

Whilst Woolf sought a literary form that would allow her to vertically plunge the depths of the mind, *The Waves* is not a master class in the stream-of-consciousness narrative style.<sup>93</sup> The characters’ thoughts are not mediated from mind to page in the form of fluid monologues that comment on the role of the individual, and *The Waves* interrogates stream-of-consciousness as a necessary evolutionary step in the development of literary narratives. Where Woolf’s earlier novels submerge the consciousness of the narrator within the characters, providing personal and political social observations, the configuration in *The Waves* is more complex.<sup>94</sup> The reader is presented with six (seven including Percival) named characters; their verbal utterances are stylistically detached and non-colloquial, declaring the ‘stuff’ of their everyday lives in a disengaged, unemotional manner. The soliloquies read as a series of observations, rather than narratives about life being lived. Where stream-of-consciousness concerns the private worlds of the individual mind, this is not the agenda driving the narratives of *The Waves*. In lieu of a stable, knowable expression of subjectivity is the modulation of extremities, oscillating between personal and private, conscious and unconscious, individual and collective (Cuddy-Keane, 2007, p.21).

Graham claims that Woolf’s departure from narrative convention is

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<sup>92</sup> Common themes and images include Bernard – language, making phrases; Susan – plants, animals, nature; Rhoda – water; Neville – poetry; Jinny – bodily gestures; Louis – history (see appendix 1, table 1).

<sup>93</sup> Stream-of-consciousness is a form of interior monologue coined by psychologist William James in 1890 and was pioneered as a narrative style in the literature of Dorothy Richardson. As the literary representation of a character’s thought, stream-of-consciousness can include the ‘intervention of a summarizing and selecting narrator’, the impressions and perceptions of the character and a violation of the ‘norms of grammar, syntax, and logic’ (Baldick, 2008, p.318). Other literary examples are James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) and Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway* (1925).

<sup>94</sup> See for example *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

exemplified by her management of verb tenses (Graham, 1970, p.194). The soliloquies are dominated by the pure present, a form of the present tense rarely used to convey everyday speech or a character's patterns of thought. Graham uses the example 'I go' from *The Waves*, contrasting it with the progressive form 'I am going' which occurs more naturally in speech (Graham, 1970, p.194). Where the pure present is used, it refers to two types of activity. 'The first is an action that is external but has no necessarily fixed location in time', for which Graham cites the description of habitual actions as an example (Graham, 1970, p.194). 'The second is an activity that is internal, such as "I believe", "I feel" ...activities exempt from any...fixed duration or location in time' (Graham, 1970, p.194). The pure present allows Woolf to impress a character's behaviour and their actions, whilst suspending the sense of time through which it occurs. This makes external actions seem momentary, regardless of their actual duration; 'they happen so rapidly that we feel them recede into the past even as they occur' (Graham, 1970, p.195).

Despite being a form of the present tense, the pure present 'inclines towards the future...for it seems to rob [actions] of their psychological substance, their felt duration' (Graham, 1970, p.195). Woolf draws upon this tension to narrate action in *The Waves*, realising her early ambition of telling the story of a life all at once with the obliteration of time.<sup>95</sup> The effect across the soliloquies is culminative as external actions are intensified by a rush of verbs.<sup>96</sup> The pure present generates the internal and external impressions of characters' scrutinising their actions. Graham argues that this

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<sup>95</sup> Tracing the stages of creative development shows how Woolf came to use the pure present in *The Waves*. I have explored these stages in previous chapters but would point the reader to Graham (1970) for a more detailed account.

<sup>96</sup> Graham demonstrates the effects of the pure present upon the telling of external actions by transposing a passage from *The Waves* — Susan making raisin bread in her kitchen from soliloquy three — into past tense. In the transposed version, Susan recalls the actions she took to make the raisin bread, which allows the reader to keep a 'clear notion of the person performing this present action' (Graham, 1970, p.195).

creates an ‘aura of the meditating mind’; as character response to external action is removed and objective, they are witness to life, ‘narrating...under some obscure compulsion’ (Graham, 1970, p.196). Consequently, the reader is immersed in a suspended present. Events are viewed ‘from within’, and only that which is discernible to the character can be discerned by the reader, ‘achieving his detachment from the character mainly through symbolic detail and structural juxtaposition’ (Graham, 1970, p.204). The soliloquies present a series of contemplations; each character offers the ‘remembrance of his sensations, actions, memories, thoughts, and feelings’ rendered into the same style: a character’s voice is both their own and each other’s (Graham, 1970, p.204).

The created effect is akin to a literary tapestry; a group of interconnected voices representing the culmination of Woolf’s ambitions for the literary expression of experience. In chapter one, I explored approaches to intermedial analysis and offered initial context on the importance of music for modernist writers, including Woolf. This has specific significance for *The Waves*, as Woolf’s diaries and letters indicate that music — specifically Beethoven’s late sonatas and quartets — provided both technical and expressive inspiration for the text’s composition:

I do a little work on it [*The Waves*] in the evening when the gramophone is playing late Beethoven sonatas (Woolf, quoted in Clements, 2005a, p.163).

It occurred to me last night while listening to a Beethoven quartet that I would merge all the interjected passages into Bernard’s final speech, and end with the words O solitude (Woolf, 2008d, p.291).

The second entry is dated December 1930 and coincides with the second redrafting of *The Waves* and its major restructuring. The string quartet in question is Opus 130 in B-flat major, including the Grosse Fugue, Opus 133.

Within his own artistic discipline, Beethoven’s late period is melodically, harmonically, formally, and rhythmically experimental and innovative. Like Woolf,



he worked to test the limits of expression in his own tradition. As Woolf reworked moments of *The Waves*, repeatedly placing her characters in different scenarios, exposing them to different possibilities, so Beethoven experimented with thematic development, expanding melodic material in multiple contexts within a piece's overall structure. Manipulating the techniques of counterpoint allowed Beethoven to create several musical subjects in increasingly complex textures, testing the limits of form amidst a harmonic language that emphasised chromaticism and dissonance. He resisted and expanded the formal expectations of his medium by rejecting traditional harmonic developments, suspending the anticipation of resolution and manipulating musical form. Woolf's diary entry from 1930 suggests that the concept of coherence expressed by Beethoven influenced the development of *The Waves*, particularly the interconnection of multiple voices and themes contained within one musical work.

Writing on the Overtura from the *Grosse Fugue*, Solomon makes the following observations on the piece's aesthetic:

It presents a labyrinthian process, a set of apparent dead ends, with each segment apparently in search of a beginning, a path to the fugue. One by one, disparate motifs burst into view and abruptly break off; it is, in Kerman's description, as though the composer were hurling 'all the thematic versions at the listener's head like a handful of rocks' (Solomon, 2004, p.241).

Solomon goes on to note that order emerges from the 'splintered chaos', the 'fragments coalescing into a gigantic three-part fugue, as a coherent universe is assembled from improbable ingredients' (Solomon, 2004, p.241). The Overtura offers the listener a representation of creation, of 'fracture and assembly', leading to a double fugue and culminating in thematic convergence (Solomon, 2004, p.241).<sup>97</sup> Beethoven's compositional techniques presented Woolf with an expressive style capable of accommodating multiple voices that are not bound for resolution; the effect

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<sup>97</sup> See Kerman's *The Beethoven Quartets* for critical discussions on composition, style and historical significance (1979).

created is one of an integrated whole exposed to abstraction. Whilst critical views on the influence of Beethoven's work upon Woolf are varied, the connection is nevertheless important for the insight it offers into the impact of music upon her literary aesthetics.<sup>98</sup>

Clements argues that the importance of Beethoven's music for Woolf's literary aesthetic is not a case of straightforward influence and is more productively understood as an 'intermedial (or quasi-intertextual) link, an exchange of ideas' (Clements, 2005a, p.163). Clements' point of view is supported by an explicit reference to Beethoven within Bernard's final soliloquy:

I went, swinging my stick, into a shop, and bought – not that I love music – a picture of Beethoven in a silver frame. Not that I love music but because the whole of life, its masters, its adventurers, then appeared in long ranks...behind me; and I was the inheritor (Woolf, 2008a, p.212).

Here, Beethoven is named with Byron, Shelley and Dostoevsky as Bernard considers the power of tradition and its accumulation of treasures. Both Woolf's critical essays and her fiction demonstrates her suspicion of the canon of masters and the power they wield over tradition, so she would perhaps be inclined to focus on Beethoven's creative process rather than the 'conception of him as an elite' (Clements, 2005a, p.165). Inspiration as exchange impacts the nuances of technique including form and thematic development but it also impacts conceptual meaning. Through her own listening experience, Woolf maintained an awareness of the potential of musical form to 'drive articulation/utterance in ways that are significantly different from assertion and explanation' (Varga, 2014a, p.12).

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<sup>98</sup> For a study on the transformation of musical sound into words see Clements (2005a). Clements includes an analysis of how Bernard from *The Waves* enacts the form of Beethoven's *Grosse Fugue*, opus 133. Other studies exploring the influence of Beethoven upon *The Waves* are Sutton (2015), Varga (2014b), Jacobs (1993) and Levin (1986). Woolf's work has also been interpreted alongside other composers, for instance Wagner (Sutton, 2015; Marcus, 1977; Blisset, 1963); Schoenberg (Schulze, 1992; Levin, 1986); Stravinsky (Haller, 1993) and Cage (Cuddy-Keane, 2000).

The emphasis on rhythm, sound and the interaction of multiple voices in *The Waves* recalls musical form and supports Woolf's aim to express the running in and out of voices representing the movement of waves. This, however, highlights the complexity of medium: where music can express a polyphony of sound through contrapuntal voicings, the simultaneous exclamations of multiple voices is not easily incorporated into literary form. Despite this, the statement, variation and development of musical themes characteristic of Beethoven's music is identifiable in Woolf's creation of character in *The Waves*. The impersonal uniformity of their expression, the reader's coming to know through thematic content, the swapping, sharing and development of images and gestures are musically inspired ways of expressing experience. Music can sustain the individual, 'the patterns that define single sounds and tonalities, the solvent of single moments and experiences', and this functions in *The Waves* as a 'form of evolving consciousness...each character increasing in self-awareness of themselves and one another' (Levin, 1986, p.220). Woolf herself highlights this connection when exploring ways to make a character come together:

behind the cotton wool is hidden a pattern; that we – I mean all human beings – are connected with this; that the whole world is a work of art; that we are parts of the work of art. *Hamlet* or a Beethoven quartet is the truth about this vast mass we call the world;...we are the words, we are the music; we are the thing itself (Woolf, 1982, p.84).

Writing to Elizabeth Trevelyan in 1940, Woolf reiterates this sentiment, noting how she conceives of her writing as music before 'abstracting it into themes' so she may hold together the 'mass of details' (Woolf, quoted in Clements, 2005a, pp.160-161). In the same letter, she details how she attempts to state her thematic material in the first chapter — which relates to the exposition in musical form — before introducing the developments and making all themes and variations sound together, recapitulating her introductory material in the last chapter. Whilst this letter was

written nine years after the publication of *The Waves*, it offers insight into the impact of music upon Woolf's literary practice. Its contrapuntal nature, disparate themes and motifs offer the possibility of thematic evolution whilst sustaining an interconnected whole. Through this, the fragmentary but continuous experience of subjectivity finds aesthetic expression.

To allow me to draw parallels between the formulation of subjectivity communicated by Woolf and Bush, I will now explore *A Sky*'s expression of characterisation by focussing on the complexity of voices. As the discussion progresses, I will point to moments of overlap between the texts, before offering some general comments on the type of subjectivity Woolf and Bush create in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

The textual strategies underpinning the expression of characterisation in *The Waves* offers a formulation of subjectivity that is characterised by instability, awareness and an openness to the presence of others. This emphasises a state of multiplicity that is dependent upon the interaction and interconnection of diverse characters, a formulation which is identifiable in *A Sky*. The song cycle form adopted by Bush for *A Sky* creates a space where characters are enabled in their explorations of selfhood, both individual and collective, and her techniques reflect the expressive possibilities of musical composition admired by Woolf.

The characters in *A Sky* are not identified by name and become known to the listener through a series of motifs and themes, each associated with melodic, rhythmic and textural qualities.<sup>99</sup> As Woolf creates leitmotifs for her characters in *The Waves*,

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<sup>99</sup> I have named the characters to facilitate my discussion, and my choice of name reflects how they are represented in the cycle. For instance, 'the blackbird' and 'the wood pigeon' reference the sampled sound marking their first presentation (see appendix 1, table 2, and appendix 2 for further details).

Bush introduces three primary motifs — associated with the characters of the wood pigeon, the narrator and the chorus (Figure 10) — in *A Sky*'s opening songs that recur in varied forms as the cycle progresses.<sup>100</sup>

1) Wood pigeon motif

2) Narrator opening theme

3) Chorus opening theme

**Figure 10 – Character motifs**

The wood pigeon motif is introduced in ‘Prelude’ (0:10), and both the narrator’s opening theme and the chorus are first heard in ‘Prologue’ (0:20 and 2:28 respectively). As the reader of *The Waves* is encouraged to build a relationship with the characters through attentive engagement, *A Sky* gradually introduces its listener to a series of principal characters by integrating their motifs within several compositional layers. As in *The Waves*, this includes a practice where motivic and thematic narratives are shared between characters to create a consistently developmental environment. This leads to a lack of dramatic impetus and the listener comes to know through aural and lyrical gestures the events that unfold throughout the cycle. Consequently, knowing the speaking subject with certainty is problematic. Even in moments where the lyrics mimetically articulate an event — for instance, the description of the painter painting in ‘An Architect’s Dream’ — there is little direct

<sup>100</sup> Appendix 2 shows transcriptions of the primary motifs, including examples of their variations.

engagement with the action. The narratives, therefore, are not prescriptive, and stylistically offer less definition than those in *The Waves*.

Where the reader's attention to the soliloquies reveal specific events in the lives of the characters in *The Waves*, the external events in *A Sky* are vaguely detailed, communicated primarily through the interaction of musical themes. As the character soliloquies are 'rendered in the same style' (Graham, 1970, p.196), Bush creates a comparable uniformity within her own medium by establishing character presence through motifs and themes. This echoes Woolf's use of the pure present tense in creating conflict between external action and internal response; the detachment from personal response emphasises character immersion into experience. Through this, Bush creates a microcosmic culture containing multiple divergent perspectives in a contrapuntal form. The technical foundations upon which Woolf and Bush build their expression of characterisation creates a state of tension and instability that questions the role of knowable narrator. As this asks, 'who speaks?' in *The Waves*, it asks, 'who sings?' in *A Sky*.

In literary traditions, *voice* refers to the technical aspects of an author's style. Whilst this distances voice from the acoustic sphere, the aesthetic influence of impersonality and musical form allows Woolf to resist the traditions of her medium. As the carrier of authorial expression, voice is retrieved from linguistic traditions that claim it is the 'guarantor of truth and self-presence, from which springs the familiar idea that the voice expresses self and identity' (Weidman, 2015, p.233). This is connected to the materiality of the voice and the physicality of vocal production. In historical models of the voice, as offered for example by Rousseau (1998) and Locke (2003), the materiality of vocal expression is considered secondary to the message behind the utterance. Consequently, materiality is contextualised as a disruptive force

that threatens the sovereignty of the subject. This extends to theorisations that interrogate the sovereign subject by stressing the deconstructive potential of vocality.<sup>101</sup> Accentuating the secondary function of the voice emphasises its disruptive potential in challenging assumptions of meaning, and this includes the vocal production of gendered subjects, within which the female voice is contextualised as an ‘inarticulate vocality’ when compared to the authority of the male voice (Weidman, 2015, p.234).

The examination of the social and cultural production of gender has led to an interrogation of the role of voice in Western practices of music, where the question of voice is arguably more complex; as Abbate notes, music’s voices are ‘stubborn’ (Abbate, 1996, p.12). The dependency upon live and/or recorded performance means there is no straightforward way to account for musical voices. Where literary voices can be located within the grammatical function of a text, even formalist readings of voice and music are unable to adequately show the multiple manifestations in an individual piece (Abbate, 1996, p.12). This is the consequence of music’s multiple modes, which shift between performers and performances, and owing to an impossible range of variables affecting the articulation of voice, musical voices occupy a fluid space. Despite these complexities, drawing on the work of Cone (1982) and Abbate (1996) can help us think about the complex question that is ‘who sings?’ in *A Sky*.

Cone’s *The Composer’s Voice* is an influential musicological study that asks: ‘If music is a language, then who is speaking?’ (Cone, 1982, p.1).<sup>102</sup> Fundamental to

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<sup>101</sup> This is exemplified by French feminist traditions, where vocal materiality imagines a ‘maternal’ voice to create a site of resistance to the subjugation of female vocality (Irigaray, 1985; Kristeva, 1980). Similarly, Barthes claims the ‘grain of the voice’ as the locus of musical enjoyment and the expression of meaning through a material vocality (1992), where deconstructionist traditions emphasise the disruptive force of the voice and its capacity to destabilise and challenge the concept of a stable subject (Derrida, 2011, 2001).

<sup>102</sup> Cone is primarily concerned with opera and accompanied song, although his work is becoming influential in the study of popular music, for example Nicholls (2007), Moore (2005) and Gelbart (2003).

Cone's thesis is the simultaneous presentation of three 'persona-like figures' in vocal music: the 'vocal', 'virtual' and 'implicit' personas (Cone, 1982, pp.17-18). The first refers to the poetic 'I', a central vocal persona, or protagonist, of which there might be several. The second, 'virtual' persona, is the musical accompaniment that frames the speaking characters. Finally, the combination of the 'vocal' and 'virtual' personas forms the 'implicit' persona, which represents 'a persona of the composer' (Cone, 1982, p.18). The 'implicit' persona is the composer's voice as it is expressed in the context of a specific composition.

Throughout *The Composer's Voice*, Cone explores if the vocal persona is conscious of the act of singing, and in doing so, he finds the presence of conscious and subconscious thought represented by the relationship between melody and words. Melody gives insight into the subconscious of the protagonist(s), whilst the words indicate conscious thought. Cone also finds the articulation of a singing character's subconscious feelings and motivations in the musical accompaniment. Within this, the composer's voice, or 'implicit' persona, is an ordering force, and the characters are not diegetically aware of the author's guiding presence.

Cone revised his thinking over the course of his career and replaced the triad of personae with 'a unitary vocal-instrumental protagonist that is coextensive with the persona of the actual composer of the song' (Cone, 1992, pp.181-182). Whilst Cone places a greater emphasis upon the composer's voice as the guiding intelligence in a musical work in his revisions, the composer maintains a dominant role even in his earlier theorisations. In centralising the composer as a hegemonic persona, Cone's theory has been subject to scrutiny.

Abbate reads Cone's understanding on the function of voice in music as 'monologic', and she is wary of the notion that music's voices emanate from a 'single



composing subject' (Abbate, 1996, pp.11-12). She favours 'an aural vision of music animated by multiple, decentered voices localized in several invisible bodies', exploring the appearance and disappearance of voices over time, and the ways in which they 'manifest themselves...as different *kinds* or modes of music that inhabit a single work (Abbate, 1996, pp.12-13). In Abbate's interpretative approach, music's voices cannot be uncovered if their origination is assumed to be from a single source. Quite the opposite, she seeks moments that disturb or disrupt the hegemony of the composer's persona, exploring how these fractures lead to the emergence of new voices.

Abbate's understanding of voices in music are shaped by prosopopoeia reconstrued in an 'auralized form' (Abbate, 1996, p.13). This feeds into the overarching ambition of her work, which is that 'certain gestures experienced in music constitute a narrating *voice*' (Abbate, 1996, p.19). Given that she is concerned with exploring the complexities of music's narrative voices — within which she considers analytical methodology, the relationship between music and language, the importance of the body and the sociocultural context of her chosen pieces and composers — Abbate seeks to 'hear the discursive distance that is a sonorous signal for music's voices' (Abbate, 1996, p.28). Practices of listening are crucial in Abbate's approach as she promotes attentive engagement to the intricate musical environment from which voices take 'audible flight' (Abbate, 1996, p.29).

Cone's and Abbate's understanding of voice appear counterintuitive, particularly in relation to the different emphasis they place upon the centrality of the composer. Cone prioritises the composer as a form of resonating intelligence, where Abbate challenges this dominance. Despite this tension, both theorisations resonate with *A Sky*.

In *A Sky*, the narrator character is the most obvious representation of Cone's poetic 'I', the vocal persona. Bush's performance as the narrator character is centralised in that her vocals provide an audible anchor through which the experience of the song cycle is communicated to the listener. The introduction of the narrator in 'Prologue' initiates the presentation of her associated motif into the cycle's musical setting and contextualises her as a speaking character, who delivers most of the lyrical content. Similarly, the consistency of Bush's vocal performance as the narrator contextualises this character's experiences as the driving force of the cycle's overarching narrative. In this sense, the musical setting that frames the narrator as the poetic 'I' is the 'virtual' persona; it sets in place the narrator as the central speaking character in *A Sky*. The structure of Cone's triad of personae — and his later theoretical revisions — argues that the combination of the vocal and virtual personas represents a persona of the composer, and there are several ways a persona of Bush might be identified in *A Sky*. Her vocal performance as the narrator, which includes the establishment and development of a musical motif specific to the character, could represent a persona of Bush. This would be supported to a degree by the creative background to *A Sky*, the context provided by *Aerial*, and Bush's curiosity about the communicatory potential of birdsong.<sup>103</sup>

I would argue that whilst the narrator is centralised as an expressive conduit in the cycle, repeat listening reveals a musical setting that negates a claim to monologic identity, whether this is a main protagonist, or persona of Bush. The compositional strategies adopted in *A Sky* — particularly the representation of character creation and interaction through musical motifs, their development through different voices and their recurrence in instrumental accompaniments — resonates with Abbate's

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<sup>103</sup> See pages 143-154 in chapter two.

interpretation of ‘decentered voices’ which manifest as different ‘modes of music’ in a single work (Abbate, 1996, pp.12-13). In *A Sky* these voices are conjured through lyrics (spoken and sung) and music, including sampled sound. Consequently, the interpretation of *A Sky* as the story of one character’s experience is disturbed and disrupted by Bush’s compositional techniques, because the interaction of voices expands the vocal spaces and denies any character a dominant perspective. This occurs through a gradual process which builds the presence of multiple characters through increasing layers of interconnection. The effect not only disturbs the notion of a centralised character, but it continually dislodges the expectations of the listener through shifting the foundation upon which they build their understanding of character personalities.

Narratively, the characters demonstrate an awareness of their capacity to interact and engage through song, and I will explore the importance of this throughout this chapter, particularly in the closing section. It is, however, an important point to raise here, because it reveals much about the formulation of subjectivity that is communicated through characterisation. The lyrical and musical content of *A Sky* indicate the character’s immersion into their environment and their responsiveness to each other. Consequently, the narrator becomes one of several narrating voices, as all character’s impact and influence the narrative and musical creation of the sound-world. Beyond the interior world of *A Sky*, the construction of characterisation also challenges the interpretation of Bush’s persona as dominating presence. While Bush’s vocal presence is discernible throughout the cycle, the textual expression of character moves the listener farther away from her persona as implicit author and it is difficult to map any of the characters onto her directly. In this respect, the compositional creation of characterisation frames the listener’s experience of the cycle, and realises

the experiential context created by the artwork accompanying *A Sky* in the album's release.<sup>104</sup>

Drawing on the work of Cone and Abbate helps interpret the complexity of voice and its connection to character expression in both *The Waves* and *A Sky*. At the start of this section, I identified similarities between Woolf's and Bush's textual construction of character, which I connected to a formulation of subjectivity characterised by instability, awareness and openness to the presence of others. Cone's understanding of voice is counterintuitive to Woolf's wider literary aims — particularly her theory of impersonality and her wariness of authorial control — however, engaging his work alongside Abbate's helps tease out the complex expression of musical personas. Their research, when allowed to resonate with one another, emphasises the importance of lending an ear to the textual creation of character and the different ways an individual text might disrupt itself.

For instance, both *The Waves* and *A Sky* begin by introducing the reader/listener to their characters. They are presented alongside their associated motifs and themes, giving the reader/listener a sense of the character's identities, however the process of 'getting to know' is quickly compromised by a focus on the abstraction, oscillation and fragmentation of subjectivity. Consequently, *The Waves* and *A Sky* lack an authoritative consciousness and are 'constructed not as the whole of single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other' (Bakhtin, 1984, p.63). In this regard, the questions I posited at the start of this discussion — 'who speaks?' and 'who sings?' — can be answered 'everyone and no-one' (Naremore, 1973, p.75).

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<sup>104</sup> See pages 153-154 from chapter for further discussion.

In this discussion, I have explored the technical and aesthetic expression of characterisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky* to identify a comparable formulation of subjectivity. I mediated this through the questions ‘who speaks?’ and ‘who sings?’ to find the complexities of character expression in each text. In discussing Woolf, I focussed upon her use of the pure present tense to focus the reader’s attention on character perceptions in a suspended present. I then considered the influence of Beethoven’s compositional techniques upon the technical expression of *The Waves*, particularly the interaction of multiple diverse voices within an integrated whole. Having found a formulation of subjectivity characterised by instability and fragmentation, I identified a similar expression in *A Sky*. Finding parallels between Woolf’s and Bush’s textual strategies, I explored the complexities of musical voices by drawing on the work of Cone and Abbate. In doing this, I considered how Bush challenges the ideal of authoritative consciousness by establishing character personas only to disturb and disrupt their stability, thereby opening additional vocal spaces. I then connected this to *The Waves*, to identify a formulation of subjectivity that is multiple, fragmented and resistant to the dominance of an authoritative consciousness.

In the next section, I will develop the formulation of subjectivity I have identified in *The Waves* and *A Sky* by exploring its significance for androgynous expression. To do this, I will ‘listen out’ to consider how Woolf’s and Bush’s abstraction of unitary selfhood can help disarticulate the myths of unity that surround androgyny’s reception.

#### Listening to the Androgyne: Disarticulating the myths of unity

In the previous section, I explored how the technical and aesthetic expression of characterisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky* highlights a formulation of subjectivity

defined by instability, abstraction and fragmentation. Focussing on the textual expression of voice, I found that both texts resist the presence of authoritative consciousness, promoting instead an environment of multifarious character expression. In this section, I delve deeper into the ways Woolf and Bush resist the ideology of the self as stable entity, exploring the significance of this resistance for the interpretation of androgynous expression. I begin by exploring themes of totalisation and unity in *The Waves*, focussing on the overlap between interpretations of Bernard's final soliloquy and androgyny. To interrogate these associations, I will examine how Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies communicate the loss of self through the disarticulation of 'I'. By 'listening out', I explore how the community of selves expressed in *The Waves* and *A Sky* supports a reconsideration of the myths of unity that surround androgyny's conceptualisation. To support my readings, I will draw on the deconstructionist theories of Derrida and Nancy.

Woolf's expression of character in *The Waves* points to a formulation of subjectivity that disrupts the notion of selfhood as united and stable. Despite the textual strategies employed by Woolf, and her motivations for writing *The Waves*, a common interpretative thread in Woolfian studies reads the text as the expression of one totalising consciousness. There are several formal and technical features that would support this interpretation: from the influence of musical techniques upon Woolf's textual composition, the articulation of multiple voices contextualised in an overarching structure, the repetition of central themes and images, and perhaps, most significantly, the final soliloquy.

Told entirely from Bernard's perspective and documenting his 'summing up' of life, the final soliloquy presents a theoretical hurdle when interpreting androgynous expression in *The Waves*. This is further complicated by Woolf's own account of her

creative process, particularly her desire to merge the soliloquies into Bernard's summation.<sup>105</sup> This realisation impacts the formal, stylistic and thematic expression of Bernard's speech. Where the soliloquies are dominated by the pure present tense, the final soliloquy is written in the past tense, and the technical expression of Bernard's reflections on life and his friends draws the thematic material of other characters — which includes the consolidation of the text's central themes — into his perception.<sup>106</sup> Images from the interludes are also woven into his soliloquy, and Bernard is consequently afforded the role of narrator with omniscient presence. This could be perceived as Woolf breaking with some of the more complex expressive traits of *The Waves* so she may write the story of one presiding consciousness, within which the other characters represent different aspects of Bernard's personality.

The reading of *The Waves* as the story of Bernard is connected to another common association in Woolfian studies: Bernard as the representation of Woolf's vision of the androgynous writer (Minow-Pinkney, 2011; Flint, 1994; Sypher, 1983). This interpretation owes much to Bernard's understanding of language as the creation of meaning.<sup>107</sup> Minow-Pinkney argues that whilst all the characters confront questions concerning identity and its loss, Bernard is 'most acutely aware of the vagrant nature of selfhood' (Minow-Pinkney, 2011, p.159). He comes to experience his self as 'multiple and heterogeneous', which Minow-Pinkney reads as Bernard's 'megalomaniac inflation of the ego', and contrasts with Rhoda's character, who agonises at her persecution by those who can sustain self-unity (Minow-Pinkney,

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<sup>105</sup> Refer to page 200 for a transcript of the diary entry.

<sup>106</sup> See Graham for an account of how Woolf developed Bernard's character during the drafting and editing process (1970).

<sup>107</sup> Throughout his life, Bernard carries aspirations to be a great novelist and he collects phrases which he intends to turn into stories. Bernard mediates and controls his experience of the world through language, although he comes to realise that language cannot fully render reality (see appendix 1, table 1). Much of Bernard's discussion of language broadly reflects Woolf's own experiments with literary form.

2011, p.168). Minow-Pinkney does note that Bernard's megalomaniacal ego disseminates as he comes to endure the same conflicted experiences of selfhood as his friends, and as a result, he incorporates the perceptions of others in the final soliloquy.

Minow-Pinkney's study is concerned with the possibility of feminine writing, which she argues is made possible in *The Waves* because of Bernard's androgyny (Minow-Pinkney, 2011, p.184). She characterises Bernard's androgyny as the oscillation between his command over language and its expressive fallibility, the former associated with masculinity, and the latter with femininity.<sup>108</sup> Through Bernard, Minow-Pinkney offers a formulation of androgyny as the 'permanent alternation between the formation and dissemination of the self'; the 'dangerous, impossible dialectic is the existential reality of androgyny' (Minow-Pinkney, 2011, p.186). This 'impossible dialectic' is reinforced by the last line of *The Waves* – '*The waves broke on the shore*' (Minow-Pinkney, 2011, p.186):

The last sentence of the novel sustains the impossible dialectic of an androgynous feminine writing to the very end, formally reintegrating a subject that it thematically disseminates (Minow-Pinkney, 2011p.186).

Representative of wider discourses that connect Bernard to androgyny, Minow-Pinkney's analysis raises an important conceptual issue; that Bernard, this 'self-consciously androgynous spirit', is housed in a male body (Sypher, 1983, p.191).

Bernard's presence highlights ongoing questions regarding the relationship between male and female subjectivities in *The Waves*. The merging of themes and images into Bernard's final soliloquy reflects the historical trajectory that frames androgyny as the masculine elevation of consciousness. From this perspective, the female characters are subsumed into Bernard's consciousness so he may achieve the

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<sup>108</sup> Minow-Pinkney draws upon a psychoanalytical framework to explore feminine writing in Woolf's novels, focussing specifically upon Kristeva's theorisation.



role of androgynous writer. This implies the silencing of the female body, voice and experience, which is reinforced by the outcome of Rhoda's and Bernard's individual struggles. Where Rhoda experiences acute social and personal dissociation which culminates in her suicide, Bernard finds a way through his trauma and elevates his creative spirit.

The understanding of *The Waves* as the expression of one presiding consciousness is conceptually problematic for androgyny, particularly in instances where interpretations hinge upon Bernard's sex.<sup>109</sup> Focussing upon the interaction of the characters as male and female returns androgyny to the specificity of the sexed body, and this is problematic for my thesis, which seeks to focus on textual strategies and 'listening out' as an interpretative approach to androgynous expression. I have raised the issue of Bernard's final soliloquy because androgyny is implicated within these discussions, and because I believe Woolf's textual strategies negate interpretations that place him as the central character. Focussing on textual expression allows me to reconsider the emphasis that is placed upon unity in the interpretation of androgyny, whilst simultaneously demonstrating alternative ways to engage the concept's meaning. To do this, I will build upon the formulation of subjectivity I identified in the previous section by 'listening out' to *The Waves* and *A Sky* to explore how each text resists an authoritative consciousness by initiating a process where the self — the 'I' — is deconstructed and disarticulated.

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<sup>109</sup> This reflects critical responses that associate androgyny with male privilege and the subsumption of feminist for masculine progression. It also relates to criticisms of Woolf's formulation of androgyny in *A Room*, particularly as the reconciliation of the sexes. I have discussed these trajectories in the introduction and chapter one, specifically problematising the emphasis placed upon the specificity of sex for its dependence upon an essentialised understanding of self in relation to the body. I also argued that such interpretations fail to account for the complexities of Woolf's textual strategies and her wider aesthetic ambitions.

In Woolfian studies, the character Bernard is often interpreted as the presiding consciousness of *The Waves*, and as a representation of Woolf's androgynous writer. This interpretation is problematic because it suggests a formulation of subjectivity that is unified and knowable. The textual expression of subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Room* interrogates this categorisation, revealing selfhood as a carefully constructed fiction that expresses the 'illusion of solidity' (Katz, 1995, p.238). By focussing on a heterogeneous, non-hierarchical expression of subjectivity, Woolf and Bush initiate a process where a dominant 'I' is deconstructed and disarticulated. Drawing on the work of Derrida and Nancy, I will explore how this process is textually manifested and how it impacts the interpretation of androgyny.

Writing about the deconstructed self in Derridean philosophy, Porritt argues that Woolf's visions of selfhood surpass deconstructionist readings (1992).<sup>110</sup> Where philosophical discourses of deconstruction question the stability and unity of the self, Porritt claims Woolf's formulation of subjectivity moves *through* this territory to the phenomenon of plurality, culminating in the disarticulation of the singular self.

Following Descartes' cogito, 'I think, therefore I am', the self is considered a source of knowledge, an identifiable being providing a secure, solid centre of self-identity. Derrida accepts the dominant model of self as the subject of history, so he may begin the process of deconstruction. His deconstructive technique is a form of textual engagement that exposes communicative limitations by seeking ambivalences that disorientate solidified readings of authorial intention. Through this, Derrida worked to challenge the Cartesian self by interrogating its philosophical construction, thereby questioning the perpetuation of its meaning. Porritt's discussion focusses on the part of this process where the concept and the logic of the sign are destroyed; the

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<sup>110</sup> Derrida's philosophy was also important in Moi's reconsideration of Woolf's formulation of androgyny in *A Room* (see page 86 from the introduction for further discussion).

moment that leads Derrida to suggest that ‘the “self” is not a unified, singular and identifiable entity but is a phenomenon created by human language’ (Porritt, 1992, p.324).

Interrogating the logic in the concept of self-identity – ‘I am I’ – Derrida begins with the mind’s voice. When speaking to oneself, an assumption is made about the relationship between voice and mind; saying ‘I’ creates a referral that is a recognisable reflection of the ‘self’. ‘I am I’ visually represents this referral, where the two ‘I’s surrounding the ‘am’ reflects the being of ‘I’ and vice versa. Derrida refers to this as a play of representation in which the ‘point of origin becomes ungraspable’, the ‘reflection, the image, the double, splits what it doubles’ (Derrida, quoted in Porritt, 1992, p.325). The effect is a multiplication of self-identity, which highlights the lack of a central being making a claim to ‘I’. As a marker of self-identity, the inner voice masks an ‘always already absent presence’ which articulates *différance* (Porritt, 1992, p.325). Derrida takes this deconstructive process further and looks for a way to re-read Saussure’s concept of the signified/signifier, a linguistic model that posits words as ‘signs’, or the articulators of meaning. Where the signifier refers to the process of meaning, the signified refers to that which is named, the content of the signification; the relationship between the two work to construct identity. In search of textual ambivalence, Derrida scrutinised this relationship for a point of ‘cross-over in the signified/signifier function’, which swaps the function of each as a result of ‘reflection/deflection’ (Porritt, 1992, p.325). This disperses the signified (self-identity), leaving only the signifier (‘I’) and revealing the self as a function of ‘I’. This demonstrates the role of the self as the creation and function of language.

Porritt argues that through manipulating the pronoun ‘I’, Woolf questions the stability of the subject (Porritt, 1992, pp.226-331). This same process is identifiable in

*A Sky*, though it has a different presentation. In *The Waves*, 'I' is the most frequently used personal pronoun, usually in conjunction with short, simple sentences. In the soliloquies, it is uttered between the characters and is also fundamental in supporting the effect created by Woolf's use of the pure present tense. The pattern of use is cyclical; 'I' helps to emphasise the wave-like rhythms of the sentences. In *A Sky*, 'I' is used once in 'An Architect's Dream' and is not uttered again until the final track, 'Aerial', where it is lyrically emphasised. 'I' is expressed as the signifier through vocal textures and timbres, rhythmic and melodic emphasis, although the most emphatic expression of 'I' in *A Sky* is the tonal centre.

Rooted in c-sharp minor, this tonality stretches across each song and becomes an aspect of character. Like the repetition of 'I' in Woolf's soliloquies, and the sharing of musical themes and motifs between characters in *A Sky*, the harmonic development wanders from c-sharp minor, creating unsettled, unstable moments. A typical example of this occurs in 'Prologue'. The harmony indicates b major tonality but the harmonies in the bass line suggest g-sharp minor, whilst instrumental moments reinforce c-sharp minor. This harmonic language creates a meditative suspension reminiscent of Woolf's use of the pure present in the soliloquies, and yet in instances where the harmonic language returns to its central tonality, it often does so abruptly. Despite this wandering language, c-sharp minor maintains its presence, whether through the tonal centre of a song, or implied through harmonic complexity, for instance, added notes.

As *The Waves* and *A Sky* progress, the naming 'I' is doubled to create a state of reflection as in Derrida's 'I am I'. Woolf achieves this through linguistic repetition, and Bush through lyrical gestures and the recurrence of musical characters that are gradually opened to different vocal spaces. The combinations of these effects create rings of self-identity that express the multiplication of self. Woolf continues to grow

the repetition of 'I' in the structures of the soliloquies and sentences — 'I shall go; I shall lie; I shall be; I die; I hate; I love; I am nothing' (Woolf, 2008a, p.108) — as Bush continues to add more contrapuntal lines to the cycle, both with an increasing rate of interaction between characters ('Sunset', 'Nocturn', 'Aerial'). On *A Sky*, the narrator, her voice easily discerned at the start of the cycle, begins to interact until her vocal prominence is compromised, and the created musical subjects become less individualised.<sup>111</sup>

'Aerial Tal' signifies an important moment in the deconstruction of 'I'. The track is texturally sparse, consisting of an ostinato piano line built around two chords (e major 7<sup>th</sup> and c-sharp minor) and the narrator's voice and the song of a blackbird (sampled sound). The piano ostinato, which comprises a three-note motif, develops from the wood pigeon motif and incorporates the textural qualities of the blackbird song to create a new musical subject, one that overlaps with the vocal lines. The narrator and blackbird perform in call and response; the narrator's vocal line comprised of stylised imitations of the blackbird song. Interpreted from a Derridean perspective, the exchanges in 'Aerial Tal' express both the erosion of self-identity and the realisation that identity is a linguistic construction. The dispersal of the subject is developmental, with each song articulating a different step in the process; in 'Aerial Tal' language gives way to alternative vocal interactions and utterances, whilst carrying the stylistic traits of the song cycle. Where Woolf's use of 'I' increases in frequency, intensifying to six repetitions in the final soliloquy — 'I rose and walked away – I, I, I; not Byron, Shelley, Dostoevsky, but I Bernard, I even repeated my own name once or twice' (Woolf, 2008a, p.212) — Bush manipulates accepted notions of the voice as a marker of self to deconstruct notions of self-identity.

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<sup>111</sup> This is progressive throughout the cycle, culminating in the final song 'Aerial'. I will consider 'Aerial' shortly and will return to the song for further analysis in chapter four.

Porritt claims ‘the mere activity of language cannot convince us that there is a single presence corresponding with the word ‘I’, a sure inference between language and an identifiable self-entity’ (Porritt, 1992, p.330). She argues that in the gradual repetition of ‘I’, Woolf ‘pluck[s] at the veil of language until a hole is worked through the fragile material’ (Porritt, 1992, p.336).<sup>112</sup> This same effect is created by Bush, though the difference in medium makes it possible for more abstract forms of expression; she can abandon language and its control over self-definition through manipulating the cycle’s character voicings. The characters in *The Waves* and *A Sky* all undergo a process of exploration for the sake of self-identity; through the repetitious stating of the subject ‘I’, however, the perception of self is revealed to be contradictory. Finding the edge of self-entity and crossing over into the ‘I’ points to an overlap between the signified/signifier relationship; a necessary step for the deconstruction of ‘I’ and one that acknowledges a character’s willingness to be exposed to the loss of ‘self’. This provides a different perspective on the relationship between self and experience: experience does not reveal selfhood, nor is the concept of self an interpretation of experience. Approaching the concept of self through engaging its loss destabilises the understanding of self as an identifiable entity.

Whilst Derrida’s deconstructive approach relates to the processes found in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, the ‘method of demonstration’ is different (Porritt, 1992, p.332). Derrida adopts a method that finds a failing in logical construction, where Woolf represents experiences that ‘culminate in the reader’s realisation of the experience’, depending upon how deeply the reader engages with the text and characters (Porritt, 1992, p.332). Similarly, the representation of experience created by Bush depends

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<sup>112</sup> Here, Porritt borrows from Spivak’s preface to *Of Grammatology*. Spivak notes that Derrida attributes to Heidegger’s language ‘a passion for unveiling which has as its object: truth’, and his ‘mise-en-abyme “places in the abyss” any notion of truth as a presence revealed in language’ (Spivak, quoted in Porritt, 1992, p.336).

upon the listener's realisation; a process that asks the listener to 'listen out' to perceive characterisation as an interconnected expressive palette. The instability of self-identity is communicated by manipulating expectations of the represented experiences; the relationship between self and experience is shown to be an 'illegitimate interpretation' (Porritt, 1992, p.332). This is a process of sustained consideration; the reader/listener considers the experience that is represented and will assume there is an experiencing self, although the repetitious articulation of 'I' — whether it be through the direct use of the pronoun in Woolf, or through the manipulation of vocal utterance and harmonic language by Bush — works to disarticulate its meaning.

*A Sky* offers a lyrical representation of this disarticulation in the final song, 'Aerial'. The personal pronoun 'I', largely absent until this point, is a key structural aspect of the lyrics and echoes the conceptual reflection of self-identity; 'I am I' represented as 'I feel I':

I feel I want to be up on the roof  
I feel I gotta get up on the roof

Similarly, this song rarely moves away from the tonic harmony of c-sharp minor, and as I have previously noted, this tonality has the function of a self, an 'I'. In 'Aerial', the harmonic language moves cyclically through inversions with added tones, but strongly emphasised on each beat of the bar. The persistent reinforcement of 'I', lyrically and harmonically, disarticulates any sense 'I' has previously made.

It is through these processes that Porritt claims Woolf's vision of selfhood surpasses Derrida's deconstructionist approach and gathers towards the expression of plurality through disarticulation (Porritt, 1992, p.323). Given the expressive parallels between *The Waves* and *A Sky*, this claim can be extended to Bush, and to interpret this disarticulation as part of an increasingly complex expression of androgyny,

Nancy's theory on the subject helps unpack the relevance of these textual strategies (1993, 2000, 2004, 2007). Nancy emphasises the 'double gesture' in deconstructionist tradition — interrogating structures of power inherent in binary systems to find conceptual expression that does not depend upon the hierarchies of binary thought (James, 2006, p.18). This approach reveals the possibilities of androgyny conceptualised anew because it questions the power of the binary that has defined its meaning.

Nancy's theorisation of subjectivity is reflected in the disarticulation of self in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. He questions the fixity of the subject, arguing that the notion of fixed essence is a product of institutionalisation and centuries of philosophical thought. Like Derrida, he traces this development through deconstructionist approaches to the history of philosophy, beginning with the Cartesian cogito. Nancy claims selfhood is evasive and delicate but is nevertheless a force of displacement. The opposition of static and defined, Nancy considers identity open and energetic; the subject is the world's governance (Ellison, 2015, pp.111-112). He refers to the claim that all theoretical discourses involved with models of subjectivity inadvertently make a claim to the substance of the subject.<sup>113</sup> He inverts the fixity of the subject, and by emphasising the openness in enunciations of identity highlights the impermanence in all declarations of self as 'orientation[s] toward the future' (Ellison, 2015, p.112). When 'I' identify myself through enunciating 'my' intentions, 'I' point to a change in my identity, to something that will be. This adds time and movement to the classical formula of identity,  $x=x$ , thereby contesting the notion of self; enunciations are

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<sup>113</sup> Whilst Nancy is aware that any attempt to postulate a new theoretical discourse on the subject risks the creation of a master subject, he sees this as a necessary risk for setting in motion alternative theoretical pathways (Gratton and Morin, 2015, p.5).



(dis)articulated, opening the lines of identification that constitute identity (Ellison, 2015, p.112).

The moment of enunciation does not represent the subject becoming. To claim this is to reassert an identity with a sub-stratified subject, which implies a master subject. The enunciations are paradoxical double gestures; when a subject announces itself, it is at once withdrawn. This understanding of approach and simultaneous retreat relates to the disarticulated loss of self in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. The experiences of 'I' do not configure the essence of existence that constitutes the self. To assume so would be an illegitimate perception because it requires an essential self through which to negotiate the nature of experience. Nancy considers the gesture of presentation and withdrawal 'an encounter with a violent aporia...a convulsion or a spasm', which constitutes the 'structure of extreme withdrawal' (James, 2006, p.59). In any instance where the subject tries to announce, name or ground itself, or make claims for essence, the aporia is called into play.

This is seen in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, where the androgynous subject is not expressed progressively through statement and deconstruction of the self, but simultaneously through articulation and disarticulation; the articulation of androgynous subjectivity disarticulates the androgynous subject. This is presented through the harmonic language of *A Sky*, which states a tonal centre but destabilises the listener's expectations through a series of added tones and wandering harmonies: the key is presented but is continually withdrawn. Without the aporia, the subject is an identity constituted by an 'aggregation of qualities', a myth or fable (Ellison, 2015, p.112). As the androgynous subject is typically defined by its physicality, it becomes a

self-perpetuating myth, a story with no subject and limited potential for expressive modification.<sup>114</sup>

Nancy articulates the impossibility of the subject through the figure of the speaking mouth, *la bouche*, which is the simultaneous presentation and withdrawal of 'I'. The mouth has no face, it is an opening which forms a ring around the sound of 'I', creating a space that 'opens up an incommensurable extension of thought' (Nancy, 1979, p.161).<sup>115</sup> The mouth is the temporalisation added to the classical formula of identity; it is the convulsion or the structure of extreme withdrawal. This opening configures a space in which the subject is exposed to an exteriority that is in excess of itself. The creation of this space is perhaps a new inscription of existence, 'a singularity that is not subject to the law of the symbolic, the bar of castration, and an economy of lack' (James, 2006, p.61).

Nancy's understanding of space is not an 'objectifiable, mathematizable extension or presence', but rather a 'temporal unfolding', where singularities meet other singularities in a spacing that precedes the logic of self, subject and 'I' (James, 2006, pp.61-62).<sup>116</sup> In this space, the 'singular is plural', and for Nancy this relationality is part of being; being is always being-with (Nancy, 2000, p.32).<sup>117</sup> As

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<sup>114</sup> This is demonstrated in my discussion of androgyny in popular music research, where I explore androgyny's association with specific physical attributes. These expectations also permeate the wider reception of androgyny, including the critical response to Woolf's formulation, the details of which I examined in chapter one.

<sup>115</sup> This can be compared to Beckett's dramatic monologue 'Not I' (1972). I also point the reader to LaBelle's *Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary* for an examination of the mouth as a channel through which the self and world are brought into relation (2014).

<sup>116</sup> This is reminiscent of a *cadre sonore*, which I discussed in the previous chapter.

<sup>117</sup> Nancy's elucidates the condition of being-with through the analogy of a knot (Nancy, 2000, p.5). To understand the secrets of the knot, it must be carefully unravelled: 'on one hand, the strand of meaning is meaningful only once the knot is unravelled; yet on the other, the meaning of the knot itself (tied, untied or cut) is determined by the role the notion of meaning plays in the process of untying itself' (Hutchens, 2005, p.9). Ingold similarly evokes the analogy of the knot as 'symptomatic of the binding of lives in relations of kinship and affinity' (Ingold, 2015, p.20). He too explores the outcome of unravelling the knot's structure: 'each is joined to the other by external contact of adjacency; the other of the knot is implicate, in that the constitutive strands of each knot, as they extend beyond it, are bound into others' (Ingold, 2015, p.15).

the condition of being, 'being singular plural' emphasises a relationality and inter-relationality formulated upon sharing (Nancy, 2000, p.28). The presentation and withdrawal of the self highlights the distributive qualities of sharing, accentuating the division of difference (Raffoul, 2015, p.217). As a result, presence is always shared and it is the addition of movement — figured through the shaping of the mouth — that opens the subject to the co-presence of singularities and creation of communities.<sup>118</sup> Community, therefore, is not a collection of individual subjects who 'bind themselves together on the basis of a shared identity' but is the 'being-with' of singularities (James, 2006, p.177).<sup>119</sup>

Nancy's reading of the mouth as a temporalised unfolding, as the movement that initiates the presentation and withdrawal of the self, and the sharing in a community of singularities is particularly relevant for *The Waves* and *A Sky*. The interaction of voices underpins the expression in subjectivity in each text, and within this, the mouth is an invisible but essential means of dis/articulation. Mouths make possible the exclamations, utterances, speech and songs of the characters. Creating rings of self-identity, the repetition of 'I' disarticulates the self, so the contraction of the mouth that makes these declarations also functions as the space in which it presents and withdraws. Crucially, character vocalisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky* does not ensure self-identity. The textual strategies of Woolf and Bush communicates the loss of selfhood through the sharing of presence, thereby contextualising their expression of characterisation as the community of voices and selves.

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<sup>118</sup> Nancy's work on community is theoretical complex, commenting on the historical role of community and the communal in twentieth century politics. He explores this primarily in *The Inoperative Community* (2004), although the notion of community recurs throughout his writings. In addition to Nancy's original texts, James provides a detailed overview (2006).

<sup>119</sup> In demonstrating the conditions of community and sharing, Nancy considers literature and music the conditions of community and sharing. He argues that the practice of writing is imbued with a sense of sharing that negates the possibility of the finitude of self or an essential being (Nancy, 2004, p.64). Similarly, he writes that the 'immersive resonance' of music expresses a complicated arrangement of relationality and plurality (Gallope and Kane, 2015, pp.162-163).

Tracing the deconstruction of the self to its eventual disarticulation is an important context through which to interpret androgynous expression, because it gives a way to engage the prominent myths of androgyny whilst concurrently opening new interpretative spaces. ‘Listening out’ to the textual expression of these processes allows us to move beyond the binary logic — through exposing these fictions to the process of deconstruction and disarticulation — that determines androgyny’s meaning, because it asks that the reader/listener focus on the communicative context created by Woolf and Bush. In doing this, it becomes possible to associate the expression of androgynous subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Sky* with a state of inter/relationality that prioritises the interconnection of multiple selves. This interrogates the centrality given to the unity of masculinity and femininity in androgyny’s history, because the categories of male and female — being representative of specific physical and psychological behaviours — are rendered unstable by a condition of being that is determined by the dispersal of existence and the sharing of difference. As integrated works, the expression of subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Sky* communicates an abstraction of this unity by focussing on the interconnection of multiple, distinct voices. This complicates the interpretation of androgyny as the uniting or balancing of opposites because exposure to otherness amplifies difference and compromises the stability of the self.

This provides a different context through which to consider Bernard’s final soliloquy. Rather than presenting his character as the presiding consciousness of the text, the incorporation of motifs, themes and images from the other interludes and characters articulates the sharing of difference and the loss of self. In this sense, Bernard’s final soliloquy represents the condition of the androgynous mind originally explored by Woolf in *A Room*; it is the expression of a ‘wide open’ mind,

communicating 'experience with perfect fullness' (Woolf, 2001, p.90). Consequently, Bernard's final soliloquy threatens the expectations of androgyny as the incorporation of male and female characteristics, because it contaminates the binary with a multitude of perspectives that are consistently configured and reconfigured. Whilst the direct marker of speech identifies Bernard, the textual strategies tell the reader that the soliloquy belongs to all the characters, and Woolf guarantees their presence through weaving a literary polyphony of refrains, motifs, themes and images.

In this section, I have explored how Woolf and Bush challenge the ideology of self as united, stable entity. I began by examining a common interpretative thread in Woolfian studies that sees *The Waves* as the story of one presiding consciousness, contextualising Bernard as Woolf's representation of the androgynous writer. I considered how this intersects with androgyny's history, and how this interpretation is problematised by Woolf's textual strategies. To counter this interpretation, I drew upon the work of Derrida to explore how Woolf and Bush initiate a process that deconstructs the notion of 'I'. I explored Woolf's repetitious use of the pronoun 'I', and by 'listening out' to the lyrics, vocal expressions, and harmonic language of *A Sky*, found a comparable process in Bush's compositional strategies. I examined how the texts move beyond deconstruction to a state of disarticulated plurality, and supported by the work of Nancy, identified a formulation of subjectivity that emphasises the sharing of difference and the co-presence of singularities. I closed by considering how this formulation of subjectivity impacts the interpretation of androgynous expression, providing a new context through which to understand the significance of Bernard's final soliloquy.

My exploration in the previous section allowed me to contextualise the expression of characterisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky* as a community of voices and

selves. In the next section, I will explore this idea in more detail by offering a close, comparative analysis of the first interlude to *The Waves* and ‘Prelude’, the opening song of *A Sky*.

#### Who Listens? Subjectivity as the expression of choric community

In the previous discussion, I explored how the formulation of subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Sky* disarticulates the notion of a united, stable self, promoting instead a condition where presence is shared and being is defined by plurality and multiplicity. By ‘listening out’ to Woolf’s and Bush’s textual strategies, I considered how this formulation challenges the fictions of androgyny’s history, whilst expanding our understanding of androgynous expression. My analysis led me to characterise *The Waves* and *A Sky* as a community of voices, and I will attend to this in more detail for the remainder of this chapter. I will explore how the community of voices creates a chorus, and by focussing on the textual strategies underpinning this expression, will carry out a comparative analysis of the first interlude of *The Waves* and ‘Prelude’, the opening song in *A Sky*. I will close this chapter by offering some observations on what this formulation of subjectivity reveals about the androgynous subject.

The philosophy of Derrida and Nancy provide alternative ways to consider the importance of Woolf’s and Bush’s textual articulation of subjectivity for the interpretation of androgynous expression. The emphasis Nancy places upon sharing in the creation of the community connects to the questions I explored in the opening section of this chapter. In asking ‘who speaks?’ and ‘who sings?’ in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, I found an expression of subjectivity that negates the need for a dominant character, or main protagonist, as the focal point for the reader/listener. Expanding this through ‘listening out’ to the progressive disarticulation of selfhood, the

characters can be understood not as a mere ‘collection of selves’, but as a community of selves within the experiential worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, who are related by the ‘occurrence of singular events’ (Hutchens, 2005, p.116).

The question of narrative authority returns here, and the context provided by Derrida’s and Nancy’s work supports the interpretation of a parodic authorial voice in both *The Waves* and *A Sky*. The roles of Bernard and the narrator character are emphasised in each text — through being the only speaking character in the final soliloquy and occupying a prominent vocal space throughout the songs respectively — to show the reader/listener the processes by which one voice, or self, is multiplied by exposure to the vocal presence of others. The ambiguities that surround this presentation, the tension and instability of character communication, create blurred lines between component selves. Reading each work through the lens of authorship, whether that is Woolf, Bush, Bernard, or the narrator is to ignore the various other frames that combine to contaminate reductive interpretations. Claiming *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of one presiding consciousness is to ‘grant an authorship’ that is persistently interrogated by the conceptual and textual elements of the work (McGee, 1992, p.640).

Bernard’s final soliloquy and the track ‘Aerial’ conceptually and narratively offer a ‘summing up’ as a culmination of the thematic tenets preoccupying *The Waves* and *A Sky*. In both instances, this process is achieved through the interaction of characters, and as a condition of being in common, a unified subject is not sustainable in either work; the characters do not contract into their own introspection, but rather expand into each other’s thoughts, observations and experiences. *The Waves* and *A Sky* are structured around a series of moments involving the communality of characters. Each interlude, soliloquy and song depend upon the action of reaching out

to the presence of others. The characters initiate and sustain these acts, sharing their perspectives by drawing each other into movements that are comparable to the referrals and deferrals in Nancy's theorisation of the subject. The expression of a singularity exposed to singularities — 'each is stained by the others' (Goldman, 2010, p.65) — is the process by which the communal occurs, and the self is opened to the world. The notion of staining, being stained and staining others, indicates an indelible process of relationality.

As a community of beings, this interconnected tapestry of voices becomes a form of choric expression. Whilst characterised by sharing, it is difficult to conceive of the chorus as a form of communicative dialogue. This is due to the techniques used by Woolf and Bush to conceive and express characterisation; they do not communicate with each other in a formal exchange, such as one speaking, waiting for an answer, and then offering a response. Any identifiable traits offered in the early stages of the work become enmeshed in the other character's utterances and so, in accordance with the processes of deconstruction leading to disarticulation, they become part of community that is defined by the sharing of difference.

The chorus is better understood as a 'reciprocal invocation in which the voices convoke one another in turn' (Cavarero, 2005, p.170). These interconnected expressions are more aligned with a relational play of enunciations than a linear dialogue. The chorus, therefore, evokes a sharing of voices, their resonance becoming a community where the self is presented and withdrawn perpetually into the multiplicity of perspective. To expose a self to other-selves, and then for that self to not only endure the presence of others but to invite them into the process of self-creation without judgement or prejudice, is key to the presentation and withdrawal of the androgynous subject.



Returning to the beginning of *The Waves* and *A Sky* allows a detailed consideration of the technical and expressive methods that support the creation of the chorus. The first interlude of *The Waves* and the opening track of *A Sky* illustrates how a communal sense of sharing is constructed through the multilayering of voices and images.<sup>120</sup>

In the opening lines of the first interlude, the sun ‘had not yet risen’, and the waves, ‘following each other, pursuing each other, perpetually’, ‘sighing like a sleeper whose breath comes and goes unconsciously’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.3). Amidst this, the sun gradually rises to ‘tear away’ the surface of the sea, ‘flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres like the smoky fire that roars from a bonfire’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.3). Fully risen, the sun is ‘burnt on the rise of the horizon’, striking a light ‘upon the trees in the garden’, attending to a bird that ‘chirped up high’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.4). This prompts chirps lower down, and as the sun ‘sharpens the walls of the house’, inside the ‘blind stirred slightly’, whilst the ‘birds sang their blank melody outside’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.4). As a description of one moment, Woolf emphasises the component parts to reveal their interaction. The rising sun, lifted by the ‘arm of a woman’, affects the appearance and behaviour of the sea and sky, which in turn changes the texture of the air creating a new moment within the moment, a violent tearing as each element in the interlude unites to disturb the sanctity of the scene (Woolf, 2008a, p.3).

This moment comprises several different singular expressions; each composite part announces itself and is exposed to the others, much like the transfer of energy from wave to wave — an enunciation of being singular plural. From the outset of *The*

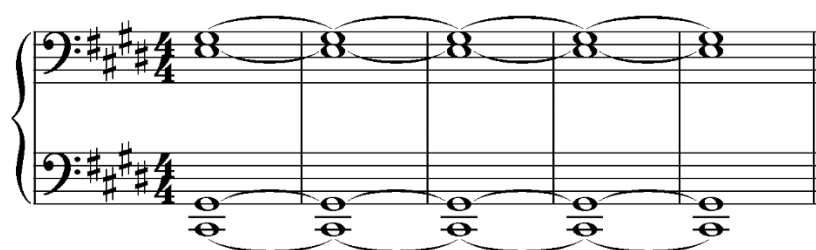
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<sup>120</sup> I could have chosen one of several comparative moments in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, however these opening sections encapsulate not only the technical methods used by Woolf and Bush, but also the developmental expressions of characterisation. Whilst the human characters from *The Waves* are not present in the interlude, its expressive features permeate the writing of the soliloquies. Similarly, the first interlude introduces several themes and images that recur throughout the text, thereby initiating the aesthetic trait of revealing the divergence of a single moment.

*Waves*, Woolf creates a scene that makes a statement of being; the present moment draws with it the statements of previous moments, offering a literary expression of Nancy's theory of communality as it leads to the creation of the chorus. As the sun reaches its highest point, the moment tears, 'flickering and flaming in red and yellow fibres' before fusing into one haze, 'one incandescence', but this is not a moment that expresses unity, or consolidates disparateness into the same moment (Woolf, 2008a, p.3). At the start of the interlude, the 'sea was indistinguishable from the sky', however the tearing breaches this idyllic representation, communicating the experiences occurring between the composite parts (Woolf, 2008a, p.3). The interlude is not straightforward description; it is an expression of diverse aspects, sharing-in-common the same moment. As an example of the influence of musical composition upon Woolf, the interlude is expressed through a literary form of contrapuntalism, supporting the reciprocal invocation of voices and the play of relationality. From here, Woolf creates a panorama, drawing the exteriority of the outside world into the interiority of the human world, 'sharpening' the house, punctuating the moment with the chirping of birds. The tension and conflict of the moment, the interdependence of the enacted lines through the statement of themes and images — the sun, the sea, the waves, the air, the birds — is an expression of being-in-common; the generation of energy initiated by this first interlude continuing into the growing communality of the soliloquies and remaining interludes.

'Prelude', the opening song of *A Sky*, creates a similar setting and context, introducing musical ideas that inform the thematic and motivic development of the song cycle. Teasing at these contributory parts reveals a process of interaction that expresses the movements of presentation and withdrawal, as singularity becomes singularities in the creation of communality.

At approximately ninety-seconds long, ‘Prelude’ is through-composed. The c-sharp minor tonality that dominates the harmonic language is not strongly felt until the entry of the piano line (0:19). Prior to this, the harmony is built upon the suspension of a c-sharp minor chord in root position (Figure 11).



*Figure 11 – Opening harmony (0:00-0:16)*<sup>121</sup>

The voicing of this chord creates a sparse, static feeling in the opening bars, which is emphasised by a melodic line, positioned above the root position chord and bringing rhythmic movement to these opening bars. Beginning on d-sharp, the line descends an interval of a major third to a b-natural, passing briefly over c-sharp before ascending back to d-sharp (Figure 12).



*Figure 12 – Wave line (0:00-0:19)*

Whilst ‘Prelude’ has a 4/4 time signature, this is not easily perceived in the opening phrases. The suspended chords emphasise each downbeat through a pulsation in tone but do not provide any rhythmic security. The open fifth set against the higher

<sup>121</sup> The format of the track timing here and going forwards, shows the relevant minutes and seconds within the track under discussion.

pitched major third creates a breath within the texture of the music, reflecting the shimmering heat of Woolf's interlude. Further heightening this effect is the wave line, which creates the sensation of oscillating space, by moving against the 4/4 pulse of the song; syncopation occurs at the highest point of the melody line and is tied into the following downbeat. Whilst this syncopation can be felt, it strengthens the feeling of static suspension; the sostenuto style mirroring the opening moment in the interlude before the sun starts to rise. Similarly, the gentle ascension and descension in the wave line can be heard in the sighing of Woolf's waves, perpetually flowing in and out.

Sampled birdsong is faded into the track (0:05), which includes the introduction of the wood pigeon call (0:10). The wood pigeon sample comes to dominate the overall voicings in the track, providing a rhythmic anchor in the opening of 'Prelude' by making the 4/4 time signature discernible. The harmony, melodic wave line and different types of sampled birdsong combine to establish a contrapuntal texture (Figure 13).

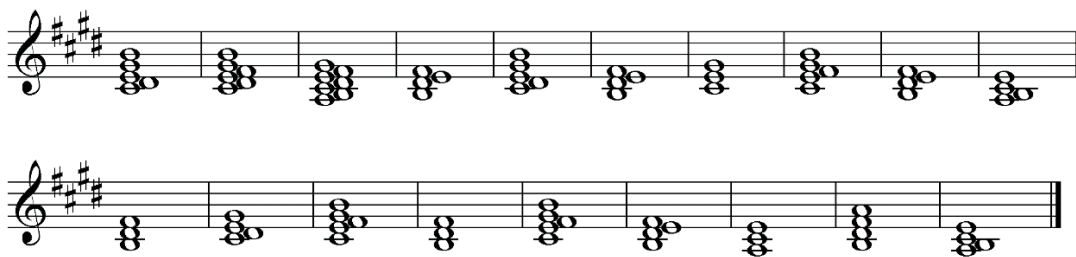


*Figure 13 – (0:07-0:16)*

As each theme is brought into the developing counterpoint, the listener is exposed to the presentation and withdrawal of the characters, where the feeling of suspended time

supports the enunciations of singularities.

As the wave line continues, the rate of harmonic progression increases (0:19-0:39). This is emphasised by drones in the bass line; triads built upon the root of each chord. When compared to the suspension of the opening bars, the addition of the triads suggests a stable harmonic language, though the chords have added sonorities, particularly added fourths, sevenths and elevenths. Stabilising the harmony whilst offsetting it against added tones offers a musical expression of the nuances of Woolf's interlude, and by securing the reader/listener in the details of the scene, it is possible to deconstruct the unity of the moment, thereby initiating the process of disarticulation. Harmonically, the tonal centre emphasises c-sharp minor but wanders between sonorities that emphasise b major, the seventh chord of the scale (Figure 14).<sup>122</sup>



*Figure 14 – Harmonic language*

The sampled wood pigeon call continues and whilst it takes a less prominent role in the track's mix, the rhythmic qualities and the melodic insinuations of the call are continued in the piano line. The wood pigeon call has a natural reverberation that implies the presence of multiple pigeons, and Bush draws upon this quality to create a melodic piano motif, supported by c-sharp minor and b major sonorities (Figure 15).

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<sup>122</sup> This chart does not show the voicings or the rate of progressions. Where chords change on individual beats, these are repetitions of previous chords with added tones (for instance at 0:29 and 1:03). This chart is intended to demonstrate how the harmonic language orientates around c-sharp minor whilst exploring neighbouring sonorities.



*Figure 15 – Piano motif (0:19-0:29)*

This creates a sparse quality echoing the sonic environment into which the wood pigeon was introduced at the start of the song, but it also leads to the progression of the cycle, with the rhythmic, harmonic and melodic qualities feeding into the musical expression of all characters as their subjectivities become pluralised by their communality.<sup>123</sup> Despite establishing more component parts in the composition of ‘Prelude’, the feeling of suspension continues; where one line in the song moves forward, another seems to delay the movement. In ‘listening out’, this creates moments of pause, allowing the listener to consider the individual themes without sacrificing the experience of their interaction. This pause is exemplified when the wood pigeon call is joined by Bush’s vocals (0:29).

Bush imitates the call of the wood pigeon to the words ‘a sky of honey’, drawing on the reverberations and inflexions in the bird’s sound. At this point, the piano motif is suspended; rather than completing its phrase on the g-sharp, it drops to e, allowing Bush’s vocal and the wood pigeon to resonate. Having developed from the rhythmic and melodic qualities of the bird call, the paused piano line exposes a crucial moment of exchange. Moments that appear static signal moments of rupture, much like those in Woolf’s interlude where the sun tears from the sea. This is emphasised in ‘Prelude’ as the human and wood pigeon vocal interaction is set against the voice of a

<sup>123</sup> See appendix 2 for transcriptions of the motifs and examples of their variations.

sun: ‘Mummy/ Daddy/The day is full of birds/Sounds like they’re saying words’ (0:22-1:02). At this point, a piano enters, adopting a rhythmically modified version of the wood pigeon call (Figure 16). This moment features all characters in ‘Prelude’ in various guises, expressing their condition of communality, however, this quickly dissipates focussing on an augmented version of the wood pigeon motif, which peaks on an a major chord in root position (Figure 17).



*Figure 16 – (0:42-0:57)*



*Figure 17 – (1:16-1:25)*

The qualities of the piano motif and wave line are combined and drawn into the harmonic progression, leading the song to its end. Reflecting the final moments of the first interlude in *The Waves*, ‘Prelude’ approaches the next song in the cycle by decreasing in both tempo and volume (1:16-1:25). The final chord is a combination of a major added ninth and c-sharp major, highlighting a temporary shift to c-sharp minor’s parallel major key but without the harmonic signposts that would traditionally

suggest such a modulation. The effect, therefore, is one of unsettled suspension, and like Woolf's ending to her first interlude points to a multitude of unseen moments.

The opening interlude to *The Waves* and 'Prelude' from *A Sky* express a communal subjectivity, an emerging chorus enabled and sustained by a continuous, shared presence. This extends to the reader and listener, as they too 'stretch their ears' (Nancy, 2007, p.5) in their perception of a 'growing aural density', which extends beyond the recognition of characters through their utterances (Cuddy-Keane, 2013, p.88). These moments similarly represent an aesthetic that continues throughout *The Waves* and *A Sky*; the state of consistent development becomes an expressive marker of subjectivity. These are not the stories of one, or two, or even six main characters, where certain utterances are privileged 'as the most meaningful aspects of life'; rather, they exist along a 'continuum of experience' (Cuddy-Keane, 2013, p.90). This is exemplified in both instances as individuated characters are gradually disarticulated through their perception of others, their sense of self dislodged by the presence of otherness as exterior experience infiltrates and affects interior life. Through these processes, the tension of persistent empathy and relationality is expressed, whether through an image of visceral tearing as in the first interlude or through the presence of harmonies which seek to swamp the dominant tonal centre through their dissonance, as in 'Prelude'. The idea of the chorus, of togetherness in vocal production, does more than offer a metaphor for character interaction; it is the actualisation of subjectivity in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, creating an expressive context in which the notion of 'I' is increasingly unsustainable.

In this discussion, I have focussed on the textual strategies underpinning Woolf's and Bush's creation of a choric community. I chose to focus on a comparative reading of the first interlude to *The Waves* and the opening song of *A Sky*



to show how the expression of subjectivity as a choric community is set up as an experiential state from the beginning of each text. The techniques I have identified are characteristic of Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies, and they show the importance of the exposure of selves to other selves through the opening of vocal spaces. This is an important context through which to interpret androgyny because it interrupts the myths of androgyny that have come to dominate the concept's reception. Specifically, it interrupts the centrality of unity in androgyny's conceptualisation and ruptures common strategies used to identify the presence of androgyny, particularly those that seek a blurring of masculine and feminine elements. In identifying the choric community, I 'listened out' to the complexity of textual expression, which allowed me to make connections between the formulation of subjectivity I heard and the androgynous subject. The process by which this connection was made exposed the fixity of androgyny's normative consideration to the radicalisation of community, allowing the emergence of new interpretative narratives. By listening to how Woolf and Bush formulate subjectivity as a community of voices and allowing this to resonate with the conceptualisation of androgyny, it is possible to characterise the androgynous subject as an undetermined plurality, consistently configured and reconfigured by the textual conditions in which it is sought.

### Concluding Remarks

This chapter has focussed on the formulation of subjectivity articulated in *The Waves* and *A Sky* and its significance for the interpretation of androgynous subjectivity. I began with a broad discussion of characterisation in each work to establish the foundation upon which the formulation of subjectivity is communicated to the reader/listener. Focussing on the textual expression of characterisation, I found that

both *The Waves* and *A Sky* emphasise the interaction of multiple diverse voices, promoting a vision of the subject that is fragmentary, unstable and resistant to the authority of a presiding consciousness. To consider their significance for androgynous expression, I explored how Woolf and Bush deconstruct the stability of 'I' through embracing the processes of disarticulation. Supported by the work of Derrida, I examined how Woolf's textual strategies, particularly her repetitious use of the pronoun 'I', negates the interpretation of *The Waves* as the story of one presiding consciousness. I found a comparable state of textual expression in *A Sky* by 'listening out' to the lyrical content, vocal performance and harmonic language, which allowed me to explore how Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies interrogate and complicate the myths of unity prevalent in androgyny's reception. Drawing on Nancy's theory of the subject as a singular plurality, I found that the characters in *The Waves* and *A Sky* form a community of voices and selves, and through a comparative textual analysis of the opening of both works, I identified the emergence of a choric community that is enabled and sustained by a continuous shared presence. Opening the myths of androgyny's history to these textual spaces, I recontextualised the androgynous subject through a condition of inter/relationality and plurality determined by the sharing and division of difference. Through these processes, I have expanded the methodological strategies taken towards the interpretation of androgyny in popular music studies, and in doing so, have demonstrated the concept's expressive capacity beyond binary logic.

In the next chapter, I will continue to enrich the understanding of androgynous expression, by exploring the material life of androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, through which I will 'listen out' to the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Becoming Panoramic** **The World of Things and Androgynous Jouissance**

In chapter three, I explored the technical and aesthetic formulation of subjectivity expressed in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I began by asking the questions ‘who speaks?’ and ‘who sings?’ to unravel the complexities of Woolf’s and Bush’s articulation of character identity. Through this, I found a comparable expression of subjectivity, one which resists a presiding authoritative consciousness and interrogates the stability of a unified self. I expanded upon this reading by attending to the ways in which Woolf and Bush initiate textual processes that deconstructs the notion of ‘I’ as a stable, secure entity. I focussed on Woolf’s repetitious use of the pronoun ‘I’, and through ‘listening out’ to the lyrics, vocal performance and harmonic language in *A Sky* found a comparable expression. Supporting my readings with the work of Derrida and Nancy, I traced the deconstruction of ‘I’ to its disarticulation and found a textual presentation of subjectivity defined by sharing, plurality and a community of selves. To close the chapter, I explored how the complex interaction of voices creates a choric community, and by conducting a close, comparative analysis of the first interlude in *The Waves*, and ‘Prelude’, the opening song in *A Sky*, found a textual expression of the androgynous subject that challenges the binary logic central in androgyny’s normative conceptualisation.

In the discussion that follows, I will expand on the previous chapter’s research by attending to the interpretative significance of the material worlds in which characters are placed. I will explore the expressive worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as spaces of affirmative materialism that express the life of androgyny beyond the concept’s association with binary logic. Drawing upon theories concerned with the

importance of artistic practice in subject formation, I consider how the internal worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* support the reimagination of conceptual meaning. Using ‘listening out’ as a key interpretative approach, I will close this chapter by pinpointing exceptional moments in *A Sky*, and by finding comparable moments of significance in *The Waves* I will trace the generation and eventual release of androgynous *jouissance*.

There again comes the rollicking chorus: Androgyny’s material life

My research in the previous chapter found character interaction crucial in the formulation of subjectivity expressed in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. In this discussion, I consider how the interaction of multiple human and non-human subjects points to a state of affirmative materialism. I will frame this discussion through Ryan’s reading of *The Waves* as a posthumanist conceptualisation of life defined by intra-action, and by ‘listening out’ to the song ‘Nocturn’, I will identify a comparable expression in *A Sky*. I close this section by highlighting the textual practice of becoming-vibratory, and in contextualising *The Waves* and *A Sky* as the articulation of androgyny’s material life, will consider how Woolf’s and Bush’s expressive strategies further challenge the binary logic that is central in the concept’s historicisation.

The expression of characterisation in *The Waves* and *A Sky* depends upon the interaction of multiple subjects responding to their surrounding environment. Responsive interaction takes several configurations, most notably between humans, humans and animals, humans and vegetal life, and humans and inanimate objects. The movement between these diverse agencies takes multiple directional flows, and the various combinations in which their guises are presented communicate the possibilities in thinking beyond the notion of sustained, stable identities. Both Woolf and Bush enter into a form of world-making that tests the power of hierarchical binary

systems, for instance human/animal, human/nonhuman, nature/culture, moving towards a condition of affirmative materialism as opposed to dialectical (Ryan, 2015, p.13). A dialectical approach to materialism is problematic for androgyny because it is predicated upon the perpetuation of dualist structures. The structure of the male/female binary provides the foundation upon which interpretations of androgyny are formed, and as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, this type of thinking has limited the emergence of new insights. Affirmative materiality initiates critical re-engagement with everyday being, suggesting ‘materialisation as a complex, pluralistic, relatively open process’ and freeing ontological understanding from frameworks of opposition that limit experience and expression (Ryan, 2015, p.13).

On a macrocosmic level, this can be seen in the structure of *The Waves*, where the soliloquies are interspersed by interludes. The characters speak amidst a backdrop of the everyday — living rooms, cafés, gardens, streets, each scene and surface composed of composite parts; tables, chairs, teacups, plants, birds, people and cars. These multiple levels of detail become objects of focus for the characters, guiding their perceptions of life. Whilst the characters search for meaningful answers to fundamental questions about the nature of human existence, they do so in ‘sustained meditation’ with the world around them; interior thoughts are cast into the exterior world (Briggs, 2000, p.76). Beyond that of the main characters, human presence takes a less personal and involved tone. This creates the ‘effect of setting the voices against a nature emptied of human presence’, so they appear ‘as if silhouetted against an imaginary skyline’ (Briggs, 2000, p.76).

The same effect is created in *A Sky*, where characters are formed and expressed through the development of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic motifs, which are then exchanged and developed as the song cycle progresses. Indicators of place, time and

character experience are communicated through complex interactions of lyrical, compositional and production techniques. Similarly, the optical illusion featured on the front cover of *Aerial* — the sound wave as mountain range intersecting the sea and sky — provides a visual representation of character voices silhouetted against an imaginary skyline, as in *The Waves*. In earlier chapters, I have considered the importance of these details for interpreting androgynous expression, however in communicating a state of affirmative materialism, they allow an expansion of my previous findings by supporting a reappraisal of the life of the androgynous subject.

In his study of Woolf and the materiality of theory, Ryan engages posthumanist conceptualisations of life to support his reading of *The Waves* (2015).<sup>124</sup> He takes several interpretative pathways, reading matter and the new physics of the early twentieth century to account for the novel's anticipation of more recent discourses on materiality, for instance, Bohr's 'philosophy-physics' (first published 1934) and Barad's 'agential realism' (2007). Whilst Ryan does not connect his findings to Woolf's expression of androgyny, his work on the entanglement of human bodies set amidst 'nonhuman objects, things, and environments' provides a way to expand androgyny's conceptual capacity to express multiple relations of difference (Ryan, 2015, p.21). Ryan frames his discussion of life in *The Waves* within Barad's 'posthumanist performative' approach to reality, where agency is not a defined attribute or characteristic of a subject, whether it is human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate (Ryan, 2015, p.174). This understanding considers agency part of the world's processes of persistent reconfiguration; an entanglement Barad describes

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<sup>124</sup> See chapter one for my discussion on Ryan's reconsideration of Woolf's androgyny in *A Room*.

using the neologism *intra-action*.<sup>125</sup>

The contrast between inter- and intra-action reconfigures the way in which subjects and objects engage. Where interaction presumes the individuality of agencies before the point of contact, intra-action emphasises the emergence of agencies through their connections (Barad, 2007, p.33).<sup>126</sup> Their status as individual elements are not absolute and can only be considered with regards to their relationality; the sense of their existence is relational arrangement. Intra-action emphasises reality as made of ‘phenomena’ that have no ‘ontologically predetermined separation’ (Ryan, 2015, p.177). In this arrangement different parts of the world are enacted through an evolving ebb and flow; a movement which emphasises the emergence of phenomena as part of the ongoing reconfiguration of the world. Writing about Bernard’s final soliloquy, Ryan suggests that the connection between emergent phenomena and intra-action impacts the ways an agent, subject or character, might perceive their association amidst the ebb and flow of other emerging agents. This responds to the numerous critical responses that draw upon the final soliloquy to interpret *The Waves* as the story of one overriding consciousness:<sup>127</sup>

It seems more than a coincidence that Bernard is accompanied by a table here as this key distinction between inter- and intra-action is brought to the fore, where the former is associated with epistemological uncertainty (there are six beings, I just do not know which one I am) and the latter with ontological indeterminacy (I cannot know which of these beings I am, because we are not distinct and separated) (Ryan, 2015, p.175).

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<sup>125</sup> Barad introduced the term intra-action in the field of physics, and was influenced by the work of Bohr, a physicist who made formative contributions to quantum physics and the understanding of atomic structure. Barad’s theory of agential realism and intra-action connects to discourses of new materialism arising in the late 1990s, spearheaded by scholars such as DeLanda (2016), Braidotti (1994) and Grosz (1994), and intersects with several academic disciplines from physics, to STS studies, actor-network theory, feminist theory and science studies. Haraway draws upon a similar materialisation of intra-actions in her work on multispecies ethnography and ‘naturecultures’ (2016, 2003).

<sup>126</sup> The emergent structures of intra-action resemble Nancy’s theorisation on ‘being singular plural’, which I discussed in the previous chapter. I draw on Ryan’s and Barad’s work here to specifically explore the material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky*.

<sup>127</sup> See pages 214-217 from the previous chapter for further discussion.

The table referred to by Ryan is the table at which Bernard sits as he ponders his identity in relation to his friends and wonders if it is possible to distinguish between lives that have been so closely lived. He begins to ‘doubt the fixity of tables, the reality of here and now, to tap my knuckles smartly upon the edges of apparently solid objects and say, “Are you hard?”’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.240). These thoughts complicate Bernard’s ability to make conclusive statements. His perception of the gradual dissolution of divisions between himself and the world he experiences is, by Ryan’s claim, a ‘network of intra-action’, within which his friendship group exemplifies a form of ‘intra-active dynamism’ (Ryan, 2015, p.176).

As a configuration dependent upon the intermingling of agencies, Ryan reads *The Waves* as an example of intra-active materiality, a condition set up from the first interlude. This is supported by my exploration of subjectivity in the previous chapter, specifically the study of the first interlude in *The Waves* and the opening song in *A Sky*; the expression of a moment where the making of difference is emphasised through a state of emerging phenomena. Given this, the claim for intra-active materiality can be extended to *A Sky*.

Ryan cites several examples — the kiss Louis shares with Jinny, Bernard’s relationship with language, Jinny’s understanding of her physicality and Susan’s connection to her farm — that shatters the nature/culture distinction and disturbs the privilege given to the individual in discourses of the self (Ryan, 2015, pp.78-79). These moments are developmental and for each character represents a gradual realisation of their changing relationship with the world. As each character is slowly immersed into the materiality of intra-action, they become less individuated and distinct, thereby expressing the intra-action of Barad’s posthumanist materiality.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> This is demonstrated in the final column of table 1, appendix 1 which shows the development of character refrains, motifs and images — including overarching themes — as the soliloquies progress.



A similar relationship unravels through the artwork accompanying *A Sky*. The images visually express the relationship between the narrator and external materiality, by emphasising the bodies of both human and bird, the sharing of distinct but connected material spaces, and the entanglement of subjects within an environment. This is exemplified by the vision of human-bird hybridity in the modification of Olson's Indus photo and the song it accompanies in the liner notes.<sup>129</sup> Sonorously and lyrically, 'Nocturn' supports the interpretation of this image as an expression of intra-action.

As the longest song in the cycle, 'Nocturn' is texturally complex, manipulating an ABAB form through augmentation and the addition of a C section. For most of the song, the narrator holds the main vocal line, identifiable through her undulating melismatic motif, comprised of a descending scale-like passage spanning an augmented third, followed by a rocking movement between c-sharp and b-natural (Figure 18).<sup>130</sup>



*Figure 18 – Narrator melisma (0:39-0:51)*

This pattern is maintained throughout the A and B sections, though with each repetition the phrases are elongated, and the rhythmic qualities of the narrator's motif are augmented (Figure 19).

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<sup>129</sup> See Figure 7 on pages 150-151.

<sup>130</sup> This melismatic variation develops from the motif's first presentation in 'Prologue' (see appendix 2).



*Figure 19 – Vocal line, first B section (1:48-2:07)*

This creates a feeling of suspension, which is exacerbated by the lack of a strict tempo in the opening A section. The synthesiser and string accompaniment, whilst moving through two rounds of a three-chord harmonic progression (c-sharp minor, a major and b major) suspends their harmonies allowing each tone to merge into the next; an effect emphasised through the addition and removal of tones. The first B section (1:38) brings rhythmic security, adding a steady bass and drum groove amidst the synthesiser and string chords. Here, the bass line is reminiscent of the narrator's introductory motif in 'Prelude' (Figure 20).



*Figure 20 – Bass line (1:39)*

At this point, the rate of harmonic progression decreases, creating a temporal contradiction; as the song moves forward with rhythmic pulsation, it is weighted by the synthesised chords and the narrator's augmented vocal line. This contrast is exacerbated by the mix of the track. As 'Nocturn' opens, the narrator's vocal occupies the front of the mix, however as the accompaniment builds, multiple guitars (electric and acoustic) and percussion lines are added, and the song becomes progressively saturated in sound and volume. In maintaining the same dynamic, the narrator's voice

sinks to the back of the mix. As the narrator is sonically identifiable through the sound of her voice and the motifs that structure her vocal lines, her gradual disappearance into the watery world of the accompaniment signals the surrendering of her individuated self in the wake of her exchanges with the birds. The pronoun ‘we’ dominating the lyrics similarly expresses the emergence of an intra-active state created by the song’s material world.

The presence of the birds — representing the chorus as a primary character — is indicated by the textural qualities of their song, rather than sampled sound. After opening the track with a suspended, barely comprehensible lyric — ‘sweet dreams’ — they do not appear again until the third repetition of the B section (4:04). From this point, they maintain a consistent presence, initially singing with the narrator to emphasise the second and last word of the phrase (stars/hair/star/fingers/sky’s/heads/sea’s/legs). The pattern of this doubling appears at various intervals within the phrases, broken by the repetition of the final B section as it merges into the final C section (6:37). From here, the presence of the chorus begins to build, and the vocal lines are multiplied with layered voicings that gradually expand in range and volume, culminating in the phrases ‘A sea of honey/a sky of honey’.

In the structures of these vocal intra-actions, the chorus gradually re-emerges within the vocalic space of the narrator, and the narrator emerges within the choric space, de-emphasising the differentiation between voices and prioritising the configuration of the chorus. Where the rest of the song features a melismatic vocal style that is controlled, this section is chanted, implying the pitches of a c-sharp minor 7 chord (7:53). The lyrics are strongly enunciated, and each vocal layer is highly rhythmic in their expressive unity (Figure 21).



*Figure 21 – Chorus chant (7:51-8:04)<sup>131</sup>*

The interaction of vocal and instrumental parts gives equal consideration to agential multiplication and the various stages of emergences, denying the privilege of a single perspective. This evokes Ryan’s reading of Bernard’s final soliloquy. It is not that the agents in ‘Nocturn’ do not know who they are, it is that they cannot know because they are no longer distinct or separate.

This configuration of materiality is similarly supported by the lyrical content. The accumulation of vocalities and instrumentation moves through stages of invitation, interaction, to intra-active engagement, a process of material immersion reflected in the narrative progression of the lyrics. The lyrics draw attention to the time of day and the season, and in a style reminiscent of Woolf’s use of the pure present, the narrator observes actions without personal and emotive response. The use of the pronoun ‘we’ alongside the lyrics ‘no-one is here’ creates further tension and highlights the complexity of voices, the lack of authoritative consciousness and the opening of vocal spaces through character relationality.<sup>132</sup> In articulating a sense of distance from the narrator as individuated self, this tension similarly highlights her intimacy with her surrounding world, thereby reconfiguring the space created through

<sup>131</sup> This also provides an example where all character motifs are incorporated into one phrase (see appendix 2).

<sup>132</sup> This tension reflects my explorations in chapter three, particularly those concerned with the question of who speaks and sings in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. In that discussion, I quoted Naremore (1973) — ‘everyone and no-one’ — and this resonates with the contradiction in pronoun use in ‘Nocturn’. I also recommend Negus (2012), Nicholls (2007), Brackett (2000) and Bradby (1990) for analyses on the use of pronouns in the creation of narrative and personas in popular song.

the song's textual expression and drawing the listener into the cycle's progression.

This conveys a state of intra-active dynamism akin to Ryan's interpretation of

Bernard's 'life', which allows the narrator to become panoramic:

On this Midsummer night  
Everyone is sleeping  
We go driving into the moonlight

Could be in a dream  
Our clothes are on the beach  
These prints of our feet  
Lead right up to the sea  
No one, no one is here  
No one, no one is here  
We stand in the Atlantic  
We become panoramic

The lyrics continue to describe these developing intra-actions expressing a

'naturalcultural entanglement' (Ryan, 2015, p.178).<sup>133</sup>

The stars are caught in our hair  
The stars are on our fingers  
A veil of diamond dust  
Just reach up and touch it  
The sky's above our heads  
The sea's around our legs  
In milky, silky water  
We swim further and further

This expresses the narrator's sensorial engagement with her external environment, and

resists the boundary between interior and exterior forces, and the limits imposed by

maintaining the division between subject and object. Reminiscent of Bernard as he

considers the fixity of tables in the grand scheme of life, the narrator in 'Nocturn'

articulates an awareness of her changing ontology:

Look at the light

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<sup>133</sup> Natureculture is a concept arguing that nature and culture are interwoven and cannot be regarded as separate. Emerging from discourses that interrogate dualistic thinking in the humanities and sciences, a naturalcultural framework considers both conceptual and empirical connections. Barad's 'agential realism' (2007) and Haraway's work on companion species (2003) both note the importance of biophysical and social formation of relationships. Natureculture frameworks can be found in primatology, biological anthropology, evolutionary biology, anthropology and animal studies.

And all the times it's a changing  
Look at the light  
Climbing up the aerial

Bright, white coming alive jumping off the aerial  
All the time it's a changing like now  
All the time it's a changing like then again  
All the time it's a changing  
And all the dreamers are waking

Ryan identifies a similar ontology of materiality in *The Waves*, one which shifts the emphasis from a human-centred understanding of interaction, to 'paradoxical, perhaps counterintuitive notion of life founded on indeterminacy' (Ryan, 2015, p.182). As an expression of being, the characters in *The Waves* and *A Sky* are positively influenced by their immersion in a persistently changing environment. Through these similarities, it is possible to contextualise *The Waves* and *A Sky* as material worlds that make 'inquiries into how differences are made and remade, stabilized and destabilized' (Barad, 2012).

Having contextualised *The Waves* and *A Sky* as worlds of material entanglement dependent upon a condition of intra-action, I will now explore the significance of this for androgyny, for the concept's expression through the interior life of each text and for the impact this presentation has upon interpretative approach.

Recognising *The Waves* and *A Sky* as a conceptualisation of life that is based upon a condition of intra-active material entanglement presents an opportunity to complicate normative considerations of androgyny and its attachment to binary structures of identity. It does this primarily through challenging the anthropocentrism of humanist thought and the boundaries that are created between human agents and the exterior world. Emphasising the state of intra-action shifts the focus from an explicitly human-centred reading to characters as part of a wider expressive environment. As a concept that is historically aligned with humanist perspectives and the authority of masculine

viewpoints, interpreting androgyny through the intra-active materiality of *The Waves* and *A Sky* supports a reconsideration of the concept's historical associations.

*The Waves* and *A Sky* present both a conceptual reflection and creative expression of a conceptualisation of life that is an 'ending procession of physical changes', where the characters are 'shaped by everything material that impinges on it, from inside and outside' (Tratner, 2015, p.155). As I explored in the first two chapters of this thesis, androgyny is attached to a material presentation that is mediated through traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity, and in seeking conformity to this definition, scholars have limited the possibilities of conceptual meaning, rendering androgynous identity static and universal.<sup>134</sup> The material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* supports the interpretation of androgynous expression beyond the logic of binary structure, and 'listening out' to the concept through the condition of intra-action emphasises the unknowability of material engagement, making possible a qualitative multiplicity and a vast number of experiential arrangements.

In addition to the intra-action and emergence of multiple identities described above, the immersion of character within their surrounding environment owes much to sensorial attunement as a form of 'becoming vibratory' (Rohman, 2011, p.17). Focussing on the movements of this becoming further emphasises the importance of the textual experience of androgynous expression by cultivating the shift from 'fixed binary structures to free-flowing undefinability' (MacLeod, 1998, p.33).

Early in *The Waves*, during one of his soliloquies, Bernard considers the distinction between life *lived* and life *experienced*:

I am at liberty now to sink down, deep, into what passes this omnipresent, general life...For myself, I have no aim... I will let myself be carried on by the general impulse...No, but I wish to go under; to visit the profound depths; once in a while to exercise my prerogative not always to act, but to explore; to hear vague, ancestral sounds of boughs creaking, of mammoths; to indulge impossible desires to

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<sup>134</sup> See my discussion in the introduction and chapter one.

embrace the whole world with the arms of understanding....Am I not, as I walk, trembling with strange oscillations and vibrations of sympathy, which, unmoored as I am from a private being, bid me embrace these engrossed-flocks...? (Woolf, 2008a, pp.92-93).

In this passage, Bernard demonstrates an awareness of the connection between material life and sensorial attunement. The language he uses to describe the energies of auditory, visual and haptic experience recognises a crossover between the exterior and interior lives of the characters; the expression of opening outwards reveals how life is experienced and creatively made to mean. Bernard considers how meaning falls from his distinguishing features, highlighting the lack of physical description Woolf gives to the characters. Despite this, they are not disembodied voices; the relationships Woolf creates — between the characters, and the characters and the reader — is a form of textual embodiment. This is similarly expressed in the techniques of *A Sky*, which place the narrator *within* the cycle through compositional practices that prioritise listening as an experiential context.

Rohman argues whilst some characters in *The Waves* exercise a reflective distance on life, Jinny is accepting of her ‘becoming vibratory’ (Rohman, 2011, p.17). Rohman’s analysis contrasts with common interpretations of Jinny, such as those by Henke (2007) and Marcus (1992) who see her characterisation as the embodied sexuality of a woman seeking escape through flirtations and interactions with men. Rohman, on the other hand, reads Jinny as a character who lacks conflict and achieves ‘natural happiness’, expressing an awareness of ‘qualitative experiential states’ (Rohman, 2011, p.19):

‘Yes,’ said Jinny, ‘our senses have widened. Membranes, webs of nerves that lay white and limp, have filled and spread themselves and float around us like filaments, making the air tangible and catching in them far-away sounds unheard before’ (Woolf, 2008a, p.110).

Rohman claims that Jinny’s language is associated, both literally and figuratively, with dance; the emphasis upon bodily movement opens multiple performative spaces.



A similar state is expressed in 'Nocturn', as the narrator's literal immersion in the sea metaphorically represents the material intra-action throughout the cycle.<sup>135</sup> Vibrational becoming represents a triple gesture between the expression of the characters within an environment, the practices that enable these emergences and the perception of their emerging.

The relationship between the interludes and characters offers a broader expression of the vibratory practices noted above, providing additional insight into the intra-actions at play in 'Nocturn'. In his discussion of bodies *as The Waves*, Tratner argues that the text is an effort to seek the 'nonhuman inside each individual' (Tratner, 2015, p.155). He describes how the light scans various natural scenes featuring animals and plants, connecting to 'human-shaped spaces, into houses, probing, revealing' (Tratner, 2015, p.155). Tratner views *The Waves* as the illumination of the 'human world with non-human light', a narrative which is similarly expressed in 'Nocturn' (Tratner, 2015, p.155). Like Ryan's Barad-inspired reading of multiple agential perspectives, Tratner highlights how *The Waves* imagines 'peering into human consciousness from a nonhuman perspective' (Tratner, 2015, p.155). This supports the characterisation of *A Sky*, where the overarching discourse is one of invitation to emergence offered by the chorus to the narrator. As the narrator's voice becomes part of a developmental, gradually emerging chorus, disappearing into a plethora of perspectives, the language of the interludes is 'inundated with the human element through the use of metaphor and simile' (Kostkowska, 2013, p.51). The waves are associated with the breath of an unconscious sleeper, the colours of the horizon mimic those of a sunken wine bottle, and the sun appears as a woman holding a lamp (Kostkowska, 2013, p.51). Just as the narrator's voice gradually becomes part

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<sup>135</sup> This statement is exemplified by the quote I included on page 253.

of the chorus in 'Nocturn', so the everyday world of the characters in *The Waves* become part of the expressive narratives of the interludes. The contrasting movement in both instances forms a relational flow where neither world is positioned as authoritative or hierarchical; intra-action assumes, to use Rohman's term, a becoming-vibrational that communicates practices of vibration.

Reading *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of intra-active agents, emerging and re-emerging through a persistent ebb and flow of interior and exterior worlds, promotes a conceptualisation of life that *is* difference. This is not a difference that results from an understanding of identity, whether he, she or it is Bernard from *The Waves*, the narrator in *A Sky*, the sea in the interludes or a voice from the chorus. As that which allows the enactment of material entanglements, vibrational practice expresses an opening to the 'tactile, spatial, physical, [and] material (Eidsheim, 2015, p.8). The 'life' of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, as a community of multiple, material realities, further questions the investment in the perception of unity, as a distinct life which maintains fixity without impediment. If the life of *The Waves* and *A Sky* is to be considered an expression of the life of the androgynous subject, vibrational practice reveals the inhibitions placed upon the conceptual potential of androgyny by the traditional figure of the androgyne.

Where androgyny is primarily associated with the recognition of a specific combination of male and female physical attributes, the vibrational practices of Woolf and Bush allows androgyny to be read through a range of sensory modes, for instance, 'listening out'. Vibrational practice emphasises the movements between factions that may be separated by conceptual expectations, for instance male/female, human/nonhuman, and truth/fiction. Taking Rohman's becoming-vibratory to androgyny allows the concept to be further enacted within *The Waves* and *A Sky*. This

creates a space where androgyny can perform and be performed as part of an interpretative entanglement that is one of many ‘different points of transmissions in the practice of [a] vibration framework’ (Eidsheim, 2015, p.17). The emphasis, therefore, is placed upon *routes*: the fluidity between different points and distributions that lead to ‘inquiries into the relationships between materials and sensations’ (Eidsheim, 2015, p.17).

Normative assumptions concerning androgyny’s meaning do not place androgyny alongside the *sense* of creation, or as Jinny would describe it, the making of life (Woolf, 2008a, p.145). Claiming the material circumstances of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as the creative expression of androgyny disrupts the expectations of readers and listeners who are searching for ‘faithfulness to a given set of assumptions’ (Eidsheim, 2015, p.19). Setting this *a priori* definition to work within *The Waves* and *A Sky* reveals a ‘series of continually unfolding transmissions’ that cannot be named and resist being known (Eidsheim, 2015, p.19).

In this discussion, I have explored the material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* and their significance for interpreting androgynous expression. Drawing upon Ryan’s reading of *The Waves* as a shift towards a state of affirmative materialism, I found a comparable condition in *A Sky*. I have considered the emergence of an intra-active materiality, where agencies — whether human, non-human, animate or inanimate — are entangled in the world’s persistent processes of reconfiguration. Supported by Ryan’s interpretation of Bernard’s final soliloquy, I interpreted ‘Nocturn’ from *A Sky*, focussing on the expressive significance of phrase length, vocal performance, harmonic language, manipulation of rhythmic effects and structure, and lyrical content to establish the textual communication of an intra-active materiality. I then explored how this expression challenges the historical connection associating androgyny with

humanist thought. By focussing on the importance of sensorial attunement and the movements of ‘becoming-vibratory’ in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, I found a textual expression of worldly becoming that challenges the binary logic prevalent in traditional conceptualisations of androgyny and the specificity of the androgyne’s physicality. Interpreting androgynous expression by ‘listening out’ to the material entanglement as it is textually expressed, I was able to complicate the material life of androgyny whilst highlighting the importance of sensorial engagement in interpretative approach.

In the next section, I will expand upon the contextualisation of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as spaces that express the material life of androgyny by exploring the importance of artistic practice in the interrogation and creation of conceptual meaning.

#### In widening circles: Art, androgyny and composing the body

In the previous discussion, I explored the material life of androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I found that both texts express a state of intra-active materiality that interrogates androgyny’s historical associations with humanist thought and binary logic to contextualise the androgynous subject as vibrational and dynamic. To expand this interpretation, I will move from a focus on the interior worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* to an examination of how artistic practice impacts subject formation and material intensification. In the first part of my discussion, I will concentrate on Kristeva’s theory of revolutionary writing, outlining the key points of her argument, before considering the importance of her work for interpreting androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I then draw upon Grosz’s work on art and the organic to expand the idea of vibrational becoming introduced in the previous section. Through Grosz’s re-reading of Darwin’s theory of evolution, I will read the presence of birdsong in *The*

*Waves* and *A Sky* as vibratory forces of being. The overarching agenda of this discussion is to create a theoretical context for the final part of this chapter, where I will ‘listen out’ to the release of androgynous *jouissance*.

In her investigations into the semiotics of literature and art, Kristeva claims the stylistics of modernist poetry emphasise the materiality of language and demonstrates a revolutionary form of writing that expresses bodily rhythms and drives and resists the rationalities of conventional language (1987).<sup>136</sup> Arguing that the subject is produced by language, Kristeva reinstates linguistic expression as a dynamic entity, capable of effecting experience and meaning.<sup>137</sup> Her recognition of this dynamism highlights the importance of language in practices of signification (*significance*), within which the expression of bodily drives is crucial in the formation of subjectivity.

Kristeva describes *significance* as an ‘unlimited and unbounded generating process’, the ‘unceasing operation of the drives toward, in, and through language’, a *practice* of heterogeneity that structures and de-structures (Kristeva, 1984, p.17).

Within the processes of signification, there are two modalities, the *semiotic* and the *symbolic*.<sup>138</sup> Broadly, the symbolic is an expression of clear, ordered and efficient

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<sup>136</sup> Kristeva’s use of ‘poetry’ is not indicative of poetry as a specific genre. The ‘poetic word’ can be found ‘wherever language challenges and reorders the principles of everyday communication and the structures of grammar and syntax, and whenever an artist chooses to experiment’ (Cavallaro, 2003, p.81).

<sup>137</sup> Kristeva’s work was important in the third phase of the androgyny debates which I discussed in the introduction and chapter one (see pages 54-58 and page 110). The discursive threads in this phase promote an understanding of embodiment that collapses binary logic, and although androgyny was precariously received, the wider theoretical territory in which the concept is situated provides an alternative way to interpret the materiality of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I have drawn on some of these discursive positions at various points in my thesis, for instance, Moi’s re-reading of Woolf’s androgyny in chapter one, and in the resistance posed to unified notions of the self through the inter-textual layers of *The Waves* and *A Sky* (chapters two and three). The textual points of overlap I identified by ‘listening out’ influenced my decision to return to Kristeva’s work in this chapter.

<sup>138</sup> Kristeva’s symbolic and semiotic modes develops and interrogates the Lacanian concepts of Symbolic and Imaginary. Lacan argues that the mirror stage constitutes a child as unitary subject because it leads to entry into the Symbolic order; before this, in the imaginary phase, the child has no sense of self and experiences limitless being through its mother. The Symbolic is associated with the Law of the Father; upon entry to this order, the child becomes a social subject and subjectivity is a product of language. Kristeva is wary of ideologies that claim a totalising subject, and her concepts of symbolic and semiotic displace the distinction made by Lacan. For further reading, see Oliver (1993) and Moi (1985).

meaning; it articulates logic. In contrast, the semiotic is a discharge of energy, emotion or feeling, and in expressing bodily drives may be verbal, or extra-verbal. Kristeva claims that by disrupting normal practices of grammar and syntax — expressions associated with the semiotic mode — it is possible to disturb the symbolic order. In constituting the subject, the semiotic and symbolic are intertwined, discharging through and into each other. Despite their different signifying potential, both modes are crucial for the subject's acquisition of language and do not function in opposition: speaking beings energise symbolic modes of signification through the discharge of semiotic bodily drives.

Kristeva attends to the semiotic as a space of primary pulsation she calls the *chora*.<sup>139</sup> The *chora* focuses on motility and is the catalyst for the articulation and rearticulation of the signifying process. In the stage prior to the recognition of self, the subject is immersed in the semiotic *chora*, a space of glossolalia, intonation, rhythm and sound. Here, the subject is a not-yet-subject and cannot attribute language to experience, however, sounds and language point to objects beyond the self and in the push towards the symbolic the semiotic *chora* is ruptured. Kristeva calls this rupture the *thetic break*.<sup>140</sup> The *thetic break* helps form subjectivity, and once the threshold into the symbolic order is crossed, the *chora* is repressed. Repression does not signal absolute loss; the presence of the semiotic continues beyond the *thetic break*, disrupting symbolic language. Disruption can be syntactical, or it might include sounds and utterances reminiscent of early attempts at self-expression. The important

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<sup>139</sup> Kristeva borrows the term *chora* from Plato's *Timaeus* to 'denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases' (Kristeva, 1984, p.5).

<sup>140</sup> Kristeva uses the example of a child imitating a dog – 'woof-woof' – to demonstrate the *thetic break*. Whilst this appears to articulate the pre-linguistic sounds of the semiotic, the child's imitation is the recognition of difference; 'woof-woof' indicates both a step away from the heterogeneous space of the *chora*, and a step towards the symbolic (Kristeva, 1984, pp.43-45).

point Kristeva makes is that entry into the Symbolic order does not grant the subject the security of language because language is always haunted by a pre-linguistic semiotic modality.

This structure impacts the subject's material world. In the *chora*, there is no body *per se*; as the subject enters the symbolic order, however the body is culturally inscribed and further boundaries between subject, world and culture are created. Kristeva argues that the efforts of language to provide complete meaning creates an *other* body, a *remnant* experienced by the subject as a consequence of linguistic grasping (Kristeva, 1988). Conceptualised through cultural inscription, the body is an *excess* that evades capture by signs (Cavallaro, 2003, p.126). Accessing the symbolic demands a subject '*act upon* its own body...define its corporeal boundaries' and shed '*borderline materials that threaten its self-containedness*' (Cavallaro, 2003, p.128). Despite the repression initiated by the thetic break, Kristeva claims that artistic practice allows a subject to re-experience semiotic space. This can happen because the body enables the speaking being and figures prominently in processes of signification.

The resurrection of semiotic expression is a particular linguistic practice, separate yet connected to the orderly structure of the symbolic. Re-accessing the semiotic after the thetic break invites motion into the unitary subject of the symbolic, annihilating homogeneity through the generative renewal of movements. In shattering the discourse of the symbolic, the unitary subject becomes a subject in process, threatening social order, linguistic signs and systems, rejecting the symbolic and mobilising repressed semiotic drives. This revolutionary subject is connected to the potential of artistic practice by allowing the *jouissance* of semiotic motility to enter the symbolic as a disruptive force. Kristeva argues that the '*semiotisation of the symbolic*' releases the '*flow of jouissance into language*' (Kristeva, 1984, p.79). This

flow is made possible through artistic practice, and the structuring and de-structuring processes of *significance* (Kristeva, 1984, p.79):

our only chance to avoid being neither master nor slave of meaning lies in our ability to insure our mastery of it (through technique or knowledge) as well as our passage through it (through play or practice). In a word, *jouissance* (Kristeva, 1987, p.x).

The ‘passage to the outer *boundaries* of the subject and society’, *jouissance* refers to total joy, or ecstasy (Kristeva, 1984, p.17).<sup>141</sup>

Given the complex and abstract nature of Kristeva’s theory of subject formation, it is necessary to explicate the most salient details of her theorisation before considering their import for androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*.<sup>142</sup> In the process of reconceptualisation, it is important that the original concept is recognisable amidst its alternative expression. The space of the symbolic and semiotic allows the exploration of androgyny’s history, without this history prescribing meaning, or affixing a specific material presentation. Kristeva’s theorisation gives the subject space to intervene in processes of meaning-making, without fixing or suggesting a specific material expression. This invites a meditation upon the possibilities of the primary space before the individuation of male and female; a space that is reminiscent of the *chora*. This theoretical framework shows how the meaning of the androgynous subject is determined by the logic of the symbolic, however this is accompanied by the possibility of semiotic discharge into this logic, and the recovery of expressive

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<sup>141</sup> Kristeva’s configuration of *jouissance* is related to that of Lacan. Whilst there are some differences in meaning between the common usage, it is significant that *jouissance* covers a ‘totality of enjoyment’ (Roudiez, 1987, p.16). Where common usage maintains a division between several meanings determined by context, Lacan’s speaks of simultaneity, where *jouissance* details the ‘sexual, spiritual, physical, conceptual at one and the same time’ (Roudiez, 1987, p.16). In Kristeva’s use, sexual or sensual pleasure is *plaisir*, where *jouissance* is total joy separate from ‘mystical connotations’ (Roudiez, 1987, p.16).

<sup>142</sup> As I have previously referenced, Moi (1985) and Minow-Pinkney (2010) have previously drawn upon a Kristevan frame to explore the political scope of Woolf’s writing. Similarly, Gordon briefly engages Kristeva’s concept of the semiotic to contextualise moments of ‘sonorous excess’ in Bush’s song ‘The Red Shoes’, although she does not develop the potential of Kristevan thought for interpreting the musical formation of subjectivity (Gordon, 2005, p.49).



experience prior to the solidification of meaning.

Through artistic practice it is possible to discharge an androgynous semiotic experience into the symbolic understanding of androgyny; a process which is unavoidably abstract. In Kristevan terms, *The Waves* and *A Sky* can be read as the articulation of a poetic language expressing androgyny's negativity.<sup>143</sup> This raises several questions, two of which are important in the progression of this discussion. Firstly, if poetic language is an experimental revolution of the semiotic articulated on the borders of the symbolic, in what ways can *The Waves* and *A Sky* be considered a semiotic expression of androgyny, and how does this negate its ordinary meaning? Secondly, if the 'strengthening of the semiotic, which knows no sexual difference, must, therefore, lead to a weakening of traditional gender divisions' (Moi, 1985, p.165) what is at stake, creatively and conceptually, in seeking the semiotic expression of the androgynous subject? These questions theoretically underpin the final part of this chapter where I will explore the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*, but before I begin this analysis, I will provide further context on the significance of artistic practice in breaching the boundaries of the unitary subject through exploring Grosz's work on art and the organic.

Grosz's work on art and the organic provides a way to expand Kristeva's understanding of revolutionary writing in the production of *jouissance*. Grosz argues for a connection between the 'productive explosion of the arts from the provocations posed by the forces of the earth...with the forces of living bodies' (Grosz, 2008, pp.2-3). 'Bodies' does not refer explicitly to human bodies but focuses on the exertion of

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<sup>143</sup> Despite her work on the relationship between the maternal body, the semiotic and the subjugation of women under patriarchal rule, Kristeva refuses to define 'woman', and remains wary of any claim that attempts to name. In the case of 'woman', Kristeva proposes a negativity that refuses marginality; a resistance which ensures the discharge of drives between the semiotic and symbolic.

energy generated through the ‘production of the new and create, through their efforts, networks, fields, territories’ (Grosz, 2008, p.3).<sup>144</sup> The intensification of that which is extracted is transformational and ‘enables and induces art’ (Grosz, 2008, p.3). Grosz situates art as more than a ‘system of unique images’ that function as signs; rather, she refers to forms of creativity that are affective rather than representational, emphasising the connections between material forces and lived experience (Grosz, 2008, p.3).<sup>145</sup>

Grosz focuses on the ‘multiplicity of sensations’, whose propagation is ‘always a mode of resonance or harmonious vibration’, with an oscillatory movement (Grosz, 2008, pp.18-19). Echoing Kristeva’s theorisation on the relationship between revolutionary poetic language — a structure which includes music — Grosz claims that the ‘visual and sonorous arts capture something of the vibratory structure of matter itself’ (Grosz, 2008, p.19):

they extract color, rhythm, movements from chaos in order to slow down and delimit within it a territory that is capable of undergoing a reshaping and a new harmonics that will give it independence, a plane of stabilization, on which to sustain itself (Grosz, 2008, p.19).

This promotes dynamic movement over stasis, where different combinations of relations are involved in perpetual processes of becoming. These becomings are not solely imaginative; they are material, their forces enveloped in an embrace with life enabling exchanges that create more becomings (Grosz, 2008, p.23). As the direct

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<sup>144</sup> Grosz’s work aligns with contemporary materialism, and her philosophies in *Chaos, Territory, Art* evokes processes like those of Barad’s intra-action (2008). Whilst their concerns are comparable, Grosz is specifically interested in the connection between art and sexual selection.

<sup>145</sup> Grosz is influenced here by Deleuze and Guattari, who claim art produces intensities. Intensities, sensations and affects are bodily forces linking the ‘phenomenological body with cosmological forces, forces of the outside, that the body itself can never experience directly’ (Grosz, 2008, p.3). ‘Affects immerse the body into materiality and chaos; they are myriad becomings across human and nonhuman and arise in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon. Affect is an impingement or extrusion of a momentary or sometimes more sustained state of relation *as well as* the passage...of forces and intensities’ (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, p.1). Affect theory influences multiple disciplines, and Gregg and Seigworth trace eight ‘regions of investigation’ emerging from Sedgwick and Frank (1995b), Massumi (1995), Deleuze (1988) and Tomkins (1962), placing Grosz in a ‘nonhumanist, oftentimes subterranean’ tradition (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010, pp.1-9).

intensification of the resonance between diverse milieus, art mobilises affective forces, opening the universe to becoming-other.

Grosz's work highlights the intersection between interiority and exteriority; theory, art and concept. As the structure of Grosz's argument, the connectivity of this triple gesture is expressed by the significance of birds and birdsong in the materiality of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Grosz re-reads Darwin's theory of evolution to argue that art is best understood as an excess of bodily energy in nature. She begins by examining the role of music in the processes of sexual selection and the evolution of language. Grosz follows Darwin's belief that because music has origins in the erotic functions of sexual selection it precedes language. From Darwin's theory, Grosz highlights the vibratory effects it creates upon material bodies, which she contextualises as the intensification of bodily passions, where 'living beings are vibratory beings' (Grosz, 2008, p.33):

Vibrations, waves, oscillations, resonances affect living bodies, not for any higher purpose but for pleasure alone. Living beings are vibratory beings: vibration is their mode of differentiation, the way they enhance and enjoy the forces of the earth itself (Grosz, 2008, p.33).

In the movements of becoming, music effects the mutual flow of attraction inviting a divergent array of living beings. For Darwin, these entwinements are exemplified by birdsong.

Darwin lists several reasons why birdsong is most representative of music, including the repertoire of songs, variations, improvisation and the incorporated scope of tones, pitches, melodies, tempos and rhythms. Most importantly, however, he emphasises the intensification of emotions experienced individually and witnessed in others, within which birdsong serves a purpose beyond the marking of territory or sexual selection. They are expressions of worldliness; direct reflections of a bird's experience of life, a spatial and temporal placement of situated experience. There are

numerous discursive threads that might be pursued here, from the convergent evolution of human song and birdsong to intersections between human speech and birdsong as communicative languages; however in exploring the connection between androgynous expression, materiality and the conceptual possibilities of artistic creation, Grosz's posthuman claim to expressive capability carries specific significance.<sup>146</sup>

the songbird...accomplishes something new in its oratory, a new art, a new coupling of (sonorous) qualities and milieus that isn't just the production of new musical elements, materials – melodies, rhythms, positive music contents – but the opening up of the world itself to the force of taste, appeal, the bodily, pleasure, desire – the very impulses behind all art (Grosz, 2008, p.39).

Grosz expands this to claim the movement of sonorous beings as part of a natural counterpoint with several conjunctions. Following these movements, 'the natural world can itself be construed as musical, as the playing out of a certain number of musical themes, the movement of duets, trios, quartets, orchestras to create natural sonatas, love songs, requiems' (Grosz, 2008, p.39). Grosz makes a direct correlation between the principles of composition, musical performance and 'bodily schema and its lived milieu' as situated within nature (Grosz, 2008, p.40).<sup>147</sup>

In chapter two, I explored the significance of birdsong in *The Waves* and *A Sky* in relation to pastoral convention, and Grosz's posthuman account of materiality gives fresh context through which to engage the presence of these nonhuman bodies. The textual strategies used by Woolf and Bush to communicate the presence of birds to the

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<sup>146</sup> The question of whether birdsong can be considered music is a complex area of debate, opening discourses on animals' ability to musically express or demonstrate an understanding of music's qualities. These perspectives incorporate questions about speech, language, evolution and the origins of music. For further reading see Bolhuis and Everaert (eds.) (2013), Yan (2013), Mundy (2009), Wallin, Merker and Brown (eds.) (2000), and Head (1997).

<sup>147</sup> Influenced by Deleuze, Grosz contextualises birds and birdsong as refrains to show how the vibrations of milieus are shaped into the harmonics of territories (Grosz, 2008, p.54). The refrain carries the condition of bodily rhythm, which 'encapsulates and abstracts these rhythmic or vibratory forces into a sonorous emblem, a composed rhythm' (Grosz, 2008, p.55). As the 'regularised patterns of vibration or resonance' rhythm moves from refrain to body, the oscillations of which constitutes pleasure and pain (Grosz, 2008, p.55).

reader/listener focus upon experience and bodily intensification. Woolf achieves this through language, by drawing the reader's ears and eyes to the behaviour of the birds, where Bush highlights the importance of birdsong through the album artwork, sampled sound, vocal performance and compositional technique. In both cases, the focus is placed upon the different ways birdsong is enacted within the worlds of each text and the impact of this situatedness upon the production of song. Experience and song are expressively entwined, reflecting the multiple movements of becoming through art. The flows of these movements express the oscillations between lived beings in a given moment, contextualising the material world through 'shifting configurations' and the sensorial attunement to these ever-changing conditions (Sigouin, 2015, p.170).

Engaging Kristeva's theory of the phallic woman, Taylor contextualises birdsong in *The Waves* as a metaphor for speech (Taylor, 2006, p.65). She argues that 'birdsong is not treated so much as music...as it is treated as language' (Taylor, 2006, p.68). As creatures of the air, her reading associates birds with paternal law, with the realm of language, speech and order. Given the birdlike metaphors used to describe Jinny, Taylor reads her as a character who has embraced the Symbolic. Whilst she begins to engage the structural premise of Kristeva's theorisation of psychological bisexuality, her interpretation of the metaphorical significance of birdsong is conceptually limited, and fails to consider its significance beyond its employment as a technical tool in the articulation of human language.<sup>148</sup> In Taylor's search for a

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<sup>148</sup> The expression of birds and birdsong in *The Waves* and *A Sky* raises questions about the animal and anthropocentrism. Taylor's interpretation is problematic in this regard because she fails to consider the birds as autonomous beings, interpreting their presence as a metaphorical device. The environment created by Woolf and Bush negates this interpretation because they develop a material reality that is not human-centred. Whilst I cannot fully address these issues here, *The Waves* and *A Sky* open an avenue for further research on this subject. For further reading on the animal question, see Weil (2012), Pick (2011), Derrida (2008), Calarco (2008) and Haraway (2007).

character's clear communication within the semiotic and symbolic, she overlooks the interpretative possibilities opened by the experience of *The Waves*' material world and its connection to artistic practice.

The developmental relationship between the narrator and birdsong in *A Sky* expands these interpretative possibilities, expressing the disruptive possibilities of artistic practice. This relationship begins at the start of the cycle, as distinct vocalities are introduced, and through the manipulation of compositional technique undergo a series of augmentations. The initial exclamations express preparatory vocal soundings, announcing presence and generating narratives of characterisation within invitations to further engagement. Similarly, in the interludes Woolf charts the life of birds and their communion through song. Correlating with the expression in *A Sky*, these habits and behaviours are gradually drawn into the description of the characters. Similarly, as the chorus provides an omnipotent presence, an initially dominant perspective becoming less individuated as the cycle processes, so the perception of the birds is the focal point of the interludes, becoming expressively entwined as the narratives of the interludes and soliloquies develop.

The work of Kristeva and Grosz provides a collaborative commentary upon the processes of language acquisition and materiality in relation to revolutionary forms of composition and artistic practice. This relationship is crucial for androgyny, because it allows the perception of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as androgynous materialities, connecting artistic creativity to the production of conceptual meaning. These material worlds allow androgyny to enact its own conceptual production without defaulting to prescribed meaning. If the normative understanding of androgyny can be considered a product of the symbolic order, the material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* express a semiotic shattering of this discourse, an expression where boundaries between

subjects are persistently ruptured through their ability to enact within their own experience. The presence of birdsong is a creative fulcrum in *The Waves* and *A Sky*; it is a crucial aspect of the structuring and de-structuring forces within each world, and is a vital expressive technique in the production of art. As a reflection upon the wider structures of characterisation — the disarticulation of an individuated ‘I’ leading to intra-active communality — the technical communication of birdsong represents an in-world expression of the vibratory forces affecting every living being.

The material reality of *The Waves* and *A Sky* constitutes a world of things, a network of intra-actions that point to the becoming of subjectivity through oscillatory and vibrational movements. Contextualising androgyny within these worlds connects creative and conceptual expression, highlighting the importance of artistic practice when interpreting the relationship between androgyny and musical performance. Allowing the internal and external worlds of art and artistic production to meet creates a space that questions the specificity of androgyny’s normative materiality, whilst simultaneously opening new interpretative insights.

‘Listening out’ to androgynous expression highlights moments or features that appear to be important for the creation of conceptual meaning. Interpreting these features through Kristeva’s and Grosz’s theoretical models turns the recognition of these characteristics into the perception of the material life of androgyny. Attending to the interior worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* alongside the exterior, technical practices of Woolf and Bush demonstrates the complex ways conceptual meaning is expanded by the conditions of literature and music. These processes are unpredictable and take multiple, inconsistent pathways, yet unpredictability is positive for androgyny because it opens a condition of limitation to a state of unlimited potential. Considering the conceptual importance of creative expression alongside the revolutionary potential of

artistic production allows androgyny to simultaneously reflect upon its historical configuration whilst creating new, flexible processes through which to make meaning more meaningful.

In this discussion, I have explored the importance of artistic production in the creation of conceptual meaning. My intention was two-fold. In the first instance I wanted to expand upon the conceptualisation of materiality I identified during this chapter's opening discussion, by focussing on the theoretical significance of artistic creation for subject formation, bodily expression and material intensification. Secondly, I wanted to create a theoretical context for the exploration that follows, where I 'listen out' to the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*. I began by providing an overview of Kristeva's theory of revolutionary writing, and by exploring the role of semiotic and symbolic spaces in creating and ordering the subject, I focussed on the ways in which artistic practice can disturb the homogeneity of the subject by mobilising semiotic drives. Through Kristeva's theoretical model I asked questions about how *The Waves* and *A Sky* might be considered a semiotic expression of androgyny and what is at stake conceptually in seeking such an expression. As I will attempt to posit an answer to these questions in the final part of this chapter, I provided further context on the importance of artistic creation by exploring Grosz's work on art and organic. I explored her re-reading of Darwin's theory of evolution to focus on her contextualisation of art as an affective practice that promotes dynamic movement between multiple combinations of relations. Her theory allowed me to contextualise birds and birdsong in *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of worldliness that represent both the interior materiality of each text and the exterior practices adopted by Woolf and Bush. I closed the discussion by considering the importance of Kristeva's and Grosz's work for the interpretation of androgynous



materialities in *The Waves* and *A Sky*, arguing that their theoretical models support ‘listening out’ as a practice through which to expand conceptual meaning.

Having established this theoretical framework and its importance for interpreting the technical expression of androgyny’s material life, in the following section I will trace the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*.

### The waves broke on the shore: Releasing androgynous *jouissance*

In the previous section, I explored the importance of artistic practice in the production of conceptual meaning. Beginning with an overview of Kristeva’s theory of revolutionary writing, I asked questions about the semiotic expression of androgyny, and the expansion of meaning that might stem from seeking such an expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. To contextualise these questions, I explored Grosz’s work on art and the organic, focussing particularly on birds and birdsong. This discussion showed the importance of literary and musical conditions for expanding the meaning of androgynous expression. It also provided a theoretical framework through which to interpret the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*, the analysis of which I will undertake in the following discussion. I will mobilise this through the recognition of two exceptional moments in *A Sky*, drawing upon comparable articulations from Bernard’s final soliloquy to support my interpretation.

Woolf conceptualised an ‘exceptional moment’ as an interruption to the ‘non-being’ of everyday life, and I take my understanding of such moments in *A Sky* from her (Woolf, 1982, pp.81-84).<sup>149</sup> Exceptional moments constitute a ‘sudden violent shock’, one which pierces ‘the cotton wool’ of daily life by providing insight into

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<sup>149</sup> ‘Non-being’ is Woolf’s shorthand and refers to the opposite of being, or the parts of every day that are not lived consciously (Woolf, 1982, p.81).

something valuable (Woolf, 1982, p.84). For my agenda in this thesis, the most pertinent example occurs in the culminating chapter in *A Room*, where the androgynous mind is revealed to Mary. As demonstrated by this moment, the material worlds in which exceptional moments transpire are susceptible to affective forces and the generative powers of intensification and cannot, therefore, be considered stable or fixed in their transmission of meaning.<sup>150</sup> Consequently, I would argue that exceptional moments provide conceptual and creative context for the interpretation of androgynous expression. This leads to me to explore the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance* in two such moments in *A Sky*.

Whilst there are several moments in *A Sky* that are exceptional in their consolidation and transmission of meaning, there are two that struck my ear as particularly significant. The first occurs in the song ‘Aerial Tal’ and the second, in ‘Aerial’. To interpret androgynous *jouissance*, I will explore the textuality of each moment, considering the surrounding musical context and identifying comparable moments in *The Waves*.

The first exceptional moment emerges in ‘Aerial Tal’, a sixty-second vignette that marks a narrative shift in the way characters interact in *A Sky*. Texturally this is the simplest song in the cycle, with a three-note piano motif repeated with ostinato effect accompanying a duet between the narrator (performed by Bush) and blackbird (sampled sound). ‘Aerial Tal’ crystallises the interactions that take place prior to this moment in the cycle, augmenting the lyrical gestures that pass between narrator and the chorus. Until this point, the exchanges between characters are invitational,

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<sup>150</sup> Exploring the feelings of connectivity evoked by affiliations to musical traditions, Kramer asks how music comes to ‘acquire this particular type of narrativity’ (Kramer, 1999, p.59). Drawing upon the final pages of James Baldwin’s short story ‘Sonny Blues’, Kramer identifies a narrative moment, which emerges from several threads in the story’s multiple narrative structure to reveal an ‘emotional and social truth’ that is unknown until ‘it breaks through’ (Kramer, 1999, p.60).

representing a reaching out, or appeal to the experience of other vocalities. Preceding ‘Aerial Tal’, ‘Sunset’ helps to set up a space where vocal exchange progresses to communion through duet: the narrator sings, the chorus responds, and both join in the finale of the track. Whilst the chorus can be heard in previous tracks, they are situated within refrains, performed as though removed from the events in the cycle; much like Woolf’s interludes they express material intra-action but are observational. In ‘Aerial Tal’, the developmental exchanges of ‘Sunset’ create a space where the chorus and narrator *become* through their intra-action in a communicative expression that is direct and engaging. This is further emphasised by the mix of voices in the track’s production. The character ‘speaking’ is at the front of the mix until the finale, where narrator and chorus join together. At this point, there is no ‘main’ character or dominant vocality; the sonic environment becomes less distinct, more fluid, and the lyrical delivery lacks enunciation.

‘Aerial Tal’ consists of ten motifs which are guided by the blackbird song. The first two are performed by the blackbird, with the piano motif joining at the third (0:13), and the narrator joining on the fourth motif (0:17). Upon the delivery of the tenth motif (0:49), the sun laughs, followed by the wood pigeon, and the chorus singing ‘A sea of honey/a sky of honey’ with the texture, pitch and rhythmic inflexions of the wood pigeon call. These final words are the only offerings of linguistic expression, as the narrator sings the same blackbird motifs, melodically and rhythmically stylised with syllabic sounds — ‘ta da da ta, trr di da’. Despite its length, all the characters are present — the narrator, the wood pigeon, the blackbird, the chorus and the sun – though they appear in different vocal spaces. The wood pigeon motif is heard in the ostinato piano line, inspiring the verbal utterances of the chorus; the narrator imitates blackbird song; the blackbird is given a more prominent vocal

space, and the sun reappears with a non-verbal utterance. 'Aerial Tal' is a precarious moment in the cycle, representing both development and disruption; developmental because it consolidates the process of intra-action that has guided the utterances of multiple vocalities within the same space, and disruptive because it creates a point of stasis, magnifying a moment between the narrator and the blackbird by disturbing the linear progression of events in the song cycle.

Despite incorporating mimetic techniques, the exchanges in 'Aerial Tal' do not subsume personalities into one presence. Instead, the imitation is a form of echoic mimicry, which is 'communication in the absence of anything to say' (Carter, 2004, p.46). The driving force behind imitation in this context is the desire to find similarities between utterances that are consolidated but distinct. The dialogic interactions of 'Sunset' can be interpreted as a communicatory limit, positioning 'Aerial Tal' as a 'place of shared recognition' (Carter, 2004, p.46). Whilst the material reality of these exchanges resists a linear progression, the narrative arc between 'Sunset' and 'Aerial Tal' represents the linguistic processes that allow the chorus to intra-act with the narrator. Crucially, these same processes support the narrator as she finds her place in the communion through the renunciation of language.

Drawing upon Kristeva's theoretical model, the textual practices underpinning these exchanges emphasise the movement between semiotic and symbolic expression. Read as the gathering of expressive capacity, the relationship between the vocal utterances in 'Sunset' and 'Aerial Tal' express the process of meaning, of *significance*, as it is formed through two distinct modalities. In this sense, the narrator's imitation is evocative of the prelinguistic state that precedes the mapping of language onto vocal production. This state emphasises extra-verbal communication and is beyond the control of the symbolic and the imposition of prescribed meaning.

In this context, 'Aerial Tal' resists symbolic power; the stylised, syllabic utterances articulate the narrator's search for semiotic expression. As Kristeva points out, a child imitating a dog barking is a step towards the symbolic through the recognition of boundaries between selves, however through its communicative methods, 'Aerial Tal' alters the movements underlying this structure. The narrator imitates by drawing upon the sounds of a pre-linguistic state so that she may disrupt the boundaries that have been created between herself and otherness as a result of the thetic break. This cultivates a reverse movement, an attempt to recover the space of the *chora* by embracing the expressive possibilities of a pre-linguistic semiotic modality.

A similar desire is expressed by Bernard in *The Waves*, who is arguably less successful in his efforts. At the start of his final soliloquy, Bernard has an early exceptional moment:

How tired I am of stories, how tired I am of phrases that come down beautifully with all their feet on the ground! Also, how I distrust neat designs of life that are drawn upon half-sheets of notepaper. I begin to long for some little language such as lovers use, broken words, inarticulate words, like the shuffling of feet on the pavement (Woolf, 2008a, p.199).

This is a profound admission for Bernard, who lived his life as an aspiring writer, gathering descriptive phrases, and expressing a belief in the power of words to possess reality. In considering his life, the complexities of past, present and future reveal experiences that resist description through words. Language fails and becomes that which cannot affix meaning. It creates a false coherence, capable only of articulating one version of experience; its once totalising power cannot capture the formlessness of being in the world. He wishes for a 'little language' that expresses experience, rather than organising it through appropriation; 'broken words, inarticulate words', single syllable utterances that penetrate the ordering character of language, functioning instead as extra-verbal expressions of all experience, including those which may evade

linguistic description (Woolf, 2008a, p.199). From a Kristevan perspective, Bernard is looking to bring the semiotic modality into the symbolic. His 'little language' evokes the syllabic utterances of 'Aerial Tal', although he cannot discover a comparable expressive modality and remains bound to representational language. Throughout *The Waves*, Bernard links the formation and meaning of self to language; he cannot commit, however, to the fixity of linguistic articulations and questions its role in the production of meaning. Whilst Bernard realises his desire for expression beyond language he cannot move past its power. 'Aerial Tal', on the other hand, finds a preparatory, explorative path that initiates the movement from desire to expressive practice.

Crucial in this movement is the practice of repetition, and in this respect, the compositional structure of 'Aerial Tal' represents a sixty-second encapsulation of the processes underpinning the cycle in its entirety. As an aesthetic and stylistic feature, repetition similarly connects *A Sky* to *The Waves*, as both works are structured around the repetition of consistently evolving themes, images and motifs. Drawing on Deleuze's theory of repetition helps reveal the significance of this textual strategy for interpreting the processes by which androgynous *jouissance* is generated, and expands upon the notion of imitation in the negotiation of symbolic and semiotic realms in Kristeva's model.

In Deleuze's theory, repetition in literature can take the form of a 'sound, syllable, word, phrase, line, stanza or metrical pattern' or 'it can take the more elaborate form of a symbol, image, motif, recurring or extended metaphor' (Monaco, 2013, p.60). Applied to music, repetition may be motivic, rhythmic, harmonic, lyrical, structural, all of which may be associated with symbolic or metaphorical forms. Deleuze contextualises repetition as the tool that enacts structuring and de-structuring

processes within artistic expression, which in turn, highlights the role of imagination:

The role of the imagination, or the mind which contemplates in its multiple and fragmented states, is to draw something new from repetition, to draw difference from it. For that matter, repetition is itself in essence imaginary, since the imagination alone here forms the ‘moment’ of the *vis repetitiva* from the point of view of constitution (Deleuze, 2004, p.97).

Deleuze resists the notion of fixed definition, or models which enforce a singularity of meaning, and emphasises the importance of repetition for a ‘nomadic and fluid system of differences’ (De Beistegui, 2012, p.75). Difference depends upon the making and remaking of meaning, itself a product of the processes of repetition: ‘different inhabits repetition’ (Deleuze, 2004, p.97). Deleuze argues that difference cannot be defined by its distinction from what it is not, as this is false difference. In this structure, difference is not different, it is the same. Repetition is necessary for difference because it creates a return that causes alterations, without which there can be no new emergences because the world repeats an identical version of itself. For Deleuze, difference and repetition exist in a mutual, affective relationship as ‘the singular subject, the interiority and the heart of the other, the depths of the other’ (Deleuze, 2004, p.27).

Deleuze’s understanding of repetition resonates with the broader textual strategies in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. In both texts, repetition is employed as a textual device through which Woolf and Bush sustain the expressive worlds they create. It is particularly important in the communication of character experience and for ensuring the textual permeation of key themes and ideas.<sup>151</sup> I have explored the importance of

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<sup>151</sup> Considered alongside Deleuze’s theory of repetition, the recurring themes, images and motifs in *The Waves* and *A Sky* connects to the history of the fragment in eighteenth century aesthetics concerned with the androgyne. In these traditions, the fragment was associated with an ideology of wholeness, representing beauty through perfect union. Poet and philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel, was concerned with the ‘radical aesthetic possibilities opened up by the indeterminate figure of the androgyne’ (MacLeod, 1998, p.67). Schlegel emphasised indeterminacy and chaos, expressing wariness of an integrated model of the androgyne, focussing instead upon an aesthetic of the fragment that aligns the androgyne’s beauty with the grotesque – ‘more monster than god’ (MacLeod, 1998, p.76). See MacLeod for further reading (1998).

repeated themes, images and motifs at various points throughout this thesis, and when aligned with Deleuze's theory of repetition and difference, the significance of this textual strategy is further emphasised. This is largely the result of the developmental processes Woolf and Bush employ as they create points of divergence from the themes, images and motifs they have previously established. Character presence — communicated through themes, motifs and images — is not subject to identical repetition. They are altered according to the new configurations of relationality that emerge through the material worlds of each text. From a Deleuzian perspective, this is repetition that leads to the emergence of further difference. This resonates with each layer of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, from the overall creative and aesthetic background, to the expression of characterisation, to the articulation of a material world dependent upon intra-action, to the literary and musical techniques Woolf and Bush use. Not only does this communicate the centrality of relationality within the interior worlds of each text, but it also communicates these mutually affective relationships to the reader and listener.

From this perspective, the duet between the narrator and blackbird in 'Aerial Tal' is not one of mechanical imitation. The narrator does not attempt an identical form of imitation, nor does she attempt to occupy the same vocal space as the blackbird. This is exemplified by the stylised, syllabic sounds, which represent imitations whilst maintaining expressive distinction. This form of repetition emphasises the relationality between vocal spaces, whilst ensuring the expression of their difference. The weight of these alterations and the new emergences they create is largely due to the significance of birdsong in the worldly expression of *A Sky*, and this textual strategy connects the theoretical models of Kristeva, Grosz and Deleuze. The duet between the narrator and blackbird articulates the intensification of resonance



between the diverse milieu that Bush creates throughout *A Sky*. The relationship between characters — which is further contextualised by vocal spaces occupied by harmonic language and instrumentation — represents the mobilisation of affective forces, an excess of material energy and the situatedness of experience. In this respect, ‘Aerial Tal’ is an exceptional moment in *A Sky* because it initiates the generative processes through which androgynous *jouissance* is achieved. This emphasises the shifting between modalities — verbal and non-verbal utterance — as a product of the difference that emerges from repetition. Crucially, this condition is sustained by the material world Bush creates through her compositional practice.

‘Aerial Tal’ is an exceptional moment because it initiates the generative processes necessary to release androgynous *jouissance*. Exploring the significance of this song, both as an expression of the interior world of *A Sky* and for its commentary on the importance of textual strategies and artistic production, has similarly provided an opportunity to expand upon important moments in the final soliloquy of *The Waves*. Implicating androgyny within the multiple threads I have explored above — which includes the incorporation of theoretical discourse — shows how androgyny’s conceptual emergence can be initiated by the search for its semiotic expression. These expressions continue to expand in the second exceptional moment in *A Sky*, where androgynous *jouissance* is released. To explore this moment, I will take into account the context provided by the song as a whole, identifying key points in the musical narrative, and as above, will reflect upon how ‘Aerial’ can expand our understanding of important moments in *The Waves*’ final soliloquy. I will close the chapter with further thoughts on the importance of seeking the textual expression of androgynous *jouissance* for expanding conceptual meaning.

The second exceptional moment in *A Sky* occurs in the song ‘Aerial’. The concluding song in the cycle, ‘Aerial’ presents a narrative culmination that combines the simplicity of the accompaniment in ‘Aerial Tal’ with the complex layers of sound featured in ‘Nocturn’. The song opens with a sequenced string line in triple time, creating an ostinato effect throughout the song resembling that heard in ‘Aerial Tal’ but lacking the acute rhythmic distinction and syncopatory effect. This ostinato lies somewhere between the ebb and flow of the wave line from ‘Prelude’ and the detached, staccato piano fragments of ‘Aerial Tal’ (Figure 22).



*Figure 22 – Ostinato (0:00-0:03)*

The voices of familiar characters begin to join (0:05-0:15), the sun’s laughter (unheard since ‘Aerial Tal’), followed in rapid succession by a blackbird call and the sound of seagulls (a continuation from the setting of the previous track, ‘Nocturn’). In keeping with the rest of the cycle, the track maintains a strong c-sharp minor tonality throughout. The narrator joins amidst this texture with a motivic manifestation that recalls the melismatic developments from ‘Sunset’ and ‘Nocturn’ (Figure 23).



*Figure 23 – Narrator vocal line (0:16-0:23)*

The performance maintains the fluidity of the A sections from 'Nocturn'; however the faster tempo removes the ethereal quality, evoking an increased sense of urgency. The movement in this opening section is one of sustained pulsation, with a sense of suspension reminiscent of the opening song of the cycle, 'Prelude'. This is emphasised by the range of the narrator's vocal, which does not extend beyond a perfect fifth, until the final note of the phrase which is held for eight seconds a perfect octave above the lowest note of the phrase (0:33-0:41). During this opening section, the narrator's voice remains at the back of the mix, with an increasing amount of echo doubling the vocal lines; the close harmonies of the strings dominating the track, carrying the timbral and textural qualities of the chorus.

The B section continues the ostinato effect, although the density of the texture begins to increase; the bass line is rhythmically doubled jumping an interval of a perfect octave, recalling in an altered context the limits of the narrator's vocal line from song's beginning. Each strong beat is supported by a c-sharp minor chord and the root of the chord is accentuated in the bass of the song. This heightens the pulsatory feeling generated by the combination of increasing textural density and the inclusion of a seventh note in the harmonic language. The narrator joins on an off-beat from the outset of the B section (0:47), delivering the lyrics on the seventh note of c-sharp minor tonality. This echoes the chants of the chorus from the end of 'Nocturn', whilst supporting the presence of the seventh note in the accompaniment of 'Aerial' and its overall presence in the cycle. The seventh note creates a feeling of tension and dissonance, bringing to the song's texture a sense of leading; of drawing the music upwards to the promise of a resolution that is never achieved. This is also reflected in the lyrical content of this moment:

I feel I wanna be up on the roof  
I feel I gotta get up on the roof

I feel I need to be up on the roof

A shorter reprise of the opening section is followed by another B section (1:38), which maintains the overall texture from its initial performance. The narrator's vocal line, however, becomes increasingly syncopated and rhythmically complex, which is odds with the rest of the accompaniment (Figure 24).



*Figure 24 – Second B section, narrator (1:39-1:42)*

The feeling of dissonance is increasingly heightened, both in the compositional processes and in the lyrical content:

What kind of language is this?  
What kind of language is this?  
I can't hear a word you're saying  
Tell me what you are singing,  
In the sun

The rhythmic qualities recall those of the blackbird's motifs heard in 'Aerial Tal', and the use of echo emphasises a lack of enunciation which creates immediate repetitions, reducing the distinction between phrases.

This leads to a moment of stillness, suspension and pause within the texture of 'Aerial', reminiscent of the interludes in *The Waves* and of 'Aerial Tal' (2:00).

Featuring the accompaniment from the opening A section, the focal point of this section is a call and response duet between the narrator and blackbird; each utterance from the blackbird is followed by the narrator with an outburst of laughter (recalling the sun from 'Aerial Tal'). The blackbird begins with two motivic fragments. From here, there are twelve fragments of song and laughter; the gap between each

exclamation gradually closes until they overlap during the thirteenth fragment (3:27). They continue together with an extended fragment before the blackbird is silent (3:34), and the narrator proceeds with a further three fragmented exclamations of laughter, which are doubled using echo effect. The accompaniment begins to increase in textural density during these moments, leading to two further B sections, with variations of the following lyrical content:

All of the birds are laughing  
Come on let's all join in

I want to be up on the roof  
I've gotta be up on the roof  
Up, up high on the roof  
Up, up on the roof  
In the sun

The pulsating beat returns here adding layers of accompaniment which suffocate the vocal lines. This is exacerbated by an increasing amount of echo, which builds throughout the song, rendering the narrator's voice incomprehensible. The final C section is performed by the chorus — with the narrator's voice incorporated — performing phrases of stylised, syllabic imitations of laughter (6:42). The voices and accompaniment end abruptly, and the song cycle ends as it began, with the dawn chorus.<sup>152</sup>

In the overall structure of 'Aerial', the call and response section is the exceptional moment. This is contextualised by that which precedes the duet and the changes that are elicited. When the narrator asks, 'What kind of language is this?' she initiates the process of *becoming* fully immersed in a complex materiality by engaging questions of language, meaning and expression. She shifts from confusion to knowing

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<sup>152</sup> Close listening to this final minute reveals one last outburst of laughter. This occurs at 7:19 and is barely audible without headphones.

through the generative forces of meaning-making; her exposure to otherness leads her to question the fixity of language, as she embraces the potential of extra-verbal expression. This process is the experience of all characters, and their shifting pattern of engagement is textually represented through the modification of recognisable themes and motifs. This environment changes after the duet, as the increasingly dense texture of the song consolidates expressive identities, and whilst the listener can perceive character traits, they are not emphasised in any meaningful way. Bush's use of echo techniques in 'Aerial' exacerbates this shift by widening the space around voices with an oscillatory effect. Through this, the characters do not simply occupy a space, they generate their own material spatiality.

The narrator's duet with the bird leads her to revelation through opening relationality with another vocalic being. 'Aerial' expands the generative processes initiated in 'Aerial Tal', which leads to the release of *jouissance* and the ecstasy of androgynous being. The material world of *A Sky* creates a semiotic space that invites this release; the material entanglement undergoes perpetual alteration giving the narrator access to spaces that are beyond the prescriptive power of linguistic expression. The structure of this space resembles Kristeva's *chora*; its motility enables a not-yet-subject to access extra-verbal states. It is the simultaneous movement forwards and backwards along the paths that lead to a subject's becoming. Taking this journey as it has been explored across the song cycle, each step initiates the returns made possible through semiotic expression. As I discussed in the previous section, in *The Waves*, Bernard realises the need for such a space, but cannot disrupt his place in the symbolic structure enough to achieve its expression, perhaps because he is not committed to the renunciation of his self, or because he fears what form it might take. Later in his soliloquy he repeats his need for a little language, articulating some

specificity in his desire:

I need a little language such as lovers use, words of one syllable such as children speak when they come into the room and find their mother sewing and pick up some scrap of bright wool, a feather, or a shred of chintz. I need a howl; a cry...I need no words. Nothing neat. Nothing that comes down with all its feet on the floor (Woolf, 2008a, p.246).

Bernard's howl and cry have a distinct animalistic quality, showing his awareness of what can escape the confines of symbolic language. This evokes Poizat's work on the thrill of the operatic voice, its 'pure cry' situated 'outside musical discourse' as a 'sheer vocal effect' (Poizat, 1992, p.40). He reads the 'pure cry' as a culmination, a marker of historical progression within operatic tradition, where 'singing grows more and more detached from speech and tends more and more towards the high notes' (Poizat, 1992, p.40). This signals a search for a simple state of vocal materiality, one that proceeds the entrance into the symbolic realm of language. It is the expression of a 'boundless longing'; the soprano's voice 'goes beyond utterance into pure uttering' (Connor, 2000, p.39). Drawing on Poizat, Bernard's 'little language...a howl; a cry' signals a desire for uncontrolled moments of expression, his own 'pure cry' would mark his rapture; the experience and expression of *jouissance*. Where Bernard grasps toward a conclusion, the knowledge of how to relate expression to experience, the gathering energies in *A Sky* do not seek conclusion or resolution. Exclamations are the result of *being within* a changing series of relations, the configuration of which resists closure and conclusion. Verbal and nonverbal utterance reveals a 'drive that remains forever unsatisfied' (Kristeva, 1987, p.142).

The release of *jouissance* is heralded by laughter in 'Aerial', because it enacts the rupturing of verbal language with an extra-verbal utterance, exclaimed in response to something from the exterior world. Stretching backwards and forwards across the continuum of language, it affects a subject, seizing and gripping the body within an

act of reciprocity. In this sense, laughter is paradoxical because it is physiological like coughing or hiccupping but requires external/internal relationality. Drawing upon Baudelaire, Kristeva describes a ‘doubling process’ revealed to the artist by laughter, where the subject ‘posits himself as sovereign at the very moment he shatters within the process encompassing his position’ (Kristeva, 1984, p.222). Laughter ‘designates an irruption of the drives against symbolic prohibition’, an expression of being oneself whilst being another at the same time (Kristeva, 1984, pp.222-223). It articulates a space of *jouissance* because in assuming and undermining an absolute subject, it is the ‘symptom of rupture and of the heterogeneous contradiction within signifying practice’ (Kristeva, 1984, p.223). Kristeva’s textual practice of laughter aligns with the performance of ‘Aerial’ in that it expresses the pleasure that is obtained through resisting and disrupting inhibition (Kristeva, 1984, p.225). Upon being released this pleasure is ‘immediately invested in the production of the new’ (Kristeva, 1984, p.225):

Every practice which produces something new...is a practice of laughter; it obeys laughter’s logic and provides the subject with laughter’s advantages. When practice is not laughter, there is nothing new; where there is nothing new, practice cannot be provoking; it is at best a repeated empty act (Kristeva, 1984, p.225).

In the production of the new, laughter deceives meaning, and the intra-active communion of the narrator and bird expresses a *jouissance* that deceives, ruptures and explodes meaning beyond the sense of figuration.

Exploring the exceptional moments in ‘Aerial Tal’ and ‘Aerial’ has allowed me to consider answers to the questions I posed earlier in the chapter: how can *The Waves* and *A Sky* be considered the semiotic expression of androgyny and how does this impact conceptual meaning?<sup>153</sup> The discussions above, which focus on the

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<sup>153</sup> See page 265 for questions and surrounding context.



interpretation of textual strategy supported by theoretical discourse, answers the first question, however I will now consider how seeking the semiotic expression of androgyny impacts conceptual meaning and influences interpretative approach.

Identifying the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance* asks that we attend to the material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* as they are expressed through Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies. 'Listening out' supports the recognition of these strategies, exposing androgyny to configurations beyond traditional formulations. Consequently, common conceptual associations — for instance androgyny as the transcendence of difference, androgyny as a state of nostalgia and the androgyne as a figure of the sublime — that structurally rely on the fusion of masculine and feminine elements become exposed to more complex states of materiality. Focussing on androgyny through 'listening out' allows a consideration of the life of androgyny within specific literary and musical works, alongside an exploration of the investment in common myths surrounding androgyny's meaning. *The Waves* and *A Sky* express the life of androgyny as developmental, uncertain, unpredictable, inconsistent, yet vitally engaged. Finding the *jouissance* of androgynous expression evokes the double movement in Kristeva's structure of signification in multiple ways: traditional understanding with reconceptualisation, history with future, articulation with expression and representation with experience. It is arguably impossible to release androgyny fully from its association with binarisms, however, its conceptual expression within and through the material worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* invites multiple interpretative movements into this binary logic, thereby disturbing its structure and disrupting its power.

Discovering multifarious movements and flows comments upon the production of meaning in androgyny's history, disrupting the linearity and stability of binary

logic. Connecting androgyny to affirmative configurations of materiality that focus on the vitalism of ontological being, alongside theories on the production of art has allowed me to recognise textual strategies of resistance. The worlds within *The Waves* and *A Sky*, and their technical expression, initiate a narrative where androgyny is both *expressive of* and *expressed within* each work. This configuration depends upon developmental processes that resist the act of naming beings by focussing upon how they are altered by complex networks of intra-action and the entanglement of life. Drawing on the work of Kristeva and Grosz, I was able to ask how a subject comes to be aware of their condition, how this is textually expressed, and how this connects to artistic production and influences interpretative approach. This dynamic provides a way to respond to the myths of androgyny that have informed and characterised conceptual meaning and can be likened to the articulation of the symbolic realm in Kristeva's theoretical model; it is clear and ordered in its articulation of specific characteristics.

'Listening out' to Bush's textual strategies — the extra-verbal utterances, use of sampled birdsong, techniques of imitation and mimicry, the patterns of musical exchanges amidst multiple vocal spaces, instrumental arrangement, harmonic language and the manipulation of production technique — reveals androgyny's potential for semiotic articulations. Allowing the interpretative significance of these strategies to resonate with key moments from *The Waves*, it is possible to characterise both texts as spaces of semiotic expression, through which androgyny can challenge the logic and order of normative considerations. *A Sky* abandons language favouring the immersion into a condition of affirmative materialism, and when interpreted as state of androgynous expression, the *jouissance* of 'Aerial' ruptures the conventions of traditional conceptualisations.

Where the fictions of androgyny emphasise the specificity of male and female bodies, personalities or behaviours, whether it is through strategies that blur, blend or merge, the textual expression of ecstasy in *A Sky* lacks these defining attributes and the repetitious patterns of sameness that result, revelling instead in the destabilisation of expectation. There is predictability in the normative representation of androgyny that is both compromised and wilfully abandoned in *A Sky*; the figure of the androgyne cannot be known, because the material reality that *is* the expression of androgyny never ceases; it is perpetually configured and reconfigured through the dynamism of artistic practice. The release of androgynous *jouissance* as it is exemplified through choric laughter renders conceptual definition impossible; in laughing, androgyny finds a way to deceive itself, to rupture the sense of meaning and perpetually, unpredictably emerge anew.

### Concluding Remarks

My discussions in this chapter have focused on listening to the material life of androgyny and the release of androgynous *jouissance* in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. I started this exploration by examining the material worlds created by Woolf and Bush, identifying parallels between the textual strategies employed. Supported by Ryan's interpretation of *The Waves* as an intra-active posthumanist conceptualisation of life and Rohman's understanding of becoming-vibratory, I contextualised the relationality of human and nonhuman life in both texts as a challenge to the centrality of binary logic and humanist thought in androgyny's historicisation. I expanded my understanding of the material life of androgyny by drawing upon Kristeva's theoretical model of revolutionary writing and Grosz's work on art and the organic. Through these theorisations, I examined the connection between artistic production,

subject formation, bodily expression and material intensification, and produced a framework through which to interpret the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance* in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Highlighting the importance of artistic creation for rupturing the boundaries between symbolic and semiotic expression, I asked how seeking a semiotic expression of androgyny might lead to an expansion of conceptual meaning.

To practically engage the work of Kristeva and Grosz and to explore possible answers to the questions I posed, I analysed two exceptional moments in *A Sky*; the first in the song ‘Aerial Tal’ and the second, in ‘Aerial’. ‘Listening out’ to Bush’s compositional practice, from harmonic language, lyrical content, to instrumentation, vocal performance and production technique, I traced the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance* as it develops between the two exceptional moments. I focussed upon the relationship between human voice and birdsong — particularly the extra-verbal utterances which are characteristic in both songs — and found the release of androgynous *jouissance* in a choric expression of laughter. Through my explorations, I returned to important moments in the final soliloquy of *The Waves*, re-contextualising their importance for androgynous expression through my analysis of ‘Aerial Tal’ and ‘Aerial’. I closed the chapter by considering how seeking a semiotic expression of androgyny supports the practice of ‘listening out’ as an alternative method of interpretative engagement and a means to rupture and expand conceptual meaning. This has allowed me to respond to the common understanding of androgyny and the limited interpretative strategies used in popular music research. In responding to these limitations, I have enriched the understanding of how androgyny comes to mean and have demonstrated the importance of textual strategies in the production of conceptual meaning.

This marks the end of my comparative analysis, and in the next and final chapter, I will reflect upon my practice of ‘listening out’, offering some concluding thoughts on how practices of listening expand and enrich the understanding of androgyny’s expressive capacity in music.

## Conclusion

### The Common Listener 'Listening out' to the musical expression of androgyny

In this thesis, I have formulated and applied a practice of 'listening out' to the musical expression of androgyny. My comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky* has demonstrated the different ways listening can enrich the understanding of androgyny when prioritised as an interpretative strategy. By attending to the multifarious ways concepts can be made to mean, I have extended the historical, social and cultural principles with which androgyny is associated. Focussing on Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies as the primary articulation of androgynous expression has allowed me to expand the possibilities of existing interpretative approaches, whilst highlighting the different ways androgyny permeates the musical fabric of *A Sky*. In doing this, I have accounted for the expression of androgyny in the lyrical content and vocal articulation, two explorative areas common in existing interpretative strategies. Beyond this, I considered the relationship between androgynous expression and the harmonic, melodic and rhythmic structures of *A Sky*, supporting my interpretations with discussions of production techniques and musical textures. In yielding the ground of expectation to the unpredictability of 'listening out', I have opened androgyny to a range of historical and theoretical discourses concerned with the acquisition of knowledge and the production of meaning, and have developed new ways to think about the concept's expressive potential both in popular music and literature.

To frame my research, I began by providing a summary of what I regard as an important moment in the history of androgyny — the 1973 MLA conference. I chose to start here because the narratives of the conference encapsulate positive and negatives responses to androgyny and give an overview of the complex theoretical and

political territory in which the concept is situated. Establishing the broad discursive field allowed me to identify recurring ideas about what androgyny means in relation to wider discourses on the sex, gender, and equality. Exploring this complex theoretical territory, I identified both the limitations and possibilities of the concept, which allowed me to recognise the barriers confronting my research. The most significant hurdle I faced was the multiple and often divisive trajectories in androgyny's history. This was exacerbated by how androgyny is engaged in popular music studies.

I found that the general discipline of popular music studies considers a wider range of musical and non-musical gestures into their analytical strategies. Studies of androgyny, on the other hand, orientate their analysis around the presentation of physical attributes, whether an artist's style, on-stage behaviours, or music videos. Discussions about the musical presence of androgyny focus on the manipulation of genre, lyrical content, and vocal style and technique, and are contextualised by the recognition of physical attributes typically associated with the androgyne. Inspired by the work of Heilbrun, particularly her 'Further notes towards the recognition of androgyny' (1974), I provided a clear statement of how I intended to use androgyny: I would account for the expression of androgyny in the musical fabric of popular song. To support this intention, I developed a practice of 'listening out', establishing a methodological framework that would allow me to recast the common histories of androgyny by attending to its musical expression.

At the start of this thesis, I discussed the circumstances through which practices of listening became central in my approach to androgyny and revealed how attentive listening led me to a comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Exploring 'listening out' as a strategy through which to interpret androgyny in a song's musical fabric, I was aware of the risk in shifting the stability of conceptual

meaning, particularly if I wandered too far from the context in which androgyny is typically recognised. These risks are encapsulated in the following quote:

Suppose you wanted to produce a radical change in the way a given concept was used, and you thought this could be done by producing something incorporating a denial of everything we (others) thought was involved in the employment of this concept. We could only understand the result as a use of *this* concept if we found it to have a significant connection to something which constituted a use of this concept in the past (Goehr, 1994, p.94).

I was aware that to fully realise the potential of ‘listening out’ to androgynous expression, it was important to create an interpretative framework that would support listening as a primary means of conceptual engagement. To accomplish this, I returned to Woolf’s formulation of androgyny as presented in *A Room*.

Woolf’s androgyny permeates twentieth century debates, and by exploring negative and positive critical responses to her formulation, I emphasised her textual strategies as the primary creators of meaning. This allowed me to shift the focus away from androgyny as the expression of a specifically sexed and gendered body, emphasising Woolf’s contextualisation of androgyny as a creative ideal. This set a precedent for my work on ‘listening out’ to androgyny, whilst establishing ‘a significant connection to something [Woolf’s androgyny] which constituted a use of this concept in the past’ (Goehr, 1994, p.94).

I developed this space by exploring the academic study of Bush, to characterise her performance aesthetic and establish existing methodological approaches. Through this survey, I found moments in her music that are associated with androgyny, and whilst she is not regarded as a traditional androgynous performer, her music lends itself to an exploration of androgynous expression through my practice of ‘listening out’. I found that strategies used in the interpretation of these moments focus primarily on Bush’s adoption of multiple personas and vocal strategies, and in this regard, are aligned with conventional understandings of



androgyny's musical presentation. Centralising the physicality of her performance, existing interpretations of Bush's androgyny only nominally consider the role of musical content, whilst the wider study of her performances incorporate a range of musical-analytical techniques. Drawing these different approaches together allowed me to attend to the gaps in research and set to work my practice of 'listening out'. To support this interpretative space, I drew parallels between Woolf's and Bush's aesthetic ambition, to establish preliminary similarities in their individual expressions of androgyny.

Crucial to the creation of this space was a methodological approach that would allow the interpretation of androgyny's musical expression as it manifests through harmonic, melodic and rhythmic structures. Creating this space was one of the most important parts of the research process, because it needed to support my engagement of several different disciplinary threads — the musical expression of androgyny, the wider concept of androgyny, Woolf, Bush, and their literary and musical textual strategies. Each thread was essential in my attempts to unravel both the musical expression of androgyny and its impact upon androgyny's wider conceptualisation. The need for a secure methodological approach was similarly exacerbated by literature and music as distinct mediums, where accounting for expressive differences and similarities was crucial for developing the relationship between *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Drawing on ekphrastic approaches, theoretical discourses and musical-analytical techniques allowed me to cultivate this relationship, whilst making sense of the moment I recognised *The Waves* and *A Sky* as expressions of androgyny.

Having established a methodological framework that would support both my 'listening out' to the musical expression of androgyny and an exploration of the concept's historicisation, I was able to conduct a comparative analysis of *The Waves*

and *A Sky*. To make connections between the two texts, I explored their creative backgrounds and the significance of the artwork accompanying Woolf's original publication of *The Waves* and the images in *Aerial's* liner notes. This allowed me to identify points of comparison in Woolf's and Bush's textual strategies and the aesthetics of each text. This overarching context was crucial in opening further exploratory paths, and led me to consider similarities in form, genre and narrative. In pinpointing parallels between the central themes of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, I found an expressive state that recalled the condition in which Woolf introduced her readers to her formulation of androgyny in *A Room*. I expanded these findings by exploring the textual and thematic centrality of pastoralism and its interpretative significance for androgynous expression.

From here, I drilled deeper into the textual layers of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, exploring how each text's complex articulation of characterisation — the disarticulation of 'I' and the creation of a choric community — challenges the normative understanding of androgyny, whilst providing an alternative expressive context for the concept. By 'listening out' to textual strategies and the multiple, diverse voices that constitute the expression of characterisation, I challenged androgyny's historical association with unity and myths of completion.

Exploring characterisation led me to consider the material life of androgyny, and by drawing together the interior worlds of *The Waves* and *A Sky* with the artistic practices adopted by Woolf and Bush, I charted the generation and release of androgynous *jouissance*. Through this, I challenged the dominance of binary logic in androgyny's history and explored the potential in recovering a semiotic expression of the concept. By focussing upon two exceptional moments in *A Sky*, I recontextualised significant moments in *The Waves* to complicate the notion of androgyny as the

consolidation of male and female bodies and the erasure of difference.

Prioritising ‘listening out’ as the interpretative approach to androgyny I found conceptual expression in the musical fabric of *A Sky*. Building upon the textual strategies adopted by Woolf in *A Room* through a comparative analysis of *The Waves* and *A Sky*, I found the musical expression of androgyny in Bush’s manipulation of harmonic language, in her use of motifs, production techniques, instrumentation, lyrical content and vocal performance, including extra-verbal utterances. By drawing together strategies taken towards the interpretation of androgyny in popular music studies and the wider study of gender in the discipline, I have both challenged assumptions made of the concept’s meaning and decentralised the dominance of androgyny’s visual presence.

Decentralising the image of the androgyne is an important conceptual shift and is one that shows the importance of ‘listening out’ when interpreting androgynous expression. I wrote in the introductory chapter to this thesis of the influence scholars such as Ihde, Nancy and Feld had upon my research. They all attend to the potential of listening in questioning assumptions about the production of meaning, particularly those orientated around the certainty of visualism. Part of the difficulty in vision’s dominance is that it is an ‘inclination’ rather than a conscious choice or prejudice (Kramer, 2018, p.16), and a deliberate turn towards the auditory dimension is capable of recovering the richness of primary experience (Ihde, 2007, p.13). This involves overt and covert practices of listening, reflecting a spectrum of textual engagement. Through this, acts of interpretation are bound to practices of listening, and this understanding asked that I become involved with *The Waves* and *A Sky* as experiences of the auditory, whilst lending an ear for complex ways androgyny might resonate through multiple textual layers. Where the dominance of androgyny’s visualism has

impacted its wider conceptualisation — leading to and supporting the recurrence of myths and fictions — listening initiates movement between what we take for granted about a concept's meaning and what we have yet to learn about its expressive capacity.

Listening creates an opportunity to attend to the multiple guises in which androgyny might appear, for instance in an artist's textual strategies or in a song's musical content. In this respect, listening creates a spatial conception that favours mobility and fluidity (Connor, 1997, p.207). Whilst this space makes it difficult to account for the specific meaning of the listening experience, this unknowability opens androgyny to ways of knowing that interrogate its normative conceptualisation.

Listening makes this possibility because it

is not a practice that is contained and readily available for the historian in one document but instead is enmeshed across multiple textualities, often mentioned in passing, and subsumed under other apparent purposes such as the literary, the grammatical, the poetic, the ritual, the disciplinary, or the ethnographic (Gautier, 2014, pp.7-8).

As an approach to conceptual interpretation, the fluidity of listening practices asks the listener to consider their role within the processes of conceptual expansion, concurrently exploring where and how androgyny is concealed within a musical work. Crucial to this is the renunciation of expectation, because the listener must listen through and past the familiar image of the androgyne. The act of listening, in this respect, exposes gaps in the production of meaning, and consequently, frees androgyny from the assumptions that dominate its historicisation. This form of conceptual opening is challenging because it places the listener within a flow that is dependent upon the continual exchange between the perception of androgynous expression in a text and its subsequent interpretation. The research I have undertaken in this thesis is a practical demonstration of this and reveals the importance of

‘sympathetic transmission’ between diverse and distinct lines of questioning (Flint, 1996, p.189).

The idea of sympathetic intent is vital because it demonstrates the listener’s willingness to become involved with the complexities of androgyny’s conceptual expression. The practice of listening to androgynous expression within music asks for a sympathetic approach to questions of knowledge, one which tentatively searches rather than controls. The openness to encountering androgyny reveals the potential of apperceptive listening, opening the ‘ground for understanding’ and the forging of a new ‘conceptual system’ (Bakhtin, 1981, p.282). Attentive listening gives relationality a constitutive role within strategies of interpretation because it emphasises the importance of interaction and exchanging viewpoints. Through the recognition of multiple textual and interpretative relationships, practices of listening recover androgyny from its association with teleological intentionality, where the exploration of meaning is articulated in a linear, step-by-step manner. Departing from the originary meaning of intent, which comes ‘by metaphor’ from the Latin ‘*intendere arcum in...* meaning to aim a bow and arrow at something’, attention is drawn to the ‘situation of audition’, the ‘following up’ of ‘ambiguous traces’, which metaphorically represents the ‘arching flight’ of a hunter’s arrow (Carter, 2004, p.44). Where intent in this context suggests a straight line from point to point, the ambiguity introduced by practices of listening complicates the linearity in the production of androgyny’s meaning.

‘Listening out’ for androgyny acknowledges the concept’s capacity for complex modes of expression, and once this connection has been made, the listener must find a way to communicate this experience to others, so that androgyny’s ‘reverberations may be heard, or at least discerned’ (Kramer, 2018, p.30). This

highlights the importance of creating a supportive methodological framework through which to unravel the experiences rendered from ‘listening out’. Whilst disconnecting from the image of the androgyne is an interpretative obstacle, it is possible, as I have demonstrated, to move beyond the acceptable limits of conceptualisation. In perceiving androgyny within *A Sky* — communicated through the macrocosm of the song cycle and the microcosm of thematic and compositional moments — listening initiates the wider project of contextualisation, of making the hearkening matter for androgyny’s broader conceptualisation. The challenge facing those who listen to androgyny, such as myself, is one of method and format; how to best represent the experience of androgyny when image does not ground the experience.

As I have discussed above, my response to this challenge was to construct a methodological approach that incorporated several different strategies so that I might account for the complexities of conceptual expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky*. Within this, I communicated my musical-theoretical techniques through tabular representation, descriptive passages and transcriptions. The crucial part of this process is in the *practice* of interpretation; listening leading to recognition leading to communication. Even tentative gestures made through speaking or writing broadens the context in which androgyny is normatively considered, and the search for the right words or methods bring disorganisation to an otherwise organised concept. In its normative engagement, the word androgyny is verified by the visual construct of the androgyne; or it is falsified by not adhering to the standard of the androgyne. This organisation unravels through practices of listening because this type of verification is not possible.

On the importance of the interpreter’s approach to a text, the influence of Woolf’s practice of reading — which I discussed briefly in my opening chapter —

provides further insight. Even at this late stage, it is worth elucidating upon this point, because it gives important retrospective context both for my relationship with *The Waves* and *A Sky*, and for the wider study of androgyny.

In advocating a developmental relationship between text and reader, Woolf used the term ‘common reader’ to denote a specific attitude, which can be differentiated from scholastic study by the nature of its intent.<sup>154</sup> On the common reader Woolf writes:

Above all, he is guided by an instinct to create for himself, out of whatever odds and ends he can come by, some kind of whole, a portrait of a man, a sketch of an age, a theory of the art of writing. He never ceases, as he reads, to run up some rickety and ramshackle fabric which shall give him the temporary satisfaction of looking sufficiently like the real object to allow of affection, laughter, and argument (Woolf, 2003, p.1).

The approach of the scholar and the critic however are:

Hasty, inaccurate, and superficial, snatching now this poem, now that scrap of old furniture, without caring where he finds it or of what nature it may be so long as it serves his purpose and rounds his structure (Woolf, 2003, p.1).

In addition to intent, Woolf points to authority as a point of differentiation. The intention is not one of seeking information based upon facts, which are then tested against the rigours of standards and expectations; the intent is the pleasure of reading.<sup>155</sup> Where the scholar is preoccupied with the acquisition of knowledge through the specificity of facts, the common reader does not read for purpose. Where the scholastic reader reads to *know*, the common reader unintentionally *explores*.

The aesthetics of this distinction resonate with the academic study of

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<sup>154</sup> Woolf borrows the term ‘common reader’ from Dr. Johnson’s *Life of Gray*: ‘...I rejoice to concur with the common reader; for by the common sense of readers, uncorrupted by literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtilty and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetical honours’ (Johnson, quoted in Woolf, 2003, p.1). It is also important to note that Woolf does not understand the common reader as the opposite of a scholastic reader; intention is the mark of difference.

<sup>155</sup> Woolf’s differentiation between common and scholastic reading contributes towards her discussions on education and strategies of academic institutions. For further reading see Cuddy Keane (2003).

androgyny, particularly the extent to which androgyny's history influences conceptual interpretation. The study of androgyny favours specificity in interpretative approach, that is, adherence to specific features is prioritised. In popular music studies, this translates to the focus upon an artist's visual performance — whether on-stage or in music videos — where discussions about androgyny in a song's musical content depend upon the context given by visual presence. Woolf's practice of common reading brings a new perspective to the study of androgyny because it highlights the possibilities in seeking conceptualisation beyond factual definition.

Exploring the study of androgyny in popular music research highlights an interpretative approach that is theoretically and thematically comparable to the reception of Woolf's model. Emphasising the creative context in which Woolf introduces androgyny and enabling the gradual unravelling of the broader context of her aesthetic alongside an exploration of Bush has opened interpretative avenues previously denied to androgyny's conceptualisation. Whilst my agenda was to account for the musical expression of androgyny, I did not seek definitive answers, nor did I wish to discover the 'true' meaning of androgyny. The context of my research is scholastic, but the approach I took was more akin to Woolf's practice of common reading, in that I let the pleasures of listening and reading guide my understanding of androgyny's expressive potential. In this respect, 'listening out' to androgynous expression in *A Sky* opened a practice of 'common listening' initiated by establishing gaps in normative considerations and pointing to absences within critical engagement.<sup>156</sup> Within these gaps, androgynous expression waits for the perceptive ears of the common listener.

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<sup>156</sup> In her work on listening and narrative, Manhire suggests that Woolf considered herself a 'common listener', because her love of music was not supported by any musical expertise. Whilst Manhire explores the importance of listening in Woolf's narrative structures, she does not develop the idea of the common listener beyond her initial claim (Manhire, 2014, p.134).



Crucial in Woolf's practice of the common reader is the pleasure of exploration, of becoming entangled with the practice of reading, and by extension, listening. This brings to textual engagement the freedom of imagination. Embracing the pleasure of reading and listening gives the imagination space to roam, to become part of the processes that underpin artistic expression. This contextualises the search for meaning as an act of exploration that unfolds alongside the text in a responsive, collaborative relationship. For my purpose, this asked that I, the listener, accepted my initial perception of androgyny in *The Waves* and *A Sky* by embracing the unravelling of meaning through multiple contributory aspects. This asks the listener to relinquish preconceived ideas about the typical presentation of androgyny, to focus upon the concept's textual emergence as it is continually made and remade.

Allowing androgyny to become through its contextualisation amidst a 'kaleidoscope of perspectives, preintentions, recollections' makes it possible to interpret androgynous expression as part of the 'fulfilment of potential' and the 'unexpressed reality of the text' (Iser, 1972, p.284). The processes of imagination allowed by the practice of common listening results in dynamic invention, by connecting the gaps and absences in conceptual formulation. Through this, androgyny rises above mere description and becomes embroiled in the creative processes of meaning-making. Connecting the 'inevitable omissions' of androgyny's story with the creative context of *The Waves* and *A Sky* asks for the listener's alertness to the musical experience of androgyny (Iser, 1972, p.284). This finds the 'positive presence' in conceptual gaps and reveals the 'affirmative difference between things and our apprehension of them' (Kramer, 2018, p.36).

The relationship between listening and imagination is vital because the auditory experience of androgyny cannot be proven. This, however, is a perpetually

emerging relationship, one that is immersed within and influenced by the theoretical and aesthetic trajectories of its contextualisation. These combinations are infinite in their possibilities, and androgyny is entangled with changing combinations of discourses that influence how the listener accounts for their experience. Listening commonly to androgynous expression initiates sequences of developing impressions, rendering definitive meaning impossible as one observation is always bound for another. With each textual encounter, interpretations change, and the listener's conceptual awareness widens. These processes happen in the experiences of the individual listener, but also between listeners, as multiple encounters with multiple listeners set in motion different imaginative encounters which influence those that follow. This arena of never-ending play resists definition and denies verification, creating a productive space for conceptual expansion.

Whilst 'listening out' has allowed me to achieve my goal of accounting for androgynous expression in the musical content of *A Sky*, my focus on two texts could be regarded as a potential limitation. Similarly, my research takes for granted the need to challenge the normative conceptualisation of androgyny and the way it is typically engaged in popular music research. As my literature review in the introductory chapter demonstrated, some recent studies of androgyny, for instance Laurie's work on the gendered aesthetics of K-pop, associate androgyny with complex expressions of gender ambiguity, one which transgresses the power of binary logic. In his research, Laurie discusses some musical features of the genre to support his interpretation of androgynous personas in K-pop as the simultaneous idealisation and subversion of stereotypical identities. It is likely that scholars engage androgyny in a way that is necessary for their explorations and do not seek elaboration beyond this. Even if this is the case, however, I would argue that there are wider issues in the

conceptualisation of androgyny that deserve attention. I have returned to these issues at various points throughout this thesis, but here, I refer specifically to the interpretative dependency upon the specificity of a sexed/gendered body, which dominates the reception of androgyny, whether positive or negative.

My contribution to the study of androgyny questions basic assumptions about the concept's meaning and the formulative dependency upon the presence of a specifically sexed and gendered body. The focus upon textual strategy challenges these assumptions whilst providing a productive way to progress the understanding of conceptual meaning and formulation. Whilst I have focussed specifically on an analysis of two texts, my interpretative approach — particularly the combination of musical-theoretical techniques, theoretical discourse and conceptual analysis mediated through the perception of textual strategy — can be taken to the study of androgynous expression in any song or piece of music. In this respect, the possibilities for future research are vast. My approach could be extended to the interpretation of popular musics where the connection to androgyny is not immediately discernible (as in *A Sky*), but it would also support a reconsideration of the musical expression of androgyny in existing research. This would be particularly beneficial where androgyny recurs in research dedicated to specific genres, for instance glam rock. My methodological approach would support a reconsideration of the relationship between androgyny and music in glam style, providing a way to further account for the subversive and transgressive nature of performances within the genre.

Beyond this, it would be a worthwhile endeavour to forge further connections between different artistic mediums to fully account for the complexity of textuality in androgyny's conceptual expression. Having taken the first steps towards a reconsideration of androgyny through practices of listening, it would also be valuable

to return to an examination of androgyny's visual presence, incorporating into analytical approaches the uncertainty and unpredictability of 'listening out'.

As a form of sensorial attunement, 'listening out' is a practice of possibilities that focusses on the multifarious nature of specific contexts. My own experience of 'listening out' to androgyny led me to associate particular musical features with androgynous expression, the interpretation of which was supported by my understanding of Woolf's androgyny as it is textually expressed. Taking these findings to new musical contexts would likely yield different findings, and I would argue that this is the purpose of explorative interpretative acts, to find and expand the limits of conceptual meaning.

By embracing a practice of common listening, the listener is more than a conduit for interpretative strategy and process; the listener is more than a theorist objectively searching for answers and conclusions. This is because the movements involved in listening and the making of meaning cannot be controlled; they are observable but their 'existence cannot be verified by observation' (Kramer, 2018, p.31). The immersion within the world, whether it is the ordinary world of everyday life or the creation of worlds such as *The Waves* and *A Sky* provides an 'ever-present hum', which elicit different levels of attention; some will strike the listener as more significant than others, some will enter the listener's imagination unexpectedly (Kramer, 2018, p.31). Specific sounds or specific pieces of music become significant within the wider context of the listener's life, highlighting the importance of shifting the emphasis from the interpreter of androgyny to the listener listening for androgyny. Through this, it is possible to build a relationship with androgyny, one which embraces the potential in renouncing the authority of preconceived understanding. Cultivating this relationship, making space for unpredictable developments allows the

revelations of moments which may not initially declare their significance, but later might prove vital.

Common listening is an approach to androgynous expression, but it is also an approach to research, raising questions about the methods by which connections are made between concepts and musical performances. 'Listening out' to androgynous expression in *The Waves* and *A Sky* attends to the complexities of how meaning is produced and interpreted in a text. If the following quote offers any indication, perhaps this is an approach that would have gained Woolf's approval:

For we are apt to forget, reading, as we tend to do, only the masterpieces of a bygone age, how great a power the body of a literature possesses to impose itself: how it will not suffer itself to be read passively, but takes us and reads us; flouts our preconceptions; questions principles which we had got into the habit of taking for granted, and in fact, splits us into two parts as we read, making us, even as we enjoy, yield our ground or stick to our guns (Woolf, 2003, p.48).

## Appendix 1 Tabular Analysis

Table 1 – <i>The Waves</i>				
Interludes/ Soliloquy No. <sup>157</sup>	Time of Life/Day/Setting(s)	POV/Tense	Key Narrative Events/ Character Interaction	Key Themes/Images/Motifs (* recurring) <sup>158</sup>
Interludes	Dawn to night Pastoral seascape Garden setting Lyrical	Unmarked narrator Third person Present tense	Rising sun Surrounding landscape	Sun, sky, sea, waves, birds, birdsong Sound, light, colour Domestic objects Outside/inside spaces Attention on microcosmic worlds Similes
Soliloquy 1	Early morning Childhood School Garden Elvedon	Multiple internal monologues Direct speech Present tense	Interaction establishes personalities Family background	Key refrains/motifs established: <b>Bernard</b> – words, language, storytelling (pp.11, 12, 16). <sup>159</sup> ‘Melt into each other with phrases’ (p.11). <b>Susan</b> – nature, colour (pp.4, 9, 10). ‘I love and I hate’ (p.10). <b>Rhoda</b> – alienation, water, imagination (pp.13, 15, 20). Basin of water with petals (p.13). ‘I sail on along under white cliffs’ (p.20). <b>Neville</b> – order, decisive, sensitive (pp.13, 17, 18). ‘Death among the apple trees’ (p.18). <b>Jinny</b> – movement, physicality, bodily sensation (pp.7, 8, 17). ‘I dance. I ripple’ (p.8). <b>Louis</b> – insecure, neat, socially different, ambitious (pp.7, 14, 16). ‘The beast stamps’ (p.6). ‘My roots go down’ (p.7). <b>General</b> <sup>160</sup> – Plant-life, nature The ‘chorus’ motif Birds Water/waves/bubbles Sound and light Impressionistic/synesthetic language Collectivity v. individuality Reality Death
Soliloquy 2	Adolescence Boarding school Countryside London	As soliloquy 1	School life	<b>Bernard</b> – ‘making phrases’ (pp.22, 38, 54)* Collects phrases (p.28). <b>Louis</b> – feelings of difference* (pp.23, 30, 40, 52). ‘My roots going down’ (p.27). Likes authority, ambitious (pp.26, 28, 41, 45). ‘The chained beast stamps’* (pp.46, 53). <b>Neville</b> – references writers (pp.23, 37, 40). Refers to trees* (pp.23, 40). Falls for Percival (p.27). Bores of Bernard’s ‘phrases’* (p.29). <b>Susan</b> – homesick, ‘I hate’* contrasts

<sup>157</sup> To avoid repetition, I have grouped the interludes together.

<sup>158</sup> This denotes recurring themes, images and motifs from previous interludes, soliloquies and between characters. The order of characters here honours the order in which they speak in each soliloquy.

<sup>159</sup> Page numbers point to representative examples and do not exhaust all instances in each soliloquy.

<sup>160</sup> These recur throughout all soliloquies and between characters.

				<p>with recollections of the farm (pp.24, 31, 34).</p> <p><b>Rhoda</b> – alienation* (pp.25, 32). ‘I have no face’* (p.32). Water references (pp.34, 43, 44). ‘Oh! to whom?’ (p.44). ‘I came to a puddle. I could not cross it’ (p.50).</p> <p><b>Jinny</b> – focus on body/dancing* (pp.25, 31, 32, 35). I hate, I love recalls Susan* (p.31, 42). Wants social life (pp.43, 49).</p>
Soliloquy 3	Early adulthood College London Countryside	As previous soliloquies Moments of past tense	Characters reflect upon each other’s lives	<p><b>Bernard</b> – questions of identity* (p.61, 62). Writing, identity, phrases* (p.64, 65, 66). Waves* (p.71). ‘What am I?’ (p.61), ‘a self who does not come’ (p.62). ‘There again comes the rollicking chorus’* (p.73).</p> <p><b>Neville</b> – tree image* (p.65). Questions identity, poetry, writing process, anxiety of influence. Observes life. Percival.* ‘Now begins to rise in me the familiar rhythm’* (p.66). ‘Who am I?’* (p.67).</p> <p><b>Louis</b> – observes life* (pp.74, 75, 78). Socially anxious, ambitious*. Likens life to music* (p.76). Bird references* (p.77). Language recalls first soliloquy, (p.78). ‘Yes, I will reduce you to order’ (pp.76-77). ‘My roots go down’* (p.77).</p> <p><b>Susan</b> – nature,* animals,* farm,* domestic duties,* questions of identity and friendship* (pp.78, 79). Love and hate.* ‘I think I am the field’ (p.78). ‘Now swerving to avoid the puddle’* (p.80).</p> <p><b>Jinny</b> – reflects on lives of others, parties and social occasions* (p.81). Bodily sensations* (p.82). Likens dancing to movement of a river* (p.83). ‘I am rooted but I flow’* (p.83). ‘words crowd and cluster’* (p.84). ‘“Come,” I say, “come.”’ (p.83).</p> <p><b>Rhoda</b> – alienation,* identity,* seeks solitude*. Negation of self.* Water/the sea.* ‘The tiger leaps’ (p.85 x2, p.86). ‘The swallow dips her wing’ (p.85 x3). ‘A million arrows pierce me’ (p.85). ‘Alone, I rock my basins...my fleet of ships...I am no longer one’* (p.86).</p>
Soliloquy 4	Early adulthood London Dinner party	As previous soliloquies Moments of past and future tense	Characters united at dinner party Percival leaves for India Tension surrounds moments of communion Passages of rapid exchange	<p><b>Bernard</b> – identity,* everyday life,* impulse to live ‘Am I not as I walk trembling with strange oscillation’ (p.93). Words/phrases* (pp.94, 96, 108, 109, 110). Friendship.* ‘I am made and remade continually’ (p.109). ‘A single flower’ (p.104). Rhoda, ‘nymph of the fountain’ (p.96).</p> <p><b>Neville</b> – Percival.* ‘Immitigable apple tree’* (p.102). Poetry* (p.103). Pursues perfection* (p.106).</p> <p><b>Louis</b> – plagued by sense of</p>

				<p>difference* (p.104). ‘Chained beast stamping’* (p.104). ‘They talk a little language such as lovers use’ (p.117).  <b>Susan</b> – love, hate* (pp.107, 108, 112). Nature.* Identity.* ‘A circle has been cast on the waters; a chain is imposed’* (p.116).  <b>Jinny</b> – bodily movement, sensation, sensory experiences* (p.114). ‘Come’* (pp.114, 116).  <b>Rhoda</b> – alienation,* loss of self,* fear,* anxiety.* ‘The tiger leapt and the swallow dipped her wings’* (p.103). ‘Tiger leaps’* (p.106). ‘Afraid of the shock of sensation’* (p.106).</p>
Soliloquy 5	Early adulthood. London Museum/art gallery Concert Hall	As previous soliloquies	Soliloquy features Neville, Bernard and Rhoda. Percival dies	<p><b>Neville</b> – death,* grief,* loss.* ‘There stands the tree which I cannot pass’* (p.124). ‘Immitigable tree’* (p.125).  <b>Bernard</b> – death,* grief, suffering. Resents usual order (p.128). Phrases, notebook.* Seeks comfort in art. ‘Arrows of sensation’* (p.129).  <b>Rhoda</b> – alienation,* death,* loss.* Images of ruin and devastation, water* and waves.* ‘There is a puddle and I cannot cross it’ (p.130). Finds solace in music. ‘Voice was the arrow note’ (p.133). ‘Ah! Ah! Ah!’ (p.133). ‘A cry’* (p.134). ‘The structure was now visible’ (p.134). Picks violets for Percival (p.131). ‘Withered violets, blackened violets’ (p.132). ‘I throw my violets’ (p.155). ‘Swallow dips her wings’* (p.135).</p>
Soliloquy 6	Midlife Countryside London	As previous soliloquies	Soliloquy features Louis, Susan, Jinny and Neville	<p><b>Louis</b> – identity,* ‘I, I, and again I’ (p.138, p.141). Passing of time – ‘This is life’, ‘Life passes’ (p.140). Multiple ‘I love’* (p.139). ‘I shall fall like snow and be wasted’ (pp.138, 141).  <b>Susan</b> – music and singing,* maternal themes,* nature,* animals* and plants*. Negation of self.* ‘Sleep, sleep’ (pp.141, 142, 143).  <b>Jinny</b> – imagines stories* and facts of others’ lives,* ‘we make life’* (p.145). Bodily sensation,* passing of time,* ageing.* Water,* waves* and ship references.* ‘Come’* (p.146). ‘Arrows of sensation’ *(p.146). ‘I smell violets’* (p.146). Hunting, animal imagery.*  <b>Neville</b> – passing of time,* ‘ticking clock’ (pp.147, 150). Percival.* Art, life and representation of reality.* ‘I hate’* (p.148).</p>
Soliloquy 7	Midlife Rome Countryside London Spain	As previous soliloquies	Characters contemplate ageing	<p><b>Bernard</b> – time,* ‘The drop fell’ (pp.153, 155). Words,* notebook,* phrases,* (pp.153, 154). Literature and representation of reality.* Connectivity*. Failure.* Waves/water.* ‘I see far out a waste of water. A fin turns’ (p.157). Body</p>



				<p>and ageing.*</p> <p><b>Susan</b> – I love, I hate* (p.158). Negation of self* ‘Life stands round me like a glass round the imprisoned reed’ (p.159). Farm, nature.* ‘I am sick of natural happiness’ (p.159). Recollections of childhood.*</p> <p><b>Jinny</b> – ageing and time.* Bodily sensations* Animal metaphors.* ‘I shall raise my arm’* (p.161). Wave similes.* ‘Come’* (p.162).</p> <p><b>Neville</b> – literature and truth.* Nature of poet.* Emphasis on sounds.* ‘I read half a page of anything’ (pp.164, 165).</p> <p><b>Louis</b> – unification of poetry and everyday life.* Identity.* ‘There is always more to be understood’.* (p.168).</p> <p><b>Rhoda</b> – alienation,* ‘hate’* (p.169). Negation of self.* ‘I flung words’* (p.170). Structure of music* (p.170). Waves,* waters,* boats.* Death, suicide, ‘some solitary tree’* (p.171). ‘Oh, to whom?’* (p.171).</p>
Soliloquy 8	Middle-age. Hampton Court	As previous soliloquies	Characters united at dinner party	<p><b>Bernard</b> – ageing,* time,* identity.* Individuality versus collectivity.* ‘Shock of meeting’* (pp.175, 176). ‘My little boat bobs unsteadily’* (p.176). ‘Life as a torrent’ (p.180). Words and phrases – ‘I am wrapped around with phrases’* (p.181). Failure,* solitude.* ‘Tick, tick’ (p.188). ‘“Fight”, I cry, “Fight”’ (p.188). ‘The flower’ red carnation* (p.190). ‘I hear the chorus’* (p.195). Sleep.*</p> <p><b>Neville</b> – ‘What have I made of life?’* (p.176). Success* – ‘These papers in my private pocket’ (pp.176, 177). Nature* and birds.* Writing,* literature,* perception and creation.* ‘I have been knotted; I have been torn apart’ (p.179).</p> <p><b>Susan</b> – childhood, Elvedon,* pigeons.* Observation versus experience.* Animal imagery.* ‘With love, with hatred’* (p.190). ‘My ruined life, my wasted life’* (p.191).</p> <p><b>Rhoda</b> – alienation,* fear,* doubt.* Impact of others upon the self.* ‘Shock of sensation’* (p.185). ‘I hate, I love’* (p.185). ‘I have no face’* (p.186). ‘The swallow dips her wings’* (p.186). ‘I must go through the antics of the individual’* (p.186). ‘Who are you? Who am I?’ (p.194).</p> <p><b>Louis</b> – childhood,* difference.* Seeks a poetic form to reveal hidden permeance of life and its randomness.* Company versus solitude.* ‘love, love, love’* (p.193).</p> <p><b>Jinny</b> – bodily sensations,* sensory experience,* joy,* pleasure,* animal metaphors.* ‘Come’* (p.184). ‘So fluid has my body become’* (p.184).</p>

				Ageing,* body,* 'But I am not afraid'* (p.185).
Soliloquy 9	Old age City Café	Bernard Direct Speech Present and past tense	Bernard sums up life. Final line references interludes – <i>'The waves broke on the shore'</i> (p.248)	Consolidation of all character theme/images/motifs. Language* words,* phrases* (pp.199, 221, 223, 225, 246). 'some little language'* , 'a howl, a cry'* (pp.199, 246). 'Fin that leaden waste of waters'* (p.205). 'the chorus'* (p.206). 'I hate, I love'* (p.207). Music metaphors* (pp.209, 214). 'Life as a solid globe' (pp.199, 210, 214). 'A drop fell'* (p.212). 'Swinging my stick' (pp.212, 234, 236). 'one red flower'* (p.214). 'A string of six little fish that let themselves be caught'* (p.214). Life as torrent metaphor* (p.215). 'Life is pleasant, life is tolerable' (pp.215, 218). 'Tuesday follows Monday' (pp.215, 218, 223, 226, 236). 'Fight, fight'* (p.225). 'Rhoda nymph of the foundation'* (p.229). 'I am not one person; I am many people'* (p.230). 'clock ticks'* (pp.228, 295). Opening of soliloquy repeated with alterations (p.199 and p.246). 'I' repeated in short fragments* (p.212). Individuation,* death,* time,* ageing,* grief,* memory.* Bernard evokes the language of friends (pp.204, 205, 210, 211, 207, 221, 222).

Table 2 – <i>A Sky of Honey</i>							
Song	Tempo/ Mood	Setting	POV/ Tense	Key narrative events/ Characters	Structure	Dominant Harmony	Key musical events/Themes/ Motifs
Prelude	4/4 Slow Sostenuto	Dawn. Pastoral	Multiple perspectives Present tense	Day begins. Introduces key characters	Through- composed	C# minor tonality I-VI-VII and I-VII Added tones	Sampled birdsong of dawn chorus and wood pigeon call. Synthesised wave-line theme. Piano line based on rhythmic and melodic qualities of wood pigeon call. Segue into ‘Prologue’
Prologue	4/4 Moderate Mood as ‘Prelude’	Late morning Pastoral Sea	The narrator in future, present and past tense, first person. The chorus, present tense, first person.	First appearance of the narrator Prominent use of pronoun ‘we’	ABABC	Continues from ‘Prelude’. A and C sections – VI-VII-I- VII. B sections – I-IV-III- IV-III-IV. Added tones. Variations in chord positions.	Narrator motif established. Wave-line theme augmented in piano. Suspensions contrasting with ostinatos and broken chords. Chorus phrases incorporate inflexions of wood pigeon call. Fluid vocal lines. Sampled seagull and whale song. Impressionistic, synesthetic lyrics
An Architect’s Dream	4/4 Moderate Rhythmic Lyrical	After- noon Pastoral	Painter Narrator Chorus Present tense	Narrator watches a painter First use of ‘I’ pronoun	AABA	Continues from previous track. IV-I-VII- III. Added tones. Variations in chord positions.	Increased rhythmic articulation. Sampled birdsong. Suspensions and ostinatos. Impressionistic lyrics. Wave-line in harmonic progressions. Syncopation in vocals recalls the narrator’s motif. Fluid vocal phrases versus rhythmic accompaniment. Focus on bodily movement. Limited vocal range. Sampled sound of thunder and rain.
The Painter’s Link	4/4 Sostenuto Rhythmic Moderate Lyrical	Evening Sunset Pastoral	Painter Chorus Present tense	Rain spoils the painting. The chorus describe the effects.	Through- composed	C# minor tonality. I-VII. Added tones increase. Variations in chord positions.	Speech-singing. Suspensions. Increased rhythmical texture. Layering of voices. Triplets lengthen vocal phrases. Sparse instrumental arrangement. Increased rhythm and

							vocal phrases as the chorus enters. Melodic phrases ascend. Increased harmonic changes. Synesthetic lyrical content.
Sunset	4/4 Moments of 3/4, 5/4. Sostenuto sections contrasts with rhythmic sections.	Sunset Pastoral	Narrator Chorus Blackbird Present tense	Focus on character interaction	ABABCC (variation in section lengths).	A section – I-VII-VI. Increased rate of change in B and C sections - I-VII-III-IV-VII-VI-I-VII-VI-VII-I-VII-VI-VII. Added tones.	A section is fluid. B section rhythmic. C section combines mood and articulation of A and B sections. Narrator motif augments wave-line from 'Prelude'. Suspensions and ostinatos intensify. Textural qualities of the chorus motif incorporated into the narrator's vocals. Flamenco style instrumental. Character motifs merge. Increased layers of sounds and voices. Titular references in lyrics. Impressionistic lyrics. Sampled blackbird song segue into next track.
Aerial Tal	4/4 Moderate Bright	As in Sunset	Narrator Blackbird Present tense	Narrator and blackbird duet	Through-composed	E major tonality. Emaj7-C#m-Emaj7.	The Chorus opens song. Piano ostinato based on the wood pigeon call. Sampled blackbird song. The narrator mimics blackbird in stylised, non-verbal syllabic utterances. Syncopation. Sampled wood pigeon call. Song closes with a fusion of wood pigeon call and the chorus motif. Titular lyrics. All character motifs present.
Somewhere in Between	4/4 Fast but relaxed	Twilight Pastoral	Narrator Chorus Past and present tense	Narrator. Unknown voice. Chorus. Liminal space between awake and asleep.	AABAB	Dominant key G# minor. 1 <sup>st</sup> A section returns to C# minor. I-VII-VI-VII-I.	Syncopation. Suspensions. Manipulation of phrase length. Vocal lines incorporate variations of the narrator and the chorus motifs. The chorus closes the

				Emphasis on pronoun 'we'.		B section I-VII-VI-V.	song. Impressionistic lyrics. References to sky, sea, waves, light, sound, silence, sleep.
Nocturn	4/4 Sostenuto Rhythmic	Night Dawn Pastoral	Narrator Chorus Present tense	Dream sequence Emphasis on pronoun 'we'	ABABBB C Section lengths vary.	A sections I-VI-VII. B and C sections I-VI-I. Added tones.	The chorus opens track incorporating wood pigeon call. Synthesised suspended chords. Melismatic, wave-line version of the narrator motif. The narrator motif rhythmically augmented in B section bass line and 2 <sup>nd</sup> A section vocal line. Vocal range increases as song progresses. Gradual increase in textural complexity. Connecting passages joins chorus and narrator. C section – rhythmic, melodic 'chant-like' qualities references all character motifs. Lyrics reference bodily sensation. Synaesthetic themes. Titular references.
Aerial	3/4 Fast Energetic	Dawn Pastoral	All characters. Present tense.	Closes 24-hour of song cycle. Emphasis on pronoun 'I'.	ABABCB BC	C# minor I-VII. Added tones	Reflection of character interaction. Progressive overlap in lyrics and musical material. Sample of dawn chorus. Pulsating ostinato based on wave-line theme. A section fluid vocal phrases. B sections more rhythmic, syncopation. 2 <sup>nd</sup> C section – all characters, incorporates guitar solo. Call and response section between the narrator and the blackbird. Phrases lead upwards. The narrator and the chorus join in rhythmic laughter. Echo in song's climax. Song fades out with

							sampled birdsong. Rhythm ceases as song closes. Lyrics reference character interaction and themes of cycle – ‘What kind of language is this?’, ‘Tell me what you’re singing’, ‘All of the birds are laughing?’.
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**Appendix 2**

**A Sky of Honey**  
**Character motifs and variations**

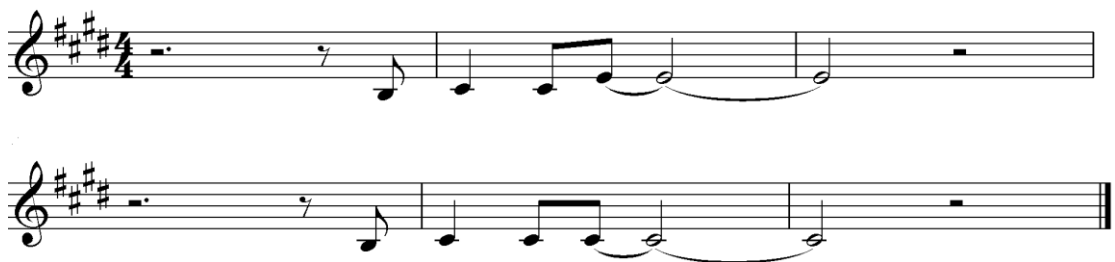
**Wood pigeon**



*'Prelude', first sounding (0:07-0:19).*



*'Prelude', piano (0:19-0:29).*



*'Prologue', the narrator (4:37-4:53).*



*'Aerial Tal', piano ostinato (0.00:0:13).*

The narrator



*'Prologue', first presentation (0:19-0:26).*



*'Sunset' (0:00-0:04) and (0:07-0:13).*



*'Somewhere in Between', the narrator (1:09-1:20).*



*'Nocturn', the narrator (2:22-2:32).*



*'Aerial', the narrator (1:17-1:23).*

The chorus



*'Prologue', first presentation (2:26-2:33).*





*The Painter's Link, the chorus (0:57-1:03).*



*'Sunset', the chorus (2:19-2:33).*



*'Somewhere in Between', the narrator (0:43-0:57).*

Phrases combining all motifs



*'Sunset', performed as the chorus (4:27-4:51).*



*'Nocturn', performed as the chorus (7:51-8:04).*



*'Aerial', performed as the narrator (0:49-0:55).*

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## Discography

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### **Filmography**

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