TRUE LOVES, DARK NIGHTS: QUEER PERFORMATIVITY AND GRIEVING THROUGH MUSIC IN THE WORK OF RUFUS WAINWRIGHT

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation studies the cultural significance of Canadian-American singer/songwriter Rufus Wainwright's (b. 1973) album *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu* (Decca, 2010). *Lulu* was written, recorded, and toured in the years surrounding the illness and eventual death of his mother, beloved Québécoise singer/songwriter Kate McGarrigle. The album, performed as a classical song cycle, stands out amongst Wainwright's musical catalogue as a hybrid composition that mixes classical and popular musical forms and styles. More than merely a collection of songs about death, loss, and personal suffering, *Lulu* is a vehicle that enabled him to grieve through music. I argue that Wainwright's performativity, as well as the music itself, can be understood as queer, or as that which transgresses traditional or expected boundaries. In this sense, Wainwright's artistic identity and musical trajectory resemble a rhizome, extending in multiple directions and continually expanding to create new paths and outcomes. Instances of queerness reveal themselves in the genre hybridity of the *Lulu* song cycle, the emotional vulnerability of Wainwright's vocal performance, the deconstruction of gender norms in live performance, and the circulation of affect within the performance space. In this study, I examine the song cycle form, Wainwright's musical score and vocal performance, live performance videos, and fan reactions to live performances in order to identify meaningful moments where Wainwright's musical and performative decisions queer audience expectations. While these musical moments contribute to the already rich and varied lineage of the gay male artist in both classical and popular music, I argue that Wainwright's queer performativity and nontraditional musical choices speak to larger issues important to American culture in the

contemporary moment. These issues include the visibility of male public mourning and the healing power of artistic expression in the face of traumatic loss.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

I discovered Rufus Wainwright's music at a turning point in my life. Directionless and depressed, Rufus Wainwright's voice – rich and versatile – had a familiarity to it that recalled the despair and isolation I associated with the emptiness of loneliness and the deafening silence after a loved one's death. Yet, at the same time, his voice was a comfort, a balm soothing wounds that held my creativity and emotional well-being hostage. In 2011, after accidentally happening upon "Cigarettes and Chocolate Milk," one of Wainwright's best known songs, I took to YouTube to begin my discovery of Wainwright's catalogue. It was during this discovery that I became familiar with his fifth original studio album, *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu* (Decca, 2010), marketed and performed as a classical song cycle.

Heavily influenced by the death of his mother, folk-singer Kate McGarrigle, *Lulu* is one of the most honest and tragic musical expressions of Wainwright's career, and its main topic – grief over the loss of a parent – is one that I identify with having lost my father to cancer in 1998. Aside from a personal relationship to the subject matter, *Lulu* was, for me, the culmination of my research interests in queer history and theory, the mixture of classical and popular musics, and the relationship between art (specifically music) and emotional expression. I propose that *Lulu* is the single most confounding musical product of Wainwright's career thus far, and an untapped resource for significant scholarship.[1] For me, *Lulu* was a vehicle for understanding how

[1] To date, only a handful of scholarly explorations of Wainwright's music exist. Kevin C. Schwandt's dissertation theorizes a new queer masculinity based on Rufus Wainwright's songs, and a resistance to traditional queer musical identities. Matthew L. Jones's Master's thesis focuses specifically on the 2001 album *Poses* and considers the ways in which Wainwright performs queer masculinity through lyrics and song genre. Katherine Williams' book, *Rufus Wainwright,* studies Wainwright's musical output from 1998 until 2012, using song analysis

Wainwright, the well-respected but non-mainstream artist with clear classical influences and a famous musical family, engaged with queer performativity and grief through music.

I argue that Wainwright's musicality, performativity, and identity are rhizomatic, extending in multiple directions, as opposed to dichotomous. His refusal to be defined as one type of performer, songwriter, or person reflects this, particularly when he explores human experiences like death or emotional pain in what might be perceived as atypical ways. For example, Wainwright's decision to mourn publicly rather than privately for an extended period of time is an exceptional deviation from the Western cultural norm of limited public mourning (a public memorial or annual commemoration days).[2] This is especially pertinent when the artistic

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through a variety of lenses, including a biographical view, genre, gender and sexuality, geography, and vocal performance. While *Lulu* is discussed in a few instances (mainly as an example of art song in popular music), Williams' analyses of the album or individual songs are not in depth and do not situate it as a work that explores either public mourning or grieving through music. Notably, Williams' analysis of *Lulu* in relation to art song chalks up some of the anomalies of the song cycle to a lack of cohesion rather than an intentional breaking of compositional norms in both classical and popular genres. Her study, however, offers sufficient background information about his back catalogue so as to be helpful in filling in gaps in knowledge about his career. For further reading that discusses Wainwright's earlier works in greater theoretical depth, see Matthew J. Jones "All These Poses, Such Beautiful Poses: Articulations of Queer Masculinity in the Music of Rufus Wainwright" (Master's thesis, University of Georgia, 2008), https://getd.libs.uga.edu/pdfs/jones_matthew_j_200805_ma.pdf; Kevin C. Schwandt, "Oh What a World": Queer Masculinities, the Musical Construction of a Reparative Cultural Historiography, and the Music of Rufus Wainwright," (PhD Diss, University of Minnesota, 2010), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 3433782; Katherine Williams, *Rufus Wainwright* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2016).

[2] As I will further discuss in chapter three, the study of grief, while extending to philosophy and anthropology, has roots in psychoanalysis. Sigmund Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917) is a foundational text that offers a dichotomous way of understanding sadness and absence that interrupts everyday life. Freud defines mourning as the "reaction to the loss of a loved person" or "abstraction," the object that takes the place of the lost individual; melancholia develops as the result of the same influences, but bears a "pathological disposition" attached to the person experiencing it. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers of Metapsychology, and Other Works,* Trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 243.

performance comes with certain expectations of fun, entertainment, and good humor, as opposed to the funereal seriousness and unfamiliar tone of a *Lulu* performance. I take a phenomenological approach to this research, concerning myself with the lived experiences that shape how people act and react to different situations.[3] Throughout the course of this study, I identify and situate "queerness" within various contexts related to *Lulu* and Wainwright's performance in order to describe that which deviates from the norm, creates unfamiliar artistic expression, or tampers with traditional expectations or hegemonic cultural practices.

At a volatile time in his life, Wainwright used his creativity to transgress social boundaries of what it meant for a male to mourn death publicly.[4] In *Lulu,* Wainwright mourned

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[3] Phenomenology is a concept dating back to Edmund Husserl's theory of the "lived body" that queer theorist Sara Ahmed builds upon in order to put the "lived body" in conversation with queer experience. Her work pertaining to emotion, the Other, and orientation and disorientation as related to affect has greatly informed this project. Alfred Schutz offers a perspective that links music, space, and audience experience to phenomenology, noting that musical knowledge is both socially approved and socially derived; in other words, audience expectations of music, performances, and composers are tacitly agreed upon. With Schutz's work serving as a foundation, I argue in chapter five that Wainwright's performativity creates affect that is then interpreted and processed by his audience. For further reading see Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006); Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology,* trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception,* trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 2002); Alfred Schutz, *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory,* edited and introduced by Arvid Brodersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976).

[4] Mourning rituals and rites vary culturally, and this study is focused strictly on an American cultural perspective. For a cross-cultural investigation of mourning and death rites, see Antonius C.G.M. Robben, ed., *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004). For multicultural explorations of loss, mourning, and how art and creativity function as tools to move through grief, see David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds., *Loss: The Politics of Mourning,* with an Afterword by Judith Butler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). The bardo of dying, a concept I bring into chapter three that Sedgwick engages with in her own work on Buddhist pedagogy in *Touching Feeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), is a Tibetan death ritual that seeks to transform grief into spiritual healing. See Robert E. Goss and Dennis Klass, "Tibetan Buddhism and the Resolution of Grief: The *Bardo-Thodol* for the Dying and the Grieving," *Death Studies,* Vol. 21, Issue 4 (1997): 377-

his mother's death publicly for months, using music – *Lulu's* music, text (lyrics), and live performance – to connect his pain with his mother's memory.[5] From the conception of the *Lulu* album to his live musical performances, Wainwright used the creative process to dwell on his grief as a way of processing it, or working through it without stifling his emotions in order to move past a traumatic experience.[6] Further, grieving publicly serves as a model of male public mourning that rejects forgetting, silencing, or shaming emotional vulnerability. This is particularly important to members of the LGBT* community who might not have access to role models who are as open about emotions, sexuality, and personal struggles as Wainwright has been. His musical significance lies in his ability to consistently open himself up to criticism, performance risks, and alienating popular music consumers who are not part of his devoted fan base in the name of exploring emotions and life experiences that are painful or unusual. Thus, his vulnerability is a constant presence in his musical performance, as well as a regular marker of his identity as a gay man.

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395. doi: 10.1080/074811897201895; Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993).

[5] The grieving process and its emotional toll will be discussed in chapters three and four. See Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Scribner, 1969). It is important to note that Kübler-Ross' five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance) do not happen in order necessarily, and mourners can regress back into the cycle. For recent scholarship on the medicalization of bereavement see Emma Penman, Lauren J. Breen, Lauren Y. Hewitt, and Holly G. Prigerson, "Public Attitudes About Normal and Pathological Grief," *Death Studies,* Vol. 38, Issue 8 (2015): 510-516. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2013.873839; Julia Bandini, "The Medicalization of Bereavement: (Ab)normal Grief in the DSM5," *Death Studies,* Vol. 39, Issue 6 (2015): 347-352. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/10.1080/07481187.2014.951498.

[6] Wainwright's working through process included re-membering his mother, or recalling her presence through his musical performances. Re-membering will be thoroughly defined and related to chapter four's live tour. See Lorraine Hedtke and John Winslade's foundational text, *Re-membering Lives: Conversations With the Dying and the Bereaved* (Amityville: Baywood Publishing, 2004). Nancy Berns discusses the conflicting messages in American culture of moving through mourning and remembering loved ones in *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

In an interview via email in May 2016, Wainwright located the *Lulu* song cycle within the realm of deeply personal experience *as well as* the oft stereotyped, intense relationship between a gay man and his mother.[7] He described that relationship as "part of the fuel that created the fire in the performance," as an organic and somewhat spontaneous occurrence.[8] With this confirmation that Wainwright and McGarrigle's close relationship shaped the *Lulu* music, text, and live performance vision, I posit that Wainwright's decisions as songwriter, performer, and grieving son result in the transgression of expected or usual performances of this highly emotional material. This is evident in Wainwright's songwriting process, an erratic journey that crosses genre boundaries, stylistic norms, and performance practice traditions. I theorize *Lulu*'s musical journey as an example of deterritorialization, or unexpected pathways or multiplicities, resulting in reterritorialization, the re-establishment of something (often changed along the way) in a new place. Additionally, Wainwright's use of multiple musical genres and vocal styles to craft an emotional and complex song cycle situates his songwriting and performance decisions as queer in relation to both mainstream popular artists and classical performance practice. Overall, these musical decisions add depth and nuance to the larger classical and popular repertoire that Wainwright contributes to, especially those relating to the LGBT* experience in Western culture.[9]

In my study, "queer" describes that which is perceived as unexpected, antagonistic, or deviant, but does *not* follow homophobic or patriarchal notions that support the binaries of us

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[7] I received HSRB approval for an interview with Wainwright initially in December 2015, and renewed approval in December 2016. With the help of Wainwright's management team, I sent my interview questions to his manager, Paula Quijano on April 28, 2016, and received Wainwright's dictated answers to my questions on May 11, 2016.

[8] Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.

[9] I do not merely locate *Lulu* or Wainwright within the American experience because of his dual citizenship in Canada and his far-reaching popularity in the UK and Europe especially.

versus them, normal versus abnormal, or right versus wrong. Instead, queer is a term that signals the many ways that Wainwright breaks with conventional norms to bring visibility to intense emotional content in his music. This includes his closeness with his mother as a gay man, his romantic life, and the personal demons he wrestles that show up in the forms of insecurity, catty arrogance, and fear.[10] Wainwright does not queer performance because he explores his personal experience as a gay man publicly, though this is a mark of his difference and vulnerability in a volatile and divided political climate. Rather, he queers performance because his performativity, music, and text are emotionally motivated, and repeatedly encourage discomfort, unlearning, and empathy, all of which are coincidentally pillars of activism. While I hesitate to call *Lulu* a political act or Wainwright's performance activism specifically, I believe that a failure to read *Lulu* in 2016 as a tool for better understanding experiences unlike one's own would be remiss. It is my intent that this study will offer examples of the emotional complexity that bearing witness to another's pain involves. While previous scholarship about Wainwright's work acknowledges the important role emotions play in his music, my study offers performance (recorded and live) as a lens through which to understand the artist as well as oneself in states of emotional vulnerability. Such discovery has the potential to lay a foundation for turning feelings into action, whether that ultimately results in allyship, activism, or creating art in order to soothe, heal, or support one another.

Embracing the Unknown: Queer Definitions and Musical Performance

Throughout this dissertation, I use "queer" to describe *Lulu*'s musical form, Wainwright's songwriting decisions, his vocal performance, his performativity in the live *Lulu* song cycle, and the performance space in which audiences experienced the live show. The

[10] These are all topics that are part of the fabric of the *Lulu* text.

definitions I use of "queer" stem from different scholars in the queer studies field, but the overarching understanding that queer describes something that has potential to change perceived expectations, deviate from hegemonic practices, and/or challenge preconceptions of ideas, identities, or meanings is foundational to this study. Further, in this study "queer" envelops sexual difference inchoately, and I do not divorce Wainwright's gay sexuality from his artistry. I theorize queer performance, performativity, and identity as woven together, as opposed to isolated or excluded.

Queer theory originated in the early 1990s as a way of theorizing gay and lesbian sexual performativities in opposition to a homogenized, dominant culture. Drawing from the work of Michel Foucault, early queer theorists such as Teresa de Lauretis, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich, and David Halperin addressed issues of sexuality and identity as a way of bringing forth previously silenced histories and forming new communities through shared knowledge.[11] De Lauretis revolutionized the term "queer" by first expanding its boundaries, allowing the vastly different experiences (social, sexual, emotional, and cultural) of gay and lesbian bodies to be encompassed in the definition and discourse of queer theory.[12] Zeroing in on the political aspect of queer expression and lived experience, Butler describes the term "queer" as an "interpellation that raises the question of the status of force and opposition, of stability and variability, *within* performativity."[13] In other words, the queer individual is not necessarily understood through a heteronormative lens, and instead is read as different or other. In relation to

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[11] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Volume I: *An Introduction,* Trans. by Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980).

[12] Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities, An Introduction," *differences* (1991): iii-xviii. This special issue stemmed from a conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz in February 1990 where de Lauretis first used the term "queer theory."

[13] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 226.

performativity, that which is "queer" rejects heterosexuality, but is also "in the present, never fully owned, but always and only deployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes."[14] In my study, I frame Wainwright's queering of *Lulu* as a personal artistic choice that creates space for emotional expression of a highly sensitive and private nature. His sexuality is not the focus of the performance, nor is it hidden or masked. "Queer" in this sense is much more complex than being non-normative or standing in direct opposition to heterosexuality.

Following the idea that queer is not merely the opposite of normative, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of "queer" is as a "continuing moment, movement, motive – recurrent, eddying, *troublant*."[15] For Sedgwick, queer is not a static idea, but "transitive," "relational, and strange."[16] She ponders the possibility of what it means "to queer" something rather than accept the normal progression of social expectations: "What if instead there were a practice of valuing the ways in which meanings and institutions can be at loose ends with each other? What if the richest junctures weren't the ones where *everything means the same thing?*"[17] Queering something is a step toward rejecting prescription or pre-determined understanding. While "queer" can be closely tied to gay sexuality, sexual identity markers, and performativities, that which is queer need not be deviant or lacking a component that would otherwise make it whole. This is an important distinction in relation to Wainwright because my argument does not hinge on the fact that he is openly gay. That which is queer need only be something that does not follow the hegemonic rules. In applying "queer" to music studies, breaking aesthetic and genre

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[14] Ibid., 228.
[15] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xii.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., 6.

rules marks a departure from traditional or conventional measures, thus creating opportunities for speaking out, talking back, or transgressing prescribed notions or identities via art.

As a resistant, transitive, and transgressive act, "queer" can also be applied to identifying the non-normative lifestyles of transgendered and LGBT* people.[18] J. Jack Halberstam notes that transitional time/space functions along the queer time and space continuum in a way that does not align with heternormative narratives, traditions, or values. I offer the song cycle form within popular music as an example of how Wainwright queered musical time and space (form). His use of form on *Lulu* is unique because prior to 2010 he did not produce an album that aligned as closely with classical art song. For Wainwright, queering musical form provided space in which to express grief publicly through music as well as deterritorialize the traditional song cycle form.

I apply queer to vocality in order to conceptually frame Wainwright's vocal imperfections and the emotional vulnerability heard in his singing. Freya Jarman-Ivens argues that the queer voice creates a "third space" from which these flaws or emotions emerge.[19] Wainwright, as an accomplished, though largely formally untrained, singer, expresses his grief through singing while also appropriating vernacular singing styles. His queer voice is evident in stylistic variety, which is a way of reterritorializing the song cycle form, as well as in the emotional rawness that is revealed as he sings about personal weaknesses and his mother's death.

Shifting from the significance of Wainwright's recorded voice to live performances, I link Butler's concept of performativity to the definition of queer as unconventional or

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[18] J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005).
[19] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices,* 2011.

alternative.[20] Wainwright's live performance of the song cycle is an example of queer performativity because his performance deviates from his typical performance practices; he avoids speaking to his audience, requests that the audience hold their applause until the end of the song cycle, and replicates the album's mood and song order exactly. The live song cycle – performed without applause from the audience or between-song commentary from Wainwright -- challenged audience expectations of the performance, resulting in a queering of performance space as affect circulated amongst the audience and was transmitted from Wainwright to audience members. One way Ahmed has theorized queer space in relation to phenomenology defines "queer" as that which is "odd, bent, twisted."[21] The ways that bodies orient themselves to certain objects, or fail to do so, affect space; queer space occurs when one's expectations of an object are disturbed, dismantled, or rerouted. Wainwright's approach to live performance was exceptional because he showed vulnerability through his vocal performance and physical presence on stage. In turn, his fans were affected in various ways as a result of this performative change.

Methodology

Focusing on phenomenological approaches, I sought methodologies that would allow me to maintain the integrity of Wainwright's music, performance, and fans' experience. I engaged with discourse analysis of press accounts and album reviews to establish *Lulu*'s musical form, Wainwright's background, and his reactions before, during, and at the end of the *Lulu* tour. I analyzed the *Lulu* score, published by Schott New York in 2012, in order to identify common

[20] Butler's gender subversion and performativity discussion in which she famously theorizes drag as parody will be discussed in chapter four. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).
[21] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 161.

themes in the *Lulu* music that support the idea of a hybrid popular music text as well as a traumatized text. A request to interview Wainwright for this dissertation was granted, and I received email responses to my questions on May 11, 2016. The 10 questions I crafted were designed to confirm my analysis of music and text, clarify songwriting process and musical influences, and add further explanation about the live performances and *Lulu*'s importance that I was unable to excavate from published press interviews. Discourse analysis of fan forum comments has proven helpful in finding documented sources, offering firsthand knowledge and accounts about Wainwright and his music that I lack. Though used sparsely, I include personal narrative in order to identify how my experiential knowledge has helped me better understand Wainwright's work, mourning itself, and the healing power of music.[22]

Exploring Wainwright's live performances led me to virtual fieldwork, in which the "field" is where the researcher goes to "study human interaction."[23] This work involved collecting live performance videos on YouTube for performance analysis in chapter four. My research on YouTube resulted in finding a nearly complete song cycle from December 9, 2010 in Albany,

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[22] Autoethnography is an approach that "acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist." See Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams and Arthur P. Bochner, "Autoethnography: An Overview," *Forum: Qualitative Social Research,* Vol. 12, No. 1 (2011): para 3, SocINDEX with Full Text, 58650812. It is a method that also "tries to disrupt traditional and dominant ideas about research, particularly what research is and how research should be done." Stacy Holman Jones, and Tony E. Adams, "Undoing the Alphabet: A Queer Fugue on Grief and Forgiveness," *Cultural Studies,<-->Critical Methodologies,* 14.2 (2014): 110. doi: 10.1177/1532708613512260.

[23] See Timothy Cooley, Katherine Meizel, and Nasir Syed, "Virtual Fieldwork: Three Case Studies," in *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology, Second edition,* Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 91. Jones' MA thesis provides a model for how to successfully pursue virtual ethnography on the RWMB (Jones, "All These Poses," 2008).

New York. I supplemented the missing performance videos with two shows from the end of the tour, December 14, 2010 in Wilmington, Delaware and December 15, 2010 in Northampton, Massachusetts. I also used virtual ethnography to collect fan comments from relevant message board threads in chapters one, four, and five. On the fan forum, I searched the "Live" performance threads by concert date, skimming, reading, and taking screenshots of the comments that lent unique, insightful, thoughtful, detailed, and poignant perspectives.[24]

Chapter Overviews

The research questions and arguments I present in this chapter overview provide a road map of how Wainwright's grief (or grieving), musicality, and performativity intersected in the various sites of analysis I studied over the past two years. These intersections reveal how grief and music are intricately entwined in *Lulu,* as well as the many ways that Wainwright deviates from the norm through performance. The following brief sketches of each chapter's arguments and findings offer the reader a sense of how the intersecting ideas of grief, music, and queer performativity combine to cement *Lulu*'s salience as a transcendent piece of art.

Chapter one considers how the form of the song cycle in popular music disrupts traditional understandings and expectations of a 19th century Romantic classical song cycle. In asking how *Lulu's* form -- a classical song cycle – reimagines an art song/popular song divide that differs from other song cycles in popular music that explore themes of loss and grief, I use

[24] I considered the initial 72 screenshots that I took of such posts and grouped them into conceptual groups comprised of 39 comments total. Many posts were repetitious; therefore I chose the ones that were most vivid and informative. I classified the posts into the following groups: empathy, negative feelings, excessive feelings, bearing witness, and feeling part of a community. All of the comments used are cited by username and no personal information was revealed. Unless the poster revealed his or her gender, I did not assume one, and though they are connected to specific tour cities and shows, their hometowns and countries are not specified. It is fairly common for Wainwright fans to travel, often extensive distances, to see him perform across international borders.

the term "queer" to describe how *Lulu*'s song cycle form creates other possibilities within musical time and space, blurring the division between popular music and art song. The definitions of "song cycle" and "concept album" are contrasted in order to explore where *Lulu* fits among salient examples of popular music albums in the late 20th/early 21st centuries and how its differences contribute to the album's queerness. Fan comments surrounding the release of the album in 2009 and 2010 offer a glimpse into the inevitable friction that accompanies a radically different release from an artist.

Having discussed *Lulu* as a song cycle that emerged from popular and classical music, I situate the song cycle as a deterritorialized traditional genre that is reterritorialized as a hybrid composition in chapter two. Using score analysis, I investigate how *Lulu*'s piano music represents genre hybridity, and how such hybridity reflects queer collective identity and Wainwright's traumatic experiences with a personal loss.[25] The ways that Wainwright's composition signal genre hybridity and new performative possibilities reflect the music's queerness as an "in-between" composition reflecting dark and uncomfortable emotions including trauma. My analysis of the twelve-song cycle will explore how Wainwright's individual songs illustrate genre hybridity, the repetitive aspects of grief and the working through process, and queer collective identity found in songs mimicking American popular song.

Shifting from the piano part to the sung melody, chapter three examines the "third space," or a new space of emotional vulnerability that Wainwright's queer vocal performance creates on the *Lulu* album. Through analysis of vocal melody and text, I discover how Wainwright's vocal performance creates a new space of emotional vulnerability that expresses his grief and personal

[25] Wainwright's experiences with trauma as related to his queer identity (specifically rape as a teenager) are important to his identity overall, but are not the main focus when I refer to his relationship with trauma in this study.

turmoil. Wainwright's queer vocality signals his emotional vulnerability and grieving through song. Additionally, Wainwright's vocal versatility pushes the boundaries of the popular/art song divide because the *Lulu* songs are sung in several different styles (folk style, crooning, and classical *bel canto*). His appropriation of African American vernacular styles (such as jazz and torch song) opens up another means of interpreting grief and marginalization, personal and social pain.

Four months after the release of *Lulu,* Wainwright began touring the song cycle, performing it live for nine months consecutively. Chapter four uses performance analysis to explore fan-captured YouTube videos of the live *Lulu* song cycle, offering a mediated form of liveness.[26] Specifically, I approach these videos asking how Wainwright's live performance makes use of queer performativity that commemorates his mother, Kate McGarrigle. Grief visibly mars his live performances, taking shape in performance errors, shedding tears while singing, breaks or cracks in his voice, and shifts in his posture and energy level while performing. His performance, as part of the Lulu concept, challenges gender norms, signaling the fluidity of gender expression. In effect, Wainwright's live performance (including his mourning gown costume and accompanying visual media) is a way of remembering his mother, or conjuring her presence while mourning her absence.

With these live performance videos in mind, chapter five explores the transmission of affect between performer and audience within performance space. I turn to Rufus Wainwright Message Board members' reflections about their experiences witnessing the live *Lulu* song cycle to provide evidence that the circulation of affect "queered" the performance space. Regardless of

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[26] This will be discussed and defined in chapter four. See Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

whether or not they liked the performance aesthetically, audience members were required to orient themselves toward or away from Wainwright's emotional performance as the result of the circulation of affect within the performance space. Some audience members were moved to empathize, sympathize or bear witness to Wainwright's grief, describing profound emotional reactions, while others became disoriented, describing anger, annoyance, or displeasure with the performance.

After studying the individual components of *Lulu* and exploring the many ways that grief, trauma, pain, and the need to express oneself through music united in this original and moving work, I reflect upon the significance of "the scar" and healing through creative expression. I consider three examples of Wainwright's songs that exemplify the healing process: McGarrigle's "Walking Song" (which he covered during the *Lulu* tour), "Candles" (written after McGarrigle's death and recorded for *Out of the Game*, the album following *Lulu*), and "Beauty Mark" (the first song he wrote about his mother in the late 1990s). These examples illustrate how Wainwright slowly healed, continuing to conjure his mother's memory through musical performance beyond the *Lulu* song cycle.

CHAPTER I. FORM, CONCEPT, AND PERFORMANCE PRACTICE: QUEERING THE ART SONG/POP DIVIDE IN *ALL DAYS ARE NIGHTS: SONGS FOR LULU*

Rufus Wainwright is a singer/songwriter with all the tendencies of a rock star. He is a flamboyant and sometimes cocky performer with a history of drug, alcohol, and sex addiction, and his well-documented musical family drama stretches from snowy Montréal to bohemian New York to bustling London.[27] Though his personal life might appear to fit the rock star narrative, his musical background favors classical music, opera, and both his mother's and father's folk music heritage.[28] As a young piano student, Wainwright had a difficult time reading music and with classical technique; even so, he spent a significant amount of time playing and had a keen affinity for the instrument.[29] Part of Wainwright's signature style involves singing while playing piano or guitar (a McGarrigle and Wainwright family tradition). Given his musical family lineage, it is little wonder that from the beginning of Wainwright's career, piano and voice were central to his art, cementing his image as a popular music artist whose influences and

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[27] Aidin Vaziri, "Grieving Rufus Wainwright throws self into work," *SFGate,* August 15, 2010, http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/Grieving-Rufus-Wainwright-throws-self-into-work-3255924.php.

[28] Wainwright's mother was Kate McGarrigle who performed with her sister Anna as a folk duo until Kate's death in 2010. Loudon Wainwright III is a well-known American folk singer still performing at the time of this writing.

[29] "Rufus Wainwright – All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu (April 20)," YouTube video, 5:31, posted by "Universal Music Classics," March 18, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoV3s52NkHA.

musical heroes aligned with Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner more than the Beatles or David Bowie.[30]

Unlike his musical influences, Wainwright entered the music scene in his twenties as an openly gay man with a strong and distinctive songwriting style with the release of his first album, *Rufus Wainwright* (Dreamworks, 1998). His decision to tell his record company that he was gay immediately, combined with the classical, folk, and showtune-inspired music on the album, kept him outside the popular music mainstream and subsequently off mainstream radio, a fact that remains true today.[31] His sexuality, though not the primary focus of this dissertation, is integral to Wainwright's identity because it has informed his trajectory as a singer/songwriter, public figure, and grieving son since Kate McGarrigle's death from sarcoma in January 2010. Her death set the tone for Wainwright's fifth original studio album, *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu* (Decca), which was written and recorded during her prolonged battle with cancer.[32] Despite this stressful and painful time in his life, Wainwright continued to work, collaborating with Robert Wilson in Berlin, providing music for a staging of 24 Shakespeare sonnets, and saw his first opera, *Prima Donna* (2009), premier in Manchester, England at the Manchester

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[30] Wainwright's main instrument, piano, is not a particularly radical choice for a singer/songwriter in popular music; artists like Elton John and Billy Joel and bands like Coldplay and Ben Folds Five feature solo piano, often accompanied by a backing band. However, Wainwright has yet to achieve the level of recognition that John has, largely due to the music he performs, which does not do well commercially.

[31] See Michael Martin, "Rufus Wainwright on Music, Gay History, and Informing the Next Generation," *Out Magazine,* May 17, 2016, http://www.out.com/hit-list/2016/5/17/rufus-wainwright-music-gay-history-and-informing-next-generation.

[32] *Lulu* was recorded in December 2009 and released on March 23, 2010 in Canada and April 20, 2010 in the U.S.

International Festival.[33] Both of these projects ended up contributing music to the *Lulu* song cycle, aspects of which I will analyze in the following chapter.

An intriguing musical effort, *Lulu* has been generically categorized by allmusic.com as Pop/Rock and Vocal, and its style is tagged as Adult Alternative Pop/Rock, Alternative Singer/Songwriter, Alternative/Indie Rock, Chamber Pop, and Contemporary Singer/Songwriter.[34] In iTunes *Lulu* is tagged as Indie Rock. The opening track, "Who Are You New York?," which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters, begins in a way that at once disorients and reels the listener in; it queers mainstream popular music's tendency toward straightforward harmonies with its gesture toward Frederic Chopin and Claude Debussy. *Lulu*, as the title track "Who Are You New York?" confirms, is a contribution to popular music and yet is quite unsuited to the majority of popular aesthetics. For example, rather than the incessant pulse of synthesized sound, there are Alberti bass figures propelling the rhythm and bouts of pauses and silences. *Lulu* best represents an example of upholding the classical spirit of the song cycle because Wainwright's connection to the piano and the vocal content emphasizes the collaborative relationship between only two instruments: voice and piano. Performing both parts heightens the popular aspects of this album's conception, recording, and performance because it mirrors the dual role of many singer/songwriters such as Tori Amos, Sara Bareilles, and Alicia Keys, who sing and play piano in performance.

Though devout fans anticipated *Lulu*'s release, mainstream radio waves and general audiences largely failed to connect with the album. *Lulu*'s moody musical aesthetic, sparse

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[33] Mike D, "Rufus Wainwright Discusses New Album, Kate McGarrigle, and Sinking into Sadness," *Inkstain,* March 23, 2010, http://www.inkstain.ca/rufus-wainwright-qa.
[34] "All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu," allmusic.com, n.d., http://www.allmusic.com/album/all-days-are-nights-songs-for-lulu-mw0001969722.

texture, and themes of death, heartbreak, and loss did not appeal to mass audiences. As Kirk Lake notes in the *Wall Street Journal,* "there is no concern for how the record might be perceived by the general public. No attempt to be popular. Instead there is a creative purity that demands total commitment from the listener."[35] There are no singles or music videos released from this album, and the songs are not as "catchy" as some of Wainwright's earlier songs.[36] The *Lulu* album, as a 21st century cultural object, is a sonic record of the period of time that Wainwright spent working on the music, as well as living through his mother's illness and mourning her death.[37] *Lulu*'s eclecticism is a response to the circumstances through which

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[35] Kirk Lake, "Rufus Wainwright and the Importance of Being Unpopular," *The Wall Street Journal,* August 20, 2010, http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2010/08/20/rufus-wainwright-and-the-importance-of-being-unpopular/.

[36] Fan favorites such as "Cigarettes and Chocolate Milk," "Vibrate," and "Grey Gardens" are notable examples.

[37] Jeremy Wallach argues, "music recordings are cultural objects whose meaningful effects come about primarily through their ability to produce material sonic presences" (37). This assertion stems from the view that music is "an *expanded* form of expression — one that makes full use of the properties of sound to move the human body in ways which speech cannot" (36). Wallach's definitions offer a point from which to build my own argument about the aesthetics of *Lulu* functioning as a smaller piece of a larger artistic experience. This artistic experience is the concept or narrative woven throughout the *Lulu* album; in other words, it is the journey that the listener takes from track one all the way to the end of the album. See Jeremy Wallach, "The Poetics of Electrosonic Presence: Recorded Music and the Materiality of Sound," *The Journal of Popular Music Studies* 15(1): 2003, 34-64. Drawing from the field of Sound Studies also provides perspective on the musical recording as a cultural object that has both meaning inscribed upon it as an artifact, as well as being imbued with meaning as the result of its existence within culture. Jonathan Sterne explains that Sound Studies analyzes "both sonic practices and the discourses and institutions that describe them," ultimately redescribing "what sound does in the human world and what humans do in the sonic world." See Jonathan Sterne, "Sonic Imaginations," in *The Sound Studies Reader,* ed. Jonathan Sterne (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2. This anthology also includes the voices of scholars R. Murray Schafer ("The Soundscape"), John Mowitt ("Sound of Music in Era of Electronic Reproduction"), Richard Leppert ("Reading the Sonoric Landscape"), and Jason Stanyek and Benjamin Piekut ("Deadness: Technologies of the Intermundane"); these are a handful of suggested further readings from various perspectives within Sound Studies that help to identify *Lulu* as a cultural object lending significant meaning beyond a sound recording.

Wainwright was living while creating this music. The album's high art sensibility is a reflection of his artistic identity, one that has never adhered to industry standards of aesthetics or performance style. As such, Wainwright's labeling of the *Lulu* album as a "song cycle" — a form understood in classical repertoire as thematically linked through text, musical motifs, and harmonic or formal structure — ignores popularity in favor of a form that best suits the album's intense themes. For example, in performance a song cycle avoids interruption, discouraging applause between songs in live situations.[38] The song cycle is a relative of the concept album in popular music, but distinct from an opera, oratorio, or musical, and though the text of a song cycle has a direct connection to the larger narrative, it need not follow a plot as in staged productions.[39]

Lulu's central themes of loss, grief, and sadness were potential points of connection to his audience, but his performance, alone at the piano without acknowledging the audience, broke performance norms his audiences have come to expect. For example, many of the songs demand vocal skill to sing along with, are much slower than a typical pop ballad heard on the radio, or contain lyrics that are closer to literature than common vernacular. In other words, *Lulu* songs lack the hook and groove that most pop music has that makes those tunes memorable. Further complicating audience expectations, *Lulu's* pervasive themes of death do not align with themes of partying, love, or youth that saturate Top 40 fare. When I asked Wainwright how the experience of writing and performing *Lulu* changed his approach to songwriting, he explained how the process was a mark of achievement and a challenge that would likely present itself in

[38] Lake, "Importance of Being," 2010.
[39] Nuanced definitions of the song cycle will be discussed later in this chapter.

the future. "I'm just happy that I did it because it's kind of a notch in my belt," he began. Wainwright continued:

> There was this period where I really wrestled with the piano specifically. I've always been slightly insecure about my piano playing and so therefore I find it's important to revisit that question and really exercise *[sic]* those demons… I feel that it's probably necessary for the rest of my career to once again, occasionally, return to that arena and challenge my hands and my voice to do something really exceptional without an orchestra or a band or other singers.[40]

Wainwright's song cycle was, in a sense, a personal challenge that was befitting of the heavy issues and situations occurring in his personal life. Thinking about *Lulu* as both a personal challenge and a response to grim life circumstances is one way of framing the song cycle's mature sensibility, a departure from some of Wainwright's more light-hearted music from previous albums.

I posit that the very form of Wainwright's composition, a song cycle (sometimes referred to as a concept album, though the differences between the two will be parsed out in this chapter), marks *Lulu* as an album that queers the art song/pop divide. Queer, in this chapter, refers to the disruption of the norm, a departure from preset or expected binaries. This definition is rooted in what J. Jack Halberstam calls the "queer time and space continuum." He writes that queerness is "compelling as a form of self-description" because of the way it "has the potential to open up new life narratives and alternative relations to time and space."[41] In his study on queer temporality and subcultural lives, queer refers to the way time is thought of in relation to "new conceptions of space."[42] Queer time is a way of locating "those specific models of temporality that emerge within postmodernism once one leaves the temporal frame of bourgeois reproduction

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[40] Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.
[41] Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 1-2.
[42] Ibid., 6.

and family, longevity, risk/safety, and inheritance; queer space concerns itself with "queer counterpublics" and the "new understandings of space" these groups produce.[43] In musical time and space, Wainwright's use of the classical art song form, the song cycle, within the popular music genre is representative of a new interpretation of structure, organization, and musical form.

As this chapter will show, the song cycle Wainwright produces does not match point by point a Franz Schubert or Robert Schumann cycle, but it shares enough characteristics that, based on scholarship that has identified categorical features of cycles, *Lulu* fits the form at its core. However, because Wainwright gained recognition as a recording artist and singer/songwriter of popular music, his thematically tied work flirts with the popular concept album because of thematic narratives and visual components. *Lulu,* in essence, is neither this nor that, but both at once, elegantly wrecking the delicate structure of the traditional song cycle and the well-recognized concept album (The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is regarded as the earliest example, and myriads of others since followed suit). I argue that the art song/pop divide that Wainwright created when he organized and finalized the songs of *Lulu* in the recording studio, later performing it as a classical song cycle live, can be understood as an illustration of Halberstam's queer space/time continuum. *Lulu* reimagines what a song cycle sounds like, drawing from classical and popular formal influences, but failing to be faithful exclusively to either form. His work as a genre-bending artist[44] inscribes this work as a bold (or haphazard, depending on one's interpretation of the music) move in popular music to elevate

[43] Ibid.
[44] The idea of genre hybridity will be discussed in depth in chapter two, focusing on the *Lulu* score analysis.

personal experience, particularly of an individual who claims a queer sexuality and explores grief and loss publicly.

Classical Art Song Traditions

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari theorize rhizomes as offshoots of ideas and concepts both philosophical and physical in nature; upon connection, rhizomes create the circumstances for original or unexpected phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari recognize that rhizomes have neither "beginning nor end, but always a middle (*millieu*) from which it grows and which it overspills."[45] The queer time/space continuum, like rhizomes, breaks down boundaries or barriers, creating space for things formerly not deemed possible.[46]

Following this description, musical form is likened to a rhizome "right down to its ruptures and proliferations."[47] Deleuze and Guattari describe lieder, or art song, as marking "the first appearance of this pure movement that places the voice and piano on the same plane of consistency, mak[ing] the piano an instrument of delirium, and prepar[ing] the way for Wagnerian opera."[48] The piano did not merely support the vocal part, but performed with it. The art song shares melodic material with the piano part, and the accompaniment might also function as a character in the narrative. A famous example of this is Schubert's "Gretchen am Spinnrade," set to Goethe's *Faust.* In it, the right-hand piano accompaniment mimics the incessant spinning wheel with a repeating pattern of sixteenth notes while the left hand mimics the pedal that is controlled by the foot, or the foot treadle. The vocal line floats above the accompaniment, its

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[45] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 21.
[46] Additionally, this concept supports the queer community's alternative, unpredicted, or previously disallowed expressions and experiences as Halberstam describes.
[47] In chapter two, I examine Deleuze's and Guattari's concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization in relation to genre, including further discussion on rhizomes and multiplicity.
[48] Ibid., 307-308.

lyrics telling the story of a woman who realizes she will never be with the man she loves and mourns this harsh reality.

This extensive connection, or relationship, between solo voice and accompaniment is the foundation of the song cycle. Laura Tunbridge questions whether the song cycle is a genre, explaining that the song cycle is not dependent upon movements to define its form, nor must there be an abundance of songs; only two songs are necessary to make a song cycle. Additionally, inconsistencies in conceptual connections are permissible.[49] Despite these caveats, a song cycle is comprised of lieder that share something, whether the common thread is thematic textual material, musical motifs, or structural aspects. Tunbridge writes:

> However a song cycle is structured, the "cycle" element is loaded and the genre's stature is dependent on it. The obvious association with nature – with life cycles, the passing of seasons, and so on – especially during the second half of the nineteenth century conjured up organic metaphors, with attendant ideas of truth, unity, wholeness, progress, even purity…[50]

Song cycle themes largely reflected the audiences who listened to them. Tunbridge explains that "Lied arose at the same time as, and catered for, a new musical audience: the educated middle classes, who were gradually supplanting the aristocracy as the main patrons of the arts."[51] The politically powerful institutions that previously commissioned composers to write for religious holidays or national celebrations no longer were the tastemakers. Much of this new musical audience was educated in playing and reading music, and so their aesthetic sensibilities were reflected in music that was performed for small groups, often in the home. Also, national identity was closely tied to lieder, particularly in Germany where folk song texts and/or melodies were borrowed or transformed in art songs.

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[49] Laura Tunbridge, *The Song Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1.
[50] Ibid., 2.
[51] Ibid., 3.

Despite changing harmonic rules and musical aesthetics, song cycles continued to be composed and performed well beyond the mid 19th century. As art song adapted to new compositional standards, one vital component did not falter in the form: the fundamental arrangement featuring one voice and one pianist. Art song remains a form of music that "encourages experimentation with notions of self-expression and what might be called construction of the subject."[52] That subject, however, was a direct reflection of society, a point that Tunbridge emphasizes, and one that I too wish to highlight in relation to Wainwright's labeling *Lulu* a song cycle: "the *idea* of the song cycle has often been more important than whether the cycle itself is a coherent, cyclical structure."[53] Wainwright has explained:

> I never intended it to be a song cycle per se, but I realized midway through there was an album of very engaging piano-voice material… It's the different key changes from song to song, the concentrating on the breath, and getting lost in the material. And that only happens in a song cycle.[54]

Though the album's production did not hinge on whether it fit every parameter of a song cycle, the thematic material of the music and its performance quirks resonated with Wainwright who was familiar with the classical form and its performance practices. This familiarity appeared to enable Wainwright to channel the song cycle tradition as he completed composing the album while maintaining his own songwriting style.[55] Further, the intricate and interdependent relationship between the piano and voice, something that is less intense though arguably not impossible with a larger band, is an example of how Wainwright queered his own songwriting

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[52] Ibid., 5.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Joseph Dalton, "Rufus Wainwright's loss prompts more personal song cycle," *Times Union,* December 9, 2010, http://www.timesunion.com/entertainment/article/Rufus-Wainwright-s-loss-prompts-more-personal-868547.php.
[55] For example, within the *Lulu* cycle, the trio of Sonnets, situated roughly in the middle of the album, represents how classical forms can be queered when popular and classical genre aesthetics combine. This cycle within a cycle will be thoroughly discussed in chapter two.

style; in this cycle he mostly did not follow the traditional line of writing a piano accompaniment that harmonically supported the vocal melody, but instead composed complex and independent piano parts that function as an equal partner rather than a subordinate second. The vast majority of his other songs cater to the simple accompaniment style, with few exceptions.[56] For a solo performer, this is a radical shift from the kind of piano accompaniment heard in jazz, for example, where singer/pianists will improvise elaborately, allowing the piano to "take the solo" while the voice is resting, but not at the same time.[57] Thus, Wainwright uses time and space differently because he crafts an independent, but complementary, relationship between the vocal and piano parts. These parts function as one unit that holds the cycle together and compels it forward musically and emotionally.

Lyrical Personas and Emotional States

As previously mentioned, the song cycle has many outlets for expression so long as it is held together thematically through musical motif, harmonic structure, form of each song, or text. The potentially slender links of a song cycle do not make the form itself weak, but rather inspires individuality and nuances that reflect the intimacy of the form and means of expression (the interconnectedness of piano and voice). The fragility of the song cycle's connection has been the subject of intriguing scrutiny in musicological studies. For example, scholars contend that Benjamin Britten's song cycles have been understood as inconsistent in terms of how they are formally connected. Walter Bernhart notes that:

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[56] "Memphis Skyline" (*Want Two)* and "Nobody's Off the Hook" (*Release the Stars)* have more classically stylized accompaniments than the majority of his songs. These might be seen as precursors to *Lulu* that show the depth of his composition and performance skills prior to 2010.

[57] An example of this dialectical relationship can be heard in Diana Krall's work. Though she plays with a backing band, her vocal leads and piano solos take turns in the jazz solo exchange style. She is both pianist and vocalist, but not at the exact same time as many *Lulu* songs exemplify.

> a set of poems in a song cycle may form a sequence of… mental states, a sequence that may imply a temporal order, which, however, does not mean that necessarily a story in the traditional sense is being told. Such a flux of mental states, often leading to a final -- mostly fatal — condition, is a genuinely lyric form of experience which is extremely suitable for song cycles…"[58]

These mental states add an element of cohesion to the form as a whole, with the flux element implying that "the agency of the unifying process is not only… a fairly abstract 'mental disposition' manifesting itself in the text," but gives way to the "more tangible" concept of "a lyric persona" who experiences "the sequence of mental states."[59] This lyric persona need not be a real person, only a "lyric consciousness."[60] The song cycle that presents a "flux of mental states" indicates that "the lyric consciousness appears in a middle position on a scale of carrying concreteness of manifestation: it manifests itself as a 'lyric persona', which is a more concrete manifestation than a mere 'mental disposition,' but it is not as concrete as a 'character.'"[61]

This discussion presents a point of contradiction in relation to Wainwright's text and persona in *Lulu.* Lulu, the character, might be imagined and not entirely concrete, shape shifting throughout the text (Lulu represents Wainwright's sister, mother, a dark seductress, the prima donna), but Wainwright *is* a real person and not a character, and his deeply personal experiences are apparent throughout the text of the cycle. Pleasure, pain, loss, trauma, and rebellion are realities of Wainwright's experience, both physical and psychological. The *Lulu* song cycle form, thus, explores the far-reaching realm of one individual's psyche rather than one character's journey, a compelling means of disrupting or queering narrative expectations. This internal

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[58] Walter Bernhart, "Three Types of Song Cycles: The Variety of Britten's 'Charms'" in *Word and Music Studies: Essays on the Song Cycle and on Defining the Field,* ed. Walter Bernhart and Werner Wolf in collaboration with David Mosley (Atlanta: Rodopi, 2001), 219.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid., 219-220.

reflection privileges the "I" rather than focusing on the experience of another, a tendency of American individualism and indicative of the preoccupation Americans especially have with one's own concerns, comforts, and experiences. The focus on the deeply personal and semi-autobiographical is ideal for popular music concept albums, which have the potential to sustain listeners' interest because narratives and characters are woven into the fabric of the concept.

Popular Interpretations of the Concept Album

A challenge for late 20th/early 21st century art music composers, not unlike in the previous century, is creating and maintaining coherence within a song cycle. The concept album has been described as an artistic and commercial commodity, a means of musical expression, and a format for recorded work; "any 'concept' present may thus derive from the recording artist, the producer, the record company's marketing department, the listener, or any combination thereof."[62] The key difference between the song cycle and the concept album that is relevant to this chapter's focus is that the concept album is always a product of the recording process. Tunbridge explains "the emphasis placed by musicians and listeners on the compositional integrity of concept albums reveals a similar set of values to those that frame the composition and interpretation of song cycles."[63] The distinction between the recorded concept album and the live song cycle performance is somewhat less clear in the 21st century, when art song is no longer exclusively a product of first the written composition and then the salon recital. Because in our contemporary moment both concept albums and song cycles are recorded *and* performed live, the interpretative responsibility falls to the listener/audience to embrace or reject the concept. In other words, the act of listening is as crucial to the experience as performing the music; without

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[62] Marianne Tatom Letts, *Radiohead and the Resistant Concept Album* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).
[63] Tunbridge, *Song Cycle,* 170.

an audience to make sense of the marriage between music and narrative/text the experience of going on a musical journey is lost.

Marianne Tatom Letts discusses the complications that arise with the concept album genre, in which the "concept" is subjective.[64] She notes that the "most explicit version of the concept album is one tied to a stage or film musical, which connects a series of songs to a visual narrative."[65] Concept albums tended to emphasize the "high art" aspect of prog rock, as seen in many 70s bands' efforts, but according to *Grove Music Online:* "concept albums in America have tended to be singer/songwriter-based," reflecting the "utterance of a lyrical 'I,' akin to the traditional song cycle with its acutely personal lyrics"; British concept albums explored "broad sociological themes or futuristic scenarios."[66] On the heels of that idea, Letts also recognizes that concept albums that deviate from the traditional standards are "resistant" because they eschew normal practices yet convey "some kind of concept beyond a single sequence of organized tracks over the course of an album."[67] Further, the "protagonist of a narrative concept album is normally heard as the lead singer, in some cases literally embodying him onstage," but "the events of a given album are unlikely to match exactly those of the singer's life."[68] The concept thus may be hidden or buried, only becoming clear when album packaging, marketing, and the musicians speak about the album's thematic connection.

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[64] Letts, *Radiohead,* 13.
[65] Ibid. The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper* (1967) is commonly perceived as the first true concept album, with the Who's *Tommy* (1969) and Pink Floyd's *The Wall* (1979) serving as other prime examples that included not only conceptual narrative ties, but visual spectacles that made the entire experience of consuming these concept albums more like a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork) that is commonly associated with late-Romantic Wagnerian opera.
[66] Ibid., 18; *Grove Music Online,* s.v. "Album," by David Buckley, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.
[67] Letts, *Radiohead,* 25.
[68] Ibid., 23.

Contemplating the events that informed *Lulu,* Wainwright explained that the album

> …is very much a reaction to a whole plethora of massive events, whether it's my mother's events, or the opera, or working with Robert Wilson on the Shakespeare sonnet project. There were all these incredibly intense, focused sessions occurring in my life that I had to be athletically involved in, both emotionally and artistically. So me being alone at the piano was this kind of refuge or cocoon that I could crawl into and just be alone and process what was going on around me without losing it in front of people.[69]

Lulu might be considered a resistant concept album because it did not develop in a linear fashion, but rather culminated in an album that straddled established concept albums and conventional song cycles in its performance practice. It resembles a concept album because of its clear textual themes, his embodiment of Lulu at various points on the album, and the visual aspects (the album artwork and the multimedia in the live tour) that elevate the themes of darkness, grief, and pain. However, a significant point of departure is that Wainwright's text reflects his personal experiences, and depending on the song, his experiences become touchstones for listeners to vicariously identify with Wainwright. His close relationship to the source material queers how traditional art songs and song cycles used text to mold a narrative to draw listeners in and often empathize with the subjects' antics. The way he chose to share his experience is in part informed by queer temporality in the late 20th/early 21st century; gay visibility has improved, allowing his voice to be heard among the many heteronormative voices within popular music.

Unifying Text and Form in Popular Music

Popular concept albums, as previously noted, rely heavily on unification of text (as well as or apart from music) to help an audience make sense of the cohesiveness of the whole work. There are several albums that serve as valuable examples of how concepts, or thematic ties,

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[69] Erin Thompson, "Q&A: Rufus Wainwright on Kate, Martha, Loudon, the Opera, and His Favorite Shakespearean Sonnet," *Seattle Weekly,* August 11, 2010, http://www.seattleweekly.com/home/916950-129/interview.

create meaningful listening experiences for audiences. *Songs for Drella* (Lou Reed and John Cale, 1990), *Magic and Loss* (Lou Reed, 1992), *Night of Hunters* (Tori Amos, 2011) and *The Nylon Curtain* (Billy Joel, 1982) are unique in their structure, musical expression, and narrative, but similarly represent the ways in which song cycles function as concept albums in popular music.

Lou Reed and John Cale wrote, performed, and recorded *Drella* in remembrance of Andy Warhol after his death in 1987. This concept album, sometimes referred to as a song cycle, is a collection of songs about Warhol's life, art, and friendship with Reed and Cale. It is not a memorial album recorded by various artists who respect his work, but a creative effort between two former Velvet Underground bandmates who swore they would never work together again. There is a distinctly personal connection between Reed, Cale, and Warhol's memory, something that comes through in the lyrics of the many stylistically varied songs on the album. Unlike *Drella, Lulu* is not a memorial album, but it does use memory and presence in a similar way. The subject of *Drella* is constantly present and is either being addressed by the singer or included in the conversation/memory. Likewise, Lulu is always present, whether she is representing Wainwright's mother, shadows from his past, or other important women in his life. Reed and Cale created a space in which to remember their friend, and though mourning that loss is part of the memorial project, I perceive the living memory of Warhol to be more present than the fresh grief of his death.

Contrastingly, Reed's *Magic and Loss* is a concept album that reflects upon themes of death, suffering, illness, love, and grief in relation to his experience of losing two friends to

cancer.[70] The lyrics do not tell a linear story, but envelop the listener in Reed's experiences and memories. It is particularly relevant to this study because it offers two important parallels to *Lulu*: 1) the cohesiveness of the album stems from the lyrical and thematic content, and 2) it is a successful example of a concept album that forces the listener to go into dark, emotional spaces from which they cannot escape unless they turn the music off. Reed produced an album where he, as Wainwright did years later, grieved through music as opposed to writing an album about death.

Though *Drella* and *Magic and Loss* share common affective characteristics, the lyrics offer two different perspectives on the mourning process. I argue that *Magic and Loss* is an example of *grieving* through music while *Drella* is an example of *memorializing* through music. Both recall the dead, but in quite different ways. For example, in the titular song on *Magic and Loss,* Reed penned: "And if the building's burning/Move towards that door/But don't put the flames out/There's a bit of magic in everything/And then some loss to even things out." Reed's lyrics and performance are too honest and personal to not be a meaningful act of remembrance for friends he loved, a key difference in merely singing about death generally. *Drella*'s opening verse of the song "Slip Away (A Warning)" speaks to an existential crisis of creativity from the perspective of Warhol: "People said to lock the door and have an open house no more/They said the Factory must change and slowly slip away/But if I have to live in fear, where will I get my ideas." In this song, Cale and Reed recall the integral role Warhol played in the art and popular

[70] In some reviews or news articles *Songs for Drella* and *Magic and Loss* are labeled concept albums, and in others called song cycles. I label them concept albums here because I am following Tunbridge's definition of the "rebirth" of the song cycle in popular music: the concept album. See chapter 11, "Rebirth: Pop Song Cycles," in Tunbridge's book *The Song Cycle,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 169-186.

culture scene, memorializing his influence with these lyrics.[71] Lyrically and thematically, *Drella* and *Magic and Loss* bring death to popular music, setting a precedent for men to explore emotionally heavy themes of personal loss through the concept album (or song cycle) form.

Shifting from conceptual parallels with *Lulu* to genre parallels, Tori Amos' *Night of Hunters* is an example of a popular artist's genre transgression. Deutsche-Grammophon approached Amos about writing and performing a song cycle in the classical tradition, and thus she produced an album (her first released on a classical label) that reflected the traditional form, but was a "21st-century interpretation… based entirely on classical themes."[72] Amos' songs on this album (also referred to as both a concept album and a song cycle in press accounts) are written in the styles of various major classical works, the closest example from within popular music that I can link to Wainwright's work. The concept itself is of Amos' creation and is about a woman who is struggling to recall her identity after losing it to her lover; themes of duality, feminine agency, nature, and mysticism abound, a probable nod to Romantic texts that were set to music. A key difference between Amos' work and Wainwright's is that his album sticks most closely to the classical song cycle voice/piano arrangement; *Hunters* is an orchestrated album

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[71] While this project explores how Wainwright grieved through music, an example of how he has memorialized through music can be found in "Memphis Skyline" (*Want Two,* 2004). This song paints a portrait of Jeff Buckley's mysterious death/disappearance into the Mississippi River in 1997 through poetic snapshots of Buckley's brief career: "always hated him for the way he looked/In the gaslight of the morning/Then came hallelujah sounding like Ophelia/for me in my room living." This verse references Buckley's haunting (and successful) cover of Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," as well as Wainwright's long time jealousy of him, echoing the memorializing nature of *Drella*. Many press accounts discuss "Memphis Skyline" as a tribute to Buckley, including a review of the Strathmore (North Bethesda, MD) performance on August 8, 2010. See Dave McKenna, "Rufus Wainwright stifles emotion, then lets it burst forth in Strathmore concert," *The Washington Post,* August 9, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/08/AR2010080802364.html.

[72] Angela Wattercutter, "Tori Amos Goes Centuries-Old-School on New Album, *Night of Hunters,*" *Wired,* September 19, 2011, http://www.wired.com/2011/09/tori-amos-night-of-hunters/.

that features piano and voice, but it is full while *Lulu* is lean. *Hunters* is thematically linked by narrative in a way that *Lulu* is not, and Amos drew upon the Romantic cycles of Schubert especially for inspiration. Additionally, there are three female voices on this album, not one; Amos' daughter and niece perform as supporting characters to Amos' protagonist. The complexity of this album reflects her training, talent, and honed performance and compositional skills. *Night of Hunters,* being on a highly recognized classical label, possesses a legitimacy that *Lulu* lacked within the classical world. Likewise, Amos' estimable career to date sustains her legitimacy in the popular world. The distinctions between Wainwright's work and Amos' exemplify the ways that classical form, style, and performance practice can be honored while deviating from strict rules or traditions. Though *Lulu* appears to be comprised of art songs not pop songs, Wainwright's compositional process did not always uphold strict classical standards (this will be discussed in depth in chapter two). Similar to *Night of Hunters, Lulu* borrows from the classical genre, but retains its contemporary sound on the recording and in live performance as well.[73]

Lyrically themed concepts are another way to identify a concept album, especially one that does not explicitly use melodic motives, harmonic progressions, key associations, or rhythmic motives to tie the larger musical structure together. Somewhat similarly to *Lulu,* Billy Joel's *The Nylon Curtain* is a song cycle that derives its concept from textual material.[74] In Joel's case, text locates "the album at a particular time in American history," which is similar to the way that Wainwright locates grief, loss, and identity struggles in *Lulu*'s text as reflective of a

[73] The recording of *Lulu* will be addressed in chapter two and chapter three (specifically in relation to Wainwright's singing). Chapter four will focus on the live performances, which were also recorded by audience members.

[74] Joshua S. Duchan, "Disappointment, Frustration, and Resignation in Billy Joel's *The Nylon Curtain,*" *Rock Music Studies,* 2,2 (2015): 168-187. doi:10.1080/19401159.2015.1022396.

particular point in his life.[75] Duchan notes that Joel's composition and production choices did not "contribute to the work's internal cohesion as a song cycle," but did "illustrate how a variety of previously used techniques coalesce and align… to heighten its impact and further its message."[76]

Similarly, Wainwright's declaration that *Lulu* was going to be experienced as a song cycle in live performance, coupled with the album artwork, the nontraditional marketing (no music video or single was released from this album), and the textual themes of isolation and grief culminated in an unforced cohesion of ideas. This is unlike his previous albums *Want One* or *Want Two,* which were originally meant to be one massive double album, but instead were released a year apart. The conceptual tie in those albums was expressed through album artwork; *Want One* featured Wainwright on the cover as a knight coming to save the day (though the liner notes indicate that he is actually saving himself) and *Want Two* shows "Wainwright in drag as John William Waterhouse's Lady of Shallot, a move unlikely to woo middle America."[77] Those albums did not have the same kind of tight lyrical concept that brought them together, and in fact, some of Wainwright's most heavily orchestrated recordings appear on those albums.[78] However, for fans that were, in fact, wooed by the lushness, richness, and intelligence of the albums, the visual connections did not detract from the music itself. The use of album artwork in *Want One* and *Want Two* hints at the overall thematic material found in the lyrics. Previous

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[75] Ibid., 171.
[76] Ibid., 177.
[77] Alexis Petridis, "Rufus Wainwright doesn't need more praise, but here it is: his album is stunning," *The Guardian,* February 25, 2005, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2005/feb/25/popandrock.shopping3.
[78] For example, the album versions of "I Don't Know What It Is," "Go or Go Ahead," and "Old Whore's Diet" are heavily orchestrated, overdubbed, and generally sonically busy when compared with "Vibrate" or "Pretty Things" two of Wainwright's more simply arranged (piano and voice only) songs.

Wainwright albums do not use album artwork in this way, and thus the *Want* albums appear to have set a precedent that *Lulu* followed successfully.

Visualizing Life After Death: the Lulu Concept

Whether Lulu is best considered a concept album or song cycle is subjective. *Lulu* was not a collaborative effort like Joel's *The Nylon Curtain* or Amos' *Night of Hunters*, two albums unquestionably part of the rock genre. Even though these albums have been identified as song cycles, they are frequently acknowledged as part of the concept album lineage, conflating the terms once again. What sets *Lulu* apart is that Wainwright's collaborations were in relation to the album, its marketing, and the visual aspects of the live performances, *not* the musical performances themselves. The first non-musical clue that the listener is in store for a dramatic musical experience comes from the mature sensibility of the *Lulu* album's artwork.

The visual aesthetics of the CD artwork are thematically linked to the songs, but are also gestures of private and extremely personal communication that were packaged, marketed, and sold around the world. The way in which the album itself is marketed also exemplifies how it is an artistic gesture of grieving through music, suspended in this case in the space of a tangible object. The album artwork is the first thing that a consumer encounters that relates to the thematic material of the music. The CD shows that Wainwright queers the space allotted for the artwork because it focuses so heavily on sadness and the simultaneous presence and absence of McGarrigle.

The album cover features an extreme close-up of Wainwright's heavily made-up, tear-filled eye.[79] The back of the liner notes shows this same eye, halfway open, and the back of the

[79] These images also appear on a giant screen in the live tour and will be discussed in chapter four.

CD case shows this same eye closed. Wainwright's name and the title of the album are not on the cover of the CD case; instead, a transparent sticker is stuck on the plastic of the case that has the artist and title of the album in the same handwriting that is found in the liner notes. The liner notes present this information with white print against a black background, and on the opposite page his dedication to his sister, "To Martha the bright lady," is scrawled in black against a white background. The following pages of liner notes contain all the lyrics to the songs and copyright and production information in the barely legible handwritten scrawl. On the last page Wainwright added his acknowledgments: "Thanks to all my family and friends. Special thanks to Jörn for always rubbing my feet. Special, special thanks to Kate for reminding me not to be afraid. See you in Montauk, Mom." The CD itself is completely black with Wainwright's name and album title in the same stylized, black handwriting. The choice of black on black in relation to mourning is obvious, but also of note is that the CD itself resembles a traditional black vinyl record, the kind of record upon which classical song cycles were pressed a century ago.

As are common in concept albums, visual aids heighten the theatricality of the popular music genre and more completely tie together the music, lyrics, and live performances of a work. Taken as a whole, the visual accompaniments of *Lulu* are indulgently melancholic and Romantic, but minimalistic as compared to full-length films or musical theatre/rock opera stagings of concept albums. Alongside the CD packaging (or vinyl pressing of the album), the choices Wainwright made in planning the live tour support the form of *Lulu* as part concept album, part song cycle. During each performance of the song cycle, Wainwright donned a "feathered, bejeweled, plunging-necklined black shroud with a seventeen-foot train that his friend Zaldy designed for him," a mourning gown that recalls Victorian fashion aesthetics meant to be worn

after a loved-one's death.[80] These Victorian aesthetics include a muddled reimagining of severe, black gowns with trains designed for mourning women and the luxurious, low-cut, plumed gowns designed for social events.[81] Wainwright's gown is a visual cue to his audience that the tone of the song cycle is reverent and subdued, reflective and gloomy. While many listeners familiar with Wainwright's tendencies to use humor to express pain or sadness might not need these visual cues to identify themes of mourning, grief, and despair in the work, for those less familiar with his sarcasm and often lofty lyrics, the image of Wainwright in the mourning gown clarifies what the music often cannot: that *Lulu* is a reaction to pain, loss, and emotional exhaustion despite outlying energetic songs such as "Give Me What I Want and Give It To Me Now" and "The Dream." For listeners who either did not attend live performances of *Lulu* or were waiting to attend a live show, foreknowledge of the mourning gown and the opportunity to see it in photographs or videos online added an extra dimension to the experience of listening to the album. Wainwright's decision to wear a costume during the live performance was a way of queering the song cycle performance in live space, as traditional classical song cycles were not performed in costume. Wainwright's costume embodies the concept while honoring the performance style of the song cycle which seeks to envelope the listener in sound and mental images, not multimedia accompaniment.

Another vital visual component that underscores the concept of *Lulu* is the image of the eye, specifically Wainwright's heavily shadowed, occasionally weeping eye alternately staring and blinking in apparent slow motion. Wainwright's collaboration with Douglas Gordon

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[80] Tim Murphy, "Il Divo," *New York Magazine.com,* April 18, 2010, http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/profiles/65495/.

[81] For a history of mourning dress, including Victorian mourning aesthetics, see Lou Taylor, *Mourning Dress: A Costume and Social History* (New York: Routledge, 1983).

preceded the *Lulu* tour, but supported the live performance of the song cycle. Wainwright explained the significance of the eye as a visual aid:

> Like the cover,[82] it's my eye, but thirty feet tall and in various stations, shall we say. Stations of the eye. It's a gorgeous work, and it's reminiscent of many things. It's reminiscent of the Surrealists, it's reminiscent of horror movies, it's reminiscent of Buñuel,[83] it's reminiscent of going to the zoo and looking at an elephant. It's just all that the eye can conjure up. And once I roll around to the show to the Shakespeare sonnet, it's shocking how much Shakespeare uses the eye as a reference in all of his work.[84]

This comment once again points to the fact that *Lulu,* as a concept, is multifaceted and widely open to interpretation. The images of the eye offer an abstract connection to themes found in the text (looking at the world around oneself, watching a lover from afar, watching someone suffer or die, looking inward toward the images one sees in dream), a less prescriptive visual than the more structured live performances of the concept of Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, for example. However, the use of the eye as a visual cue to link mourning, melancholy, death, and life to the music, the text, and the gown enriches the various media in the live performances, heightening the dramatic aspects of the material and tightening the themes of the song cycle.[85] Further, the

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[82] The "cover" refers to the *Lulu* album cover.

[83] A Spanish filmmaker known for being a "great subversive" and "mischief maker" with films that combined "surrealist non sequiturs with attacks on the bourgeoisie, the church, and social hypocrisy." "Luis Buñuel," *The Criterion Collection,* n.d., https://www.criterion.com/explore/16-luis-bunuel.

[84] Thompson, "Q&A: Rufus Wainwright on Kate…", 2010.

[85] Such collaborations need not occur simultaneously, and frequently are reimagined and produced after an album has gained recognition or live performances have ceased. For example, The Decemberists' 2009 rock-opera, *The Hazards of Love,* gained visual accompaniment in the form of a film entitled *Here Come the Waves: The Hazards of Love.* The filmmakers, Guilherme Marcondes, Julia Pott, Peter Sluszka and Santa Maria, "created animations to accompany individual sections of the album," and the film was released on iTunes. See Tom Breihan, "Decemberists Turn *The Hazards of Love* Into Animated Film, *Pitchfork,* November 19, 2009, http://pitchfork.com/news/37163-decemberists-turn-the-hazards-of-love-into-animated-film/. Additionally, *The Hazards of Love* found yet another life as a folk opera at the Players Theatre in Montréal in February 2012. The show was produced by McGill students James Campbell and

eye is significant when tied to the act of public grief. The eye's gaze is mostly static and can be interpreted as gazing upon the mourner (Wainwright/Lulu) or looking beyond to the audience in a passive confrontation as they watch the grieving son. In this way, the eye connects the stigma of male public mourning with bearing witness, topics I will return to in chapters four and five when I address the live tour in detail.

Beyond visual cues, the character, Lulu, is present in all aspects of the cycle: the music, the text, the visual aesthetics of the album packaging, and the accompanying visuals of the live tour, including Wainwright's costume in which he performs. *Lulu* is a work that encompasses both the living and dead, the fictional and the real, and thus, McGarrigle's presence and absence haunts *Lulu*, as do other women who have influenced Wainwright's work. Aside from McGarrigle, Wainwright's sister, Martha, appears in a song bearing her name.[86] "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" is sung by the *Prima Donna* diva in his opera, a fading diva past her prime and awash in waves of nostalgia watching fireworks on Bastille Day in Paris. Shakespeare's Dark Lady is another version of Lulu, and serves the role of doubling as a Louise

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Charles Harries. Ariella Starkman, "Love, nymphs, and the occasional cliché, *McGill Daily,* February 13, 2012, http://www.mcgilldaily.com/2012/02/love-nymphs-and-the-occasional-cliche/. These theatrical examples echo the extra-musical aspects of Wainwright's *Lulu,* including the Robert Wilson production of the Sonnets in Berlin, Tim Hailand's coffee table book, *A Day in the Life of Rufus Wainwright,* which curates photographs of Wainwright's daily preparation for and performance of *Lulu* in 2010, and the Douglas Gordon installations "Douglas Gordon: Phantom" and "tears become…streams becomes…" that have used aspects of his and Wainwright's 2010 *Lulu* collaboration. See "Making Eyes, Douglas Gordon," *Gagosian,* December 12, 2014, http://www.gagosian.com/now/making-eyes--douglas-gordon; Phoebe Hoban, "Douglas Gordon's Not-So-Jolly Holiday Windows Feature Rufus Wainwright's Staring Eyeball," *Vulture,* December 15, 2015, http://www.vulture.com/2014/12/douglas-gordons-not-so-jolly-holiday-windows.html.

[86] The manuscript is dedicated to Martha's son, Archangelo. Wainwright has also spoken of Martha's strength and new matriarchal role in the family since McGarrigle's passing. See Thompson, "Q&A: Rufus Wainwright on Kate…", 2010.

Brooks-type Lulu that inspired Wainwright.[87] As intimate and isolated as *Lulu* seems, feminine presence informs the work, and while Wainwright may have written, practiced, recorded, and performed this all alone, the feminine presence and simultaneous absence of these women cannot be denied. Wainwright does not "become" a female character in these songs, but rather acknowledges the female influences that inform the work. This gender fluidity represents the queerness of the concept album/song cycle dichotomy because it introduces the idea of the transgendered individual who occupies space differently than the heteronormative individual. Moreover, the multiplicity of *Lulu* creates space for a male to mourn in public.[88]

In a rigid culture (as far as male emotions are concerned), *Lulu*'s layers have the potential to make some audience members more comfortable with Wainwright's raw and honest display of public grief. Rather than strictly reinforcing the binary of male/female and popular/classical, *Lulu* deconstructs it, allowing Lulu, the female presence to appear throughout the album as a free figure that defies era, place, sexuality, gender, and artistic medium. Her temporality is certainly queer, crossing boundaries throughout the cycle and creating room for a gender fluid body on stage. "She" is crafted in the arts and found in nature, a both/and sort of creature who is not the

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[87] "Rufus Wainwright – All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu (April 20)," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FoV3s52NkHA.

[88] Lulu is discussed throughout Catherine Clément's book, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* as a character who is a femme fatale and destroys men in her quest to move up in society. Her end comes when Jack the Ripper in London murders her and her lesbian lover. Catherine Clément, *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988). In the popular music realm Lulu was also the subject of the Metallica-Lou Reed collaboration in 2011. The album was ill-received at the time, but Laurie Anderson, Reed's widow, relayed David Bowie's admiration for the record at Reed's posthumous induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in April 2015. Ben Beaumont-Thomas, "David Bowie: Lou Reed's masterpiece is Metallica collaboration Lulu," *The Guardian,* April 20, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/apr/20/david-bowie-lou-reed-masterpiece-metallica-lulu.

object of Wainwright's desire, but the driving dark force behind humanity. Lulu does not speak for all women nor all men, but to common experiences among them: pain, grief, loss, love, and desire in their many forms. "Her" presence in the concept is translated through Wainwright's performativity, and thus he becomes, by way of the song cycle performance, the essence of Lulu. As a spectral figure, she cannot be clearly identified or pinned down. I contend that this helps to make the darkness that surrounds Wainwright's work more accessible to the public. However, as I previously argue in this chapter, Wainwright represents both the lyric persona *and* the artist, which is a way of creating distance -- perceived as safe space by some -- between witnessing another person's personal pain and grief.

Curiosity, Speculation, and Expectation: Wainwright's Fans Weigh In

Fans on the Rufus Wainwright Message Board, the primary fan forum associated with Wainwright's website, speculated and debated the content of the album prior to its release. Their excitement and anticipation over this new release produced a variety of message board threads that focused on what songs might be included on the album, how the tour might manifest itself, and what musical aspects might be different from Wainwright's previous release, *Release the Stars.* On the whole, many comments in these threads reflected upon how *Lulu,* on the whole, was a musical point of departure for Wainwright, and what that might mean for fans who appreciated the pop aspects of his songwriting more than the classical traits.

In the UK, there were limited listening/preview gatherings for fans to preview the album. A press release on the main page of rufuswainwright.com invited UK fans to the listening event in March 2010.[89] The listening event prior to release for *Lulu* can be read as a gesture toward

[89] The release states: "If you live in the UK and you'd like to hear Rufus' new album, *All Days Are Nights : [sic] Songs For Lulu*, please join us straight after work and hear the full album with

inviting listeners (especially hardcore fans) to prime their ears for the experience of digesting the album as a total work (a song cycle) instead of individual songs (especially since *Lulu* did not have any singles). Fan commentary indicates that this was not precisely possible at the pre-release events because the listening took place in public bars or restaurants where people normally gather to chat, eat, and drink. *Lulu* was not designed as a pop record (with a few choice singles that reached mainstream popularity), but experienced by listeners as a complete work without interruption. This discrepancy in initial listening intentions indicates that *Lulu*'s marketing was a challenge, and not every listener was perceived as prepared to embrace a classical form.

Once it was revealed that *Lulu* was going to be performed as a song cycle, fans began considering this unexpected development. One fan noted that "to do the entire album *sans* applause" would be "one of the coolest aspects of his forthcoming dates."[90] He noted that part of the fun of the live show is "when you can get lost in a live music experience and not have that constant break from the 'magic' with the crowd noises."[91] Another fan noted the art song influence, writing:

> As I'm listening, art songs by Hugo Wolf and Franz Schubert come to mind - that is the calibre of musicality we're witnessing here. The grieving is obvious but definitely not maudlin; the whole heart is on the line, without force or pretense, simply being. This all

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other fans before anyone else - a whole month before it is released on April 5th. Arrive early for some complimentary drinks. These events are taking place in intimate venues, and priority of entrance will be given to those confirming their attendance by email. Please note that Rufus Wainwright will not be in attendance." Orsi, "Want to preview Rufus' new album?", *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* February 24, 2010, accessed July 9, 2015.

[90] DJWILBUR,"His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* February 16, 2010, accessed July 9, 2015.

[91] Ibid.

> by itself is a breath of fresh air. The sense of closeness, beyond mere intimacy, is palpable and consistent from track to track.[92]

A third fan reflected on the elimination of big production sounds for *Lulu,* and how that decision was not entirely outside the realm of possibility for Wainwright, who draws inspiration from classical composers and styles writing, "Whilst I am the first to rejoice in the huge over the top orchestrations… I really don't think Rufus is compromising his artistry by doing just voice and piano - he is laid bare, his musicality really comes through, that sometimes can be hidden in the big stuff."[93]

These comments suggest that Wainwright's fans were open to the bareness that a song cycle (understood as solo piano and voice) could offer, despite their appreciation of his more involved albums and live shows with a full band. Further, the attention paid to Wainwright's departure from busier and more flamboyant song arrangements implies that fans recognized that Wainwright was doing something original and meaningful with this release. The song cycle was, in essence, a way of queering his songwriting tendencies because of the songs' simple musical arrangements (piano/voice) and the overwhelmingly melancholy tone of the album. Fans mostly expressed excitement regarding Wainwright's decision to strip his music down, though some fans were apprehensive about the song cycle form because they were attached to the more bombastic aspects of his albums. One fan rejected solo piano performances on the grounds that "It doesn't sound like the real Rufus to me… I feel cheated a little. When you've been touched by a talented genius like Rufus...you just want to hear what he hears when he composes. I hate to

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[92] beautifulChildToo,"His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 23, 2010, accessed July 9, 2015.
[93] Nutmeg3000, "His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* June 11, 2008, accessed July 9, 2015.

think of him being the least bit fettered, artistically."[94] This opinion reveals that fans largely assumed Wainwright's musical output would follow a particular pathway, and his intentional queering of that songwriting formula caused some hesitation if not distress.

Wainwright's fans did not limit their speculations to the form or instrumentation of the songs. The title of the album and Lulu's symbolism were also discussed at length. In particular, an exchange on the message board about the binary aspects of masculinity and femininity in the characters (or lyric personae) in previous songs revealed the almost academic underlying connection many fans had with Wainwright's music. The idea that Lulu, the character, was following in the footsteps of more famous alter egos in pop music is of particular importance to the concept of queering the art song/pop divide. Fans noted similarities between *Lulu* and Mariah Carey's *Emancipation of Mimi* (Island Records, 2005) and Beyoncé's *I Am… Sasha Fierce* (Columbia Records, 2008).[95] Another fan referenced John, a character heard in Wainwright's earlier music, as a potential inner alter-ego/muse along with Lulu.[96] This idea was analyzed further, comparing the masculine personae from previous albums to the feminine aspects:

> So if John [the Baptist] is the half naked masculine persona, baptising sinners to make them pure, then Lulu is the sensitive, feminine persona crying over a baby that will never grow up to be a sinner and/or a crazy woman seducing men, forcing them to behead the ones that reject them… Rufus has talked about these two sides as being slutty and shy at the same time.[97]

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[94] Rhapsody, "His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 23, 2009, accessed July 9, 2015.

[95] Damascus, "His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* August 31 Aug, 2008, accessed July 9, 2015.

[96] "John" refers to a character mentioned in "11:11" (*Want One)*: "John was half-naked/And Lulu was crying…" Rhapsody, "His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* August 31, 2009, accessed July 9, 2015.

[97] Hyperufusensitive, "His new album," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* September 5, 2009, accessed July 9, 2015.

The binary of "slutty" and "shy" speculates that Lulu is firmly operatic in nature. The damsel in distress/murderess characteristic of female roles in opera supports the classical aspect of the Lulu concept, while recalling the male and female perspectives that can exist simultaneously within a song cycle. The idea of Lulu being more than a character – indeed, being a concept in and of itself[98] – reflects the necessity that a concept album must have a clear narrative or theme that binds the entire production together. Without necessarily defining what they were identifying in the title and Wainwright's character/embodiment of Lulu, fans were mentally and emotionally preparing for the song cycle experience to be anything but straightforward or simple. The fluidity of Lulu, and the resistance of the fans to merely categorize it as *the* subject of the album, is a credit to their intimate knowledge of Wainwright's previous works, and their acceptance that Wainwright's music might, at times, be uncomplicated, is never void of meaning.

I note fan discussions and opinions here in order to stress the point that Wainwright's intentional mixing of classical form and performativity with popular music's technologies, marketing tools, and, at times, songwriting aesthetic was a significant moment in which he queered the art song/pop divide in his career. He purposely played with musical time and space to produce an original work capable of handling the assortment of fierce emotions – both positive and negative -- that accompanied this artistic endeavor. Astute fans did not blindly accept this, automatically expecting *Lulu* to become an instant hit or fan favorite; nor did they fully reject Wainwright's experimentation and decision to close *Lulu* off to full band tours or ostentatious orchestral arrangements in the studio. As is apparent in these examples, fans took on the challenge of making sense of Wainwright's song cycle given the early hints and opportunities

[98] I purposely avoid "herself" here so as to honor the possibility that Lulu can represent gender fluidity.

to hear new songs they had at their disposal. In short, they were prepared to receive the album as a concept album that was performed as a classical song cycle. Their conversations lend considerably more depth and analysis than album reviews (which were often critical of the inaccessibility of the music to the mainstream audience) or brief discussions in press in which Wainwright has stated the core themes of the album.[99]

Conclusion

The possibilities that queer space and time affords individuals varies. For some, queer time allows people to postpone normative adulthood -- marriage, children, "settling down" – in order to pursue other things – exploring one's sexuality, for example -- while still being recognized as valued and visible members of society. For others, queer temporality functions as a marker of difference, an example of how being queer has prevented normative experiences. Queer space, as a way of counteracting the stigmas or confusion associated with queer

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[99] For example, *Pitchfork* said of *Lulu:* "The real danger with an artist who listens solely to his own muse is that he'll cut off the outside world, making music that can't be related to or enjoyed by anyone but himself. Wainwright gets closer than ever to that vanishing point of self-absorption on his latest effort, *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu*. The only things you hear on the album are Wainwright's voice and his piano, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. The problem is that he wants you to luxuriate in both when it's far more likely you'll feel like you're drowning, given how rarely Wainwright buoys the listener with an actual melody or memorable lyric." Joshua Love, "Rufus Wainwright, All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu," *Pitchfork,* April, 23, 2010, http://pitchfork.com/reviews/albums/14156-all-days-are-nights-songs-for-lulu/. *Drowned in Sound* concluded their review with the following summary: "Ultimately, an album as deeply personal and emotive as *All Days Are Nights* might only appeal to those who have followed the soap opera of Rufus Wainwright's life so far. Like a Shakespearean monologue you're either going to be living every moment with the narrator or gazing on indifferently as your attention drifts away. For those in the former camp, this is a challenging listen where life mirrors art in a profoundly resonant way." Hayden Woolley, "Rufus Wainwright, All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu," *Drowned In Sound,* May 4, 2010, http://drownedinsound.com/releases/15265/reviews/4139608. These dueling reviews approach the same idea (that Wainwright's ambition outweighs this album's relatability) with varying degrees of snark and praise, but are accurate representations of the "love it or hate it" nature of the album within the fan base.

temporality, creates room for individuals to have alternative experiences, whether by choice or perforce. Wainwright lived the "gay lifestyle" of promiscuous sex and partying to the fullest and delaying normative adulthood some years prior to his mother's illness. At the time of her illness and death, he was no longer engaged in those types of behaviors, and instead was contemplating marriage and fatherhood alongside life and death. Under these conditions, I argue that creativity functioned within a kind of queer space, a musical sanctuary where he was able to artistically process the changes occurring in his life.[100] Wainwright disrupted classical song cycle and concept album genre norms, creating an iteration of the popular song cycle that borrows from both yet is original. The inclusion of visual reminders of Lulu, the character and the concept, represents popular aspects of the queered form, while the performance practice of the album demonstrates the classical aspect. In this alternative musical space, Wainwright queers the art song/pop divide through these careful performance choices and the use of visual aids to further explain and situate the concept of Lulu, who stands for loss, grief, darkness, creativity, and love.

Fan reactions to the song cycle were varied, but on the whole, individuals expressed excitement for this departure in Wainwright's career. Though the form of *Lulu* is only the starting point for grasping the significance of the work, the ways in which Wainwright brought the concept to life through his intense piano and vocal performance stand out amongst his other creative works. The next chapter will turn to score analysis to analyze the musical relationship between piano accompaniment and melodic material.

[100] See Martin, "Rufus Wainwright on Music…, 2016.

CHAPTER II. QUEERING GENRE EXPECTATIONS: A SCORE ANALYSIS OF *ALL DAYS ARE NIGHTS: SONGS FOR LULU*

Rufus Wainwright's public performances of grief over the loss of his mother took several forms (e.g., album, press interviews, live tour), and all were in some way acts of catharsis. Using *Lulu* as a vehicle, Wainwright challenges socially appropriate ways to deal with loss and trauma. *Lulu* is a creative alternative that echoes the unpredictability of trauma and grief; his songwriting choices highlight deterritorialization, or unexpected paths, through style and form, the use of silence, and repetition (harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic) within the song cycle. Wainwright's songs are cathartic, but also create an alternative method (one that brings creative expressions of grief into public space) for processing loss and working through pain and grief. Within the *Lulu* song cycle, Wainwright's resulting hybrid composition is an example of how transforming pain into art can create an alternative to mourning in private.

As the score analysis in this chapter will show, Wainwright's choices and decisions challenge songwriting norms in popular music, creating a hybrid genre that embraces aspects of both popular songwriting and classical aesthetics. Musical choices that exemplify these aesthetics infuse this album with uncomfortable and extremely personal experiences and themes, thrusting topics of grief and loss into the public realm. These aspects of Wainwright's music are emblematic of Sedgwick's understanding of "queer" as a conduit to new ways of understanding, seeing, and knowing.[101] Wainwright's powerful, compelling voice and the text he set to music

[101] Sedgwick's introduction to *Tendencies* gives several examples of how understanding the nuances of queerness are not privileged in culture, and how consistent and conforming epistemologies work to prevent expressions of difference. Key examples include how parents, teachers, doctors, and clergy invalidate children who "show gender-dissonant tastes, behavior, [and] body language" (2); how "straight-defined students" in lesbian and gay studies classrooms,

are central to understanding the depth, intricacy, and significance of this album in popular culture.[102] Further, Wainwright's openly gay sexuality is important to understanding his artistic complexity. As a public figure, his sexuality marks him as other, despite the many allies and safe spaces for members of the LGBT* community in North America and Europe, his most frequent tour stops. His queerness, though situated in closer relation to his musical output than his sexuality, is an important factor in comprehending his public displays of grief as countering hegemonic expectations of male grieving.[103]

As discussed in chapter one, *Lulu* is a twelve-song cycle[104] that Wainwright composed, set music to text,[105] and performed entirely himself.[106] After a foundational discussion about the

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in Sedgwick's experience, felt entitled to legible learning experiences about "different lives, histories, [and] culture" (5); and how assumptions about sexuality assume "everyone 'has a sexuality,"" that "erotic expression will be oriented toward another person and not autoerotic," that if erotic expression is "alloerotic, it will be oriented toward a single partner or kind of partner at a time," and that orientation will remain constant (8). Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Tendencies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993).

[102] This component, which encompasses what I call "queer vocality," cannot be divorced from the whole album but will be discussed in depth in chapter three.

[103]This album was not exclusive to North America and was released around the globe. This complicates the idea that this creative output, while mourning for his mother, was a specifically American trait that Wainwright performed. However, Wainwright is Canadian-American and his North American understanding of the world must not be devalued. Part of that understanding situates public grieving as gendered, something that women perform and men abstain from expressing. Queering happens in this case when Wainwright grieved publicly through performance and his sister, Martha, grieved much more privately.

[104] The track listing is as follows: 1. Who Are You New York? 2. Sad With What I Have 3. Martha 4. Give Me What I Want And Give It To Me Now 5. True Loves 6. Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink 7. Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face 8. Sonnet 10: For Shame 9. The Dream 10. What Would I Ever Do With a Rose? 11. Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellant 12. Zebulon.

[105] Importantly, Wainwright refers to the song lyrics as "text" in the score. When asked about this in our interview, Wainwright responded: "It might relate to the fact that three of the texts were not lyrics to begin with; they were Sonnets by Shakespeare so maybe it was just to equalize that situation and not have to knit pick too much." Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.

relationship between genre and rhizomes as pertaining to *Lulu,* I present my analysis of the twelve songs on the album drawn from the perspectives of their piano accompaniment (tonalities and harmonic progressions), melodic contours of the vocal line, and tempo, dynamics, and other expressive directions utilized in the performance on the recording.[107] I also investigate how Wainwright's music conveys grief and loss, paying particular attention to how sadness, melancholy, and dark timbres function in the score.

Deconstructing Genre

Genre distinctions in popular music function as an organizational tool that distinguishes music that is not part of the Western classical tradition. Genres are tied closely to what Fabian Holt describes as:

> organicist metaphors as in discussions of how genres are *born,* how they *grow, mature, branch off, explode,* and *die*. These metaphors have great explanatory power, but they often create a false sense of unity and support general claims about the state of a genre.[108]

This can be damaging because such terminology puts musical styles in pre-formed and often impermeable boxes. Hard and fast definitions of musical genres prevent experimentation, development, mutation, or previously unimagined combinations. In short, genre is a way of *constructing* musical expression, an antithetical concept to the fluidity, emotional flexibility, and communicative aspect of musical creation. However, if genre constructs, it also constricts the structure of the piece or song in question. A complete lack of structure (avant-garde

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[106] The recording sounds like he played and sang every take simultaneously because of the way that the music and voice work together. It sounds like an organic performance with the rubato, dynamic relationships, and complexity of the melody and accompaniment as they fit together in several songs.

[107] These songs are not discussed in the song cycle's order in this chapter, but are grouped based on core characteristics and stylistic distinctions that exemplify queer songwriting practices and expressions of grief.

[108] Fabian Holt, *Genre in Popular Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 14.

compositions that do not formally or tonally align with western harmonic norms, for example) does not lend itself to musical intelligibility, and might complicate how a listener comprehends or relates to the music. Structural organization can ground musical forms and styles in history so that a musical lineage can be understood. For example, classical virtuosity can be identified in guitar solos in metal, and 12-bar blues helped to form the basis of the iconic 70s rock sound as heard in Pink Floyd, Cream, and Led Zeppelin. Genre can function as a map indicating where one's influences are taken from as well as a blueprint for how one will create innovative music. This is particularly true in popular music where genres are often borrowed and blended to continuously produce original music.[109]

Holt describes popular music as being "rooted in vernacular discourse, in diverse social groups, because they depend greatly on oral transmission, and because they are destabilized by shifting fashions and the logic of modern capitalism."[110] More concerned with posterity and rigor than faddish popularity, classical music follows longstanding academic traditions, attached to

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[109] "Original music" includes music that heavily quotes or samples other music's motives, riffs, or choruses. Several examples include Kanye West sampling Ray Charles' "I Got a Woman" in "Gold Digger" (*Late Registration,* 2005), Eminem sampling Dido's "Thank You" in "Stan" (*Marshall Mathers LP,* 2000), and Led Zeppelin sampling Muddy Waters' "You Need Love" in "Whole Lotta Love" (*Led Zeppelin II,* 1969). These successful cases of sampling yielded original ways of using previously recorded songs, thus creating previously unimagined material. "Rolling Stones 500 Greatest Songs Tracks Using Samples," *Who Sampled,* n.d., http://www.whosampled.com/song-tag/Rolling Stones 500 Greatest Songs/samples/1/. Less successful examples of using old music to create new music have resulted in law suits for copyright infringement (Robin Thicke's use of Marvin Gaye's "Got to Give it Up" in Thicke's 2013 hit "Blurred Lines" is a recent example). Jeremy D. Larson, "8 Artists That Could Sue 'Uptown Funk' on the Same Grounds as 'Blurred Lines,'" *Radio.com,* March 11, 2015, http://radio.com/2015/03/11/8-artists-that-could-sue-uptown-funk-on-the-same-grounds-as-blurred-lines/.

[110] Holt, *Genre in Popular Music,* 14.

which is significant cultural capital.[111] That which is classified as "pop music" specializes "in similar [shared] forms of production, with professional teams of producers and managers, and their music shares certain conventions and forms a component of certain kinds of collectivity."[112] Holt recognizes how the "network of a genre can be understood from the perspective that the genre is a constellation of styles connected by a sense of tradition."[113] Further, he notes that within these networks' similarities in "cultural values, rituals, practices, territories, traditions, and groups of people" are present.[114] Susan McClary's earlier scholarship explains a similar idea: "Meaning is not inherent in music, but neither is it in language: both are activities that are kept afloat only because communities of people invest in them, agree collectively that their signs serve as valid currency."[115] In this dissertation, I consider music as a form of affective communication, thus arguing that *Lulu* is music that was conceived as a way of communicating pain. This communication of pain is not specific to American or Canadian culture, but cuts cross-culturally, and is not limited to any particular genre of music.[116]

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[111] Ibid., 15.
[112] Ibid., 17.
[113] Ibid., 18.
[114] Ibid., 19.
[115] Susan McClary, *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender, and Sexuality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 21. It is important to note that McClary's work on classical music and gender often tends to focus on absolute music and the way that certain pitches inherently suggest a particular gender or sexuality. This is quite different from scholarship that identifies the ways that gender and sexuality are expressed within a larger musical context. While I recognize McClary's body of musicological work as important for the time, my analysis of gender, sexuality, and queerness in relation to music does not follow this line of thinking.
[116] Aside from traditional Eastern laments that are typically performed by women of the community, other musical examples of music that express pain include songs or works written in response to a national or personal traumatic event (e.g., Bruce Springsteen's 2002 album *The Rising* written after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US), Western classical works like Requiems (Verdi's *Requiem* being a central influence to Wainwright's songwriting), pop/rock breakup songs (e.g., Canadian artist Alanis Morissette's "You Oughta Know" [*Jagged Little Pill,* 1995]), or folk songs of the British Isles that often tell stories of lost love or death (e.g., the Scottish

Wainwright's musical output, prior to and including *Lulu,* has failed to fit neatly into a particular genre of popular music, but is neither purely classical in nature; rather, the industry recognizes it as falling somewhere within the broad, sweeping category of rock music which lacks clear-cut, static boundaries.[117] Though not strictly labeled as classical art song, the *Lulu* songs bear distinct traces of German Romanticism, adding to the dark and dramatic aesthetic of the music. These aesthetics are borrowed from the chromaticism that disrupts diatonic predictability in art songs of Schubert and Schumann or solo piano works of Beethoven, Brahms, and Chopin. Word painting and textual themes of love, death, and magic accompany the musical elements that are often linked to dramatic operas. Alongside these musical characteristics, the personality of the German Romantic composer provided a model for the 20th century notion of the rock star. Beethoven's isolation, Schumann's madness, and Liszt's sex appeal are rock 'n roll to the core. From a 21st century view, Wainwright's history of substance abuse, flamboyancy in performance, and sex appeal to many fans echo the fan frenzy that made 19th century audiences react emotionally to Wagnerian operatic motifs, Berlioz's stunning yet macabre *Symphonie Fantastique*, or Beethoven's lush, late string quartets. The century before Elvis appeared on television or Nirvana defined the grunge scene, German Romanticism set the standard for rock's passionate style, sound, and cultural significance.

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ballad "The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond" is said to have roots in the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1746). These examples are but a fraction of musical works that cross cultural and national boundaries that communicate pain, sadness, or loss.

[117] Kier Keightley uses the expansive term "rock" to talk about popular music that spans genres, historical contexts, and artists. He notes that rock culture rejects "soft, safe or trivial" characteristics found in pop music, instead carrying "serious, significant, and legitimate" attributes. Kier Keightley, "Reconsidering Rock," in *Cambridge Companion to Pop and* Rock, ed. Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.

Rock music's serious nature mirrors the high art aspect of classical music when compared to the low art, or cookie-cutter repetition of pop music. Rock is seen as a departure from pop because it engages with "something 'more'" than expected rock 'n roll characteristics like rebellion, pleasure or fun.[118] Rather than rebellion or joy, overt grief is infused in Wainwright's *Lulu,* making it an introspective album that bears emotional weight, echoing German Romantic themes and narratives. The music reflects classical influence because of its expressivity and complexity (e.g., rubato in both the piano and vocal parts, virtuosic runs in the piano accompaniment). And yet Wainwright's songwriting borrows from popular songwriting tendencies as well, weaving rhythmic motifs (e.g., rhumba and ragtime) with unexpected chord progressions that eschew common tonal harmony choices. The combination of the popular and classical aesthetic creates a hybrid genre, or an "in-between" genre, that Holt describes as a "conceptual metaphor in a form of decentered thinking that is structured less by core-boundary models than by models with more chaotic and transformative structures."[119] Rather than seeing the hybrid genre as that which is unattainable, the "in-between" understanding of it closely coincides with Sedgwick's understanding of "queer." This is to say that "[d]ecentered thinking that is structured by chaotic and transformative structures" allows Wainwright's self-proclaimed song cycle to be a hybrid classical/popular composition.[120] Its decentered nature merges

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[118] Ibid., 129.
[119] Holt, *Genre in Popular Music,* 159.
[120] Ibid. Holt outlines the six propositions of the in-between model. They are as follows:
Core-boundary models of genre should be complemented with decentered models.
Music has cross-generic and processual qualities that defy categorical fixity.
Spaces between genres are as valid sites of inquiry as are genres themselves.
In-between spaces have special significance for understanding diversity and transformation.
The metaphor 'in between' draws attention to how music is situated.
My in-between poetics seek to unfold connections across borders ad infinitum (159-160).

compositional traditions and performance practices without maintaining a predictable or standardized form, creating the opportunity to understand it as a rhizome.

Genre Hybridity and Rhizomes

The concept of the rhizome, or something that resists singularity and organizational structure, relates to the construction of the in-between genre and the queering of standardized genres in both classical and popular music. In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari explain that the rhizome is that which "ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles."[121] The rhizome lacks "points or positions," and create opportunities for multiplicities to occur; these multiplicities lack unity and are "defined by the outside: by the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities."[122] New multiplicities, or new possibilities, can result in reterritorialization in which something becomes something else, thus allowing the rhizome to shift, change, and proliferate.[123]

Wainwright's song cycle, as a hybrid composition, embraces multiplicity, deterritorialization (alternative lines or paths), and reterritorialization (the re-establishment of something in a new place), all of which are concepts that Deleuze and Guattari consider to be alternative ways of seeing the possibilities of intersecting connections. Deterritorialization especially creates the possibility of the deconstruction of a stable genre because the subsequent deviations result in reterritorialization. In other words, this process is a queering of the norm, or

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[121] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 7.
[122] Ibid., 7-9.
[123] Ibid., 10.

the expected trajectory of an object. Though queerness is not a concept Deleuze and Guattari discuss explicitly, deterritorialization is at play when the refrain fails to move to an expected aural place, aligning with Holt's ideas about resisting form and genre to create new musical spaces.

Deleuze and Guattari, while never devoting an entire text to music, have considered the ways that music touches lives and contributes to creating culture, and though their theoretical work stands outside of music studies, their engagement with sound, feeling, and form show the many different ways music can be theorized within cultural studies. From their perspective, which aligns with Holt's, popular music can be understood as rhizomatic because it lacks the linear structure of the Germanic compositional traditions. It "develops in fits and starts, in a messy, practical, improvisational way rather than in a refined, programmatic, theoretical way."[124] The refrain is a structural unit that unifies the larger form. For example, "a rhythmic pattern that serves to mark a point of stability in a field of chaos," is understood as an anticipated territory, an unexpected refrain. When that territory is reinforced "canonical genres [within classical music] like the sonata, with its three movements, each of which has specific sections (theme, exposition, development, coda, etc.) can be seen as 'enframing' forms."[125] Within popular music, the refrain refers to verse-chorus-verse forms that organize songs. Audiences are meant to focus on a piece of music's "plan of organization," or the "relational network of points and lines, whose unfolding they try to follow during the course of the piece" in order to make sense and

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[124] Timothy S. Murphy and Daniel W. Smith, "What I Hear is Thinking Too: Deleuze and Guattari Go Pop," *ECHO: a music-centered journal,* Vol 3, No. 1 (Spring 2001): 1-2, http://www.echo.ucla.edu.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/Volume3-Issue1/smithmurphy/index.html.
[125] Ibid., 4.

comprehend the entire piece.[126] This plan is foiled and the "enframing forms" are broken when the refrain moves elsewhere, which is to say when the listener hears something that is unexpected or unnatural to the genre.[127]

Wainwright's songwriting in *Lulu* does not follow one path or line of thinking; it is traveling many paths at once and drawing from several different influences to create one authentic contemporary sound. This exemplifies the way in which Deleuze and Guattari understand rhizomatic structures to be "transformational multiplicities," a concept that applies to Wainwright's songwriting style. The *Lulu* score resembles a rhizome – "a map and not a tracing" – in the ways that its contents mix form, style, and performance cues within the hybrid manuscript.[128]

"In-Between" the Score

Building upon the idea of the *Lulu* score resembling a "map and not a tracing," the classical music score is itself a kind of "enframing form," or a plan for organization. Notes to conductors, performers, and scholars are imbedded in the music notes, tempo and dynamic markings, and rhythmic figures, but do not ultimately determine the performance of the music. The accessibility of the *Lulu* score opened up opportunities for score analysis and making meaning of the music that could not be heard listening to the album. Over the course of researching and writing, I repeatedly consulted the score. Studying the score revealed moments where trauma and grief may have influenced Wainwright's songwriting decisions, helped me

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[126] Ibid.
[127] For example, the meter could change from a waltz rhythm to a destabilizing measure of 7, a deterritorializing experience for the listener because their expectations are not met and they are brought to a different place within the music.
[128] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 12.

identify genre-bending compositional choices, and led to a deeper understanding of the stamina it took to perform this music night after night.[129]

Schott Music published the *Lulu* score in 2012, a major departure from common popular music songwriting traditions.[130] While it is unclear whether Wainwright transcribed the music after recording it or wrote down the songs as he composed, a press release from Schott EAM (European American Music Distributors) states that the Schott New York edition of *Lulu* was "annotated and edited by the composer."[131] Wainwright's preface to the score includes a note justifying the song cycle's publication:

> But now that I've lived through these events and the songs are finally free for others to perform with this publication, I hope that artists choose to divorce themselves completely from my personal story and embrace the sounds and melodies of *Songs For Lulu* to fit their own experience, since in the end, we all live fabulously emotional and complex lives. That is my wish.[132]

These comments indicate that he is not only communicating with people who are fans of his music, but musicians who wish to explore new repertoire and infuse the music with their personal experiences through performance. This could mean classical performers looking to perform a modern work of a living composer, or popular performers wishing to challenge

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[129] This included listening to the album on CD while following along in the score, carefully studying the score in silence and making notes in the score, and playing through the piano parts myself (alone and while the album played).

[130] Schott Music was founded in 1770 and distributes over 120 third-party publishers in addition to the entire Schott program. This program includes "performance and teaching literature, urtext editions, concert and opera editions, study scores, complete editions such as those of Richard Wagner and Robert Schumann, books on music, and CDs, influences all areas of musical activities." "Company profile of Schott Music," *About Schott,* n.d., http://www.schott-music.com/about/profil/. Wainwright's previous work has not been formally notated for public consumption in a collection like this one.

[131] "Rufus Wainwright's *Five Shakespeare Sonnets* at the BBC Symphony Orchestra," *Schott EAM*, February 28, 2012, https://www.eamdc.com/news/wainwright-shakespeare-sonnets-with-BBC-symphony/.

[132] Rufus Wainwright, *All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu* (New York: Schott Music Corporation, 2012).

themselves with difficult repertoire. Either way, in allowing the song cycle to be published, Wainwright released his music and his pain to the larger public.

Analysis of tonal centers and extra-musical markings in the score offer a foundation upon which to analyze the wider significance of individual songs' music. Wainwright's songs are mostly written in stable and obvious keys; in other words, most songs contain a key signature that is consistent throughout the song, though some are not. Compositional predictability and tonal stability are apparent in "Martha" (B major), "Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face" (E-flat major), "Sonnet 10: For Shame" (B-flat major), "The Dream" (A-flat major), "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" (C major), and "Zebulon" (D major). The remaining songs are in major keys but lack a definitive key signature.[133] They have a particular tonality that can be understood in traditional western harmonic language,[134] but are revealed through chordal analysis of the piano part, close study of the melodic line contour, and using aural cues and cadences to most accurately situate the tonality of the song. Identifying the key goes beyond reading the empty key signature because it is so closely dependent upon listening to the quality of the chords (major or

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[133] Generally speaking, the C major key is written with no flats and no sharps on the staff, but the songs that lack a key signature in *Lulu* do not follow this compositional rule. The song keys are also not harmonically related, something that is common in song cycles, but not a strict compositional rule. While some minor keys might sound melancholy, the sounds that tonal centers signal to listeners are purely subjective. While b minor or e minor tonal centers are beautiful and consoling to me personally, they might be heard as depressing or melancholic to different ears. Similarly, C major, often associated with cheer, triumph, and celebration, does not signal happiness to all listeners.

[134] This kind of tonality relies on the balance of tension and resolution in consonant and dissonant chords, the inclusion of time signatures signifying rhythmic meter (e.g., 3/ 4, 4/4, 6/8), key signatures designating a specific tonal center, and common cadences such as V^7- I (perfect authentic cadence), I -V (half cadence), V^7-vi (deceptive cadence) to name a few. The pre-set rules of tonal harmony are, in one sense, the beginner's guide to composition. However, upon mastery of the rules, the destruction of them, in varying degrees, allows composers to stretch their creative muscles and expand the boundaries of consonant and dissonant sound. See Stefan Kostka and Dorothy Payne, *Tonal Harmony,* 7th Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2012).

minor, consonant or dissonant, unstable or resolved). Wainwright's inconsistent inclusion of key signatures is one marker of how he deviates from classical composition's common practice and much of popular music songwriting.[135]

In addition to the scaled back approach to arranging, Wainwright mixes the languages of his tempo and dynamic markings, thus mixing common practice composition of both the classical and popular styles.[136] Both English and Italian are used in every song except two — "Sad With What I Have" and "Sonnet 10: A Woman's Face." For example, above the first measure of "Who Are You New York," the first song on the album, the tempo marking is set at ♩ =72 beats per minute with the direction *senza rubato,* or without fluctuations in tempo, indicating a steady rhythm. Underneath the treble clef piano part the dynamic marking is *mp,* (mezzo piano, medium soft) *cantabile* (in a singing style), *richly.*[137] The mixture of languages in these tempo and dynamic markings deviates from the standard practice of using consistent language. In earlier periods of musical history, tempo and dynamic markings are in Italian, regardless of the composer's origin (French composers strayed from this, but German composers

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[135] Wainwright's interview on the UK podcast, Sodajerker on Songwriting, offers a recent overview of his songwriting practices as they pertain to his classical musical education. He explains that leaving McGill University's music conservatory allowed him to break compositional traditions more easily because he was not indoctrinated into the classical world. "Episode 54 – Rufus Wainwright," *Sodajerker on Songwriting*, February 26, 2014, http://hwcdn.libsyn.com/p/a/1/b/a1b0bccd38f66bcd/episode_54_rufus_wainwright.mp3?c_id=6887205&expiration=1451962710&hwt=e9e09c1a1179a1b4508039bfa9929346.

[136] These markings are notes in the score about how to perform the piece using musical vocabulary.

[137] The inconsistency in capitalization and the use of parentheses is the result of quoting these markings directly from Wainwright's manuscript.

quite often did not).[138] The addition of *richly* in English is an example of a moment where Wainwright is creating a hybrid composition that lies in both the classical and popular world.

Tempo and dynamic markings that speak to painful or volatile emotions are found in a number of songs. "Martha"'s tempo is ♩= 60, and *Pleading and vulnerable* is the primary indicator of performance mood. This is juxtaposed with *molto rit., a tempo, poco accel.* strewn throughout, all common Italian phrases indicating slowing down, playing at tempo, and speeding up slightly, respectively. *Move on* and *hold back* appears after measure 30. Also, in measure 29 the direction shifts form *Pleading and vulnerable* to *Tempo I. Bluesy, Gershwin-style.* After these English additions, tempo markings return to Italian in measure 48. "Give Me What I Want and Give It To Me Now!" begins *With Reckless Spirit,* ♩=108. This is a steadier song on the whole, but other directions include *Cantabile, gliding, Floating, weightless, moving forward,* and then the Italian markings for without *ritard* in measure 45, and *ritard* at the end in measure 50. These markings, as well as others that are dispersed throughout the score, are in the piano accompaniment, but there are also markings that speak directly to the vocalist.

Examples of markings that concern the vocalist alone appear in "True Loves" and "Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink." Near the final cadence of "True Loves," in measure 63, the direction in the middle of the phrase is *(no breath).* This is assumed performance practice in classical vocal technique. Breathing between syllables or in the middle of phrases is largely avoided. Breaking these rules indicates that one is either untrained or follows the popular performance practices where breath control is less important because of amplification in recording and live performance. While one would usually not see this direction in a classical score, it is notable in

[138] The use of Italian is less common in the 20th and 21st century in classical music, and mostly if not entirely absent from the popular realm.

Lulu because Wainwright is intentionally calling for a classical vocal performance practice of elongating the phrase despite the *rit.* happening at the cadence. Wainwright includes vocables in "Sonnet 43" when Shakespeare's text drops away. The direction in measure 13 reads *(as if singing to oneself)* and the phonemes are set as "Do do do do" with an asterisk that leads to a footnote that reads: "Sing freely on this or any other phoneme." This song also includes deliberate breath marks in measures 26 and 27, again creating intentional phrases that are not open to free interpretation.

"Martha," in addition to the aforementioned mix of tempo markings' languages, contains the direction *(almost spoken)* in measure 26 which coincides with the lyrics "call me back," which is at the end of a phrase and serves as a cadence both musically and lyrically. Just prior to this, measure 23 contains a footnote that reads "Optional repeat *ad. lib.*" in reference to the tied melody whole note that spans at least four measures while the piano has four sextuplets of tinkling arpeggiations. This indicates a space in the score that allows improvisation of how to conclude the period; it can either be strictly measured or elaborately held, an aspect of the score that channels jazz and popular forms that encourage vocal sustain while the accompaniment mimics an abbreviated cadenza.

Nontraditional pedal markings and chord progressions in "Zebulon" show how the desire to communicate painful feelings is imbedded in Wainwright's score. Many of the songs in the score contain pedal markings, a standard practice in classical and popular manuscripts.[139] In "Zebulon," the very last direction in the final measure of the song reads "After the sound has died away, abruptly lift your foot off of the pedal to produce a 'thud' noise resulting from the

[139] The typical use of the damper pedal is to follow bass line chord changes, which might mean changing the pedal every chord change, or letting some blend together to create more layered harmonies.

piano's dampers hitting the inside string." This is a remarkable choice because this practice, the thudding of the pedal, is not a typically welcomed performance practice in classical music, but seen as a major faux pas. For Wainwright, it means something drastically different: finality or a call to consciousness after a long time of silence or detachment.

"Zebulon"'s painfully slow tempo gathers together the threads of grief that Wainwright weaves throughout the entire album and ties them together once and for all. The ending dynamic marking, *morendo,* means dying away, a direct link that ties the end of the song, the end of the album, the end of a performance, and the end of his mother's life together. The intentional pedal thud might be a way of recalling the listener to the present moment, or could be an act that resembles waking from a dream (or nightmare). It is a way of concluding the piece without resolving the harmonic progression, which fades away on an eleventh chord that lacks the third of the chord; likely it is built from A dominant seventh, the dominant chord that should resolve to the root (D major). But it does not resolve, and the listener is left with sound that fades away without closure, and then the dull, deadened thud that resists resolution amidst haunting silence. This silence, associated with the inability to adequately express a painful experience, might also indicate the desire to relate to another person because of the isolating traumatic experience.

While *Lulu's* score is clearly the product of a painful and emotionally overwhelming period of Wainwright's life, it would be inaccurate to claim that the music printed in the score is incoherent, as if it had been written during a blackout or a dissociative moment. The score itself may not appear to be traumatized — i.e., fragmented, nonsensical, or incomplete — but the music is a by-product of emotional stress and pain. His manuscript contains markings that seek to connect musicians who might not otherwise look at the score with deliberate choices of

alternating language and directions that seek to bridge gaps in knowledge.[140] Such anomalies explored above avoid common practice techniques in the score, reflecting emotional instability and genre hybridity.

The Sonnets and Breaking Form

Genre hybridity and the relationship between rhizomes and form are perhaps best exemplified within what I argue is a portion of a song cycle within a larger song cycle: the Sonnets. "Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink," "Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face," and "Sonnet 10: For Shame" function as a three-song microcosm. These songs exemplify how Wainwright used genre flexibility and deterritorialization to deviate from stringing together thematically relevant songs within the larger twelve-song cycle. The three sonnets lack similar forms and do not need to be performed consecutively for them to make sense; in fact, the unstable aspects of each song resist enframing forms that typically result in stable genres. These songs use Shakespeare's text and exist in another form: Robert Wilson's theatre production, "Sonette."[141]

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[140] It is worth noting that since the conclusion of the *Lulu* live tour, the song cycle has been performed in its entirety by Canadian mezzo-soprano, Wallis Giunta. For a review of her performance, see Colin Eatock, "Wallis Giunta lets Rufus Wainwright's classical music shine," *The Globe and Mail,* March 2, 2012, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/music/wallis-giunta-lets-rufus-wainwrights-classical-music-shine/article550458/.

[141] The Berliner Ensemble production, which premiered in April 2009, set 24 Shakespeare sonnets to Wainwright's original music. Wilson created a truly queer production that included cross-dressing for each actor; eccentric costumes, lighting, and make-up; and did not honor the chronology of the sonnets. Wainwright performed two of the sonnets before the final curtain call at the premiere, and has performed five of them with orchestral accompaniment in the years since the *Lulu* tour. Christine Wahl, "The Bard in Berlin: Shakespeare's Sonnets Debut in Drag," *Spiegel Online,* April 14, 2009, http://www.spiegel.de/international/zeitgeist/the-bard-in-berlin-shakespeare-s-sonnets-debut-in-drag-a-618968.html.

The Sonnets were composed as music for the theatre à la Kurt Weill with a variety of arrangements.[142] Christine Wahl notes in her review that the "musical accompaniment ranges from medieval Minnesang to the very contemporary electric guitar."[143] The three sonnets on the *Lulu* album were then rearranged (it is not clear which came first, the theatre arrangements or piano accompaniment, though it would make sense if the piano accompaniment was the original source) to reflect what is in the manuscript and heard on the album.[144] They function within the song cycle as a queer block that reflects western tonality with heavy Romantic chromaticism, rubato, classical *bel canto* singing, and the essence of the song cycle, which is to set poetry, not lyrics, to music.

"Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink," is a dynamic song in E major that tricks the ear at times because of the heavy chromatic movement and the chord changes every beat. The song is in 4/4 to begin, but frequently falls into a mixed meter pattern that includes 3 /4 and 5/4 that account for irregular beats, elongated measures, and, likely, the rhythm of Shakespeare's text. The last section, however, shifts to 6/8 and modulates to B minor, darkening the sound and recalling the

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[142] He has performed five sonnets accompanied by orchestra with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, Montréal Symphony Orchestra, and the BBC Symphony Orchestra.

[143] Wahl, *Bard in Berlin,* 2009.

[144] For an analysis of musical adaption of Shakespearean sonnets, see Mike Ingham, "'The True Concord of Well-Tuned Sounds': Musical Adaptions of Shakespeare's Sonnets," *Shakespeare,* 9, 2 (2012): 220-240. doi: 10.1080/17450918.2012.705879. This article includes a description of the three sonnets in the *Lulu* song cycle, as well as Wainwright's setting of sonnet 29, "When, in disgrace with fortune's and men's eyes," which was recorded with Kate McGarrigle on banjo, Anna McGarrigle on accordion, and Joel Jifki on violin for Michael Kamen's sonnet performance project, *When Love Speaks* (2002) at the Old Vic in London. Ingham refers to *Lulu* as a concept album, and notes the "natural affinity between the songwriter's taste and aesthetics and those of his illustrious lyricist" (234). His description of the orchestral cycle setting, the one I witnessed in 2011, is described as sacrificing "subtlety and intimacy in favor of classical-pop grandiosity" (235). For further discussion of Shakespearean settings and music see Julie Sanders, *Shakespeare and Music: Afterlives and Borrowings* (Malden: Polity, 2007).

melancholy of solitude and lonely isolation; the rhythmic changes create a pulsing, seductive repetition that stands in stark contrast to the regular movement of the rest of the piece. The last three measures, however, return to E major and follow the one chord per beat pattern from the beginning.

"Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face" employs extremely sparse triad accompaniment in 4/4 time. While there is some rubato, the tempo remains consistent and the steadiness of the accompaniment is a key aspect of the piece. It is a thoughtful, tender song and the melodic line resembles a carefully sung recitative with steady, diatonic accompaniment. It is a "close" sounding piece that includes some blue notes in the melody that ground it where it rightfully belongs, in a popular genre that is reinterpreting a classical form. Additionally, it ends on a minor first inversion chord that leads directly into the next piece's tonic note. This is a direct reflection of the function of a recitative that "sets up" the aria that follows in traditional operatic practice, but does little to provide closure for the song as a stand-alone piece.

The third sonnet, "Sonnet 10: For Shame," makes a rhythmic switch from common time to 3 /4, a common waltz meter. It is marked as berceuse, a form that is typically like a lullaby in 6/8. This presents a queer moment because 3 /4 is felt in 1 while 6/8 is usually felt in 2. This signifies that Wainwright's interpretation of the form contains one major pulse rather than two. The form is typically diatonic and lacks a lot of chromaticism, another aspect that Wainwright queers in this song. The piece distinguishes itself from other well-known berceuses, like Brahms' "Lullaby," because the middle section contains chromatic passages that bring the listener to a place of swirling and pulsing movement. It is a song that paints in broad strokes and has a lengthy crescendo followed by a lengthy decrescendo. It comes to rest at a tranquil place that falls back in line with the formal standards of the berceuse.

It gestures toward the tradition of scat singing in jazz with the phonemes that are set to melodic motifs in between these irregular phrases. “A Woman’s Face” modernizes the classical operatic recitative, presenting a freer melodic line than the strictures of the accompaniment normally would allow. As the melody cadences and reaches tonic, the accompaniment resists resolution. “For Shame” queers a classical form by injecting it with musical steroids; Wainwright took advantage of the range of the keyboard, including chromatic passages and his ability to play large chords and octaves easily, the volume of the grand piano, and his singing range to write a melody that competes with the grand crescendo/decrescendo of the accompaniment. This set of songs is an exemplary model of how genres can be bent to the will of the songwriter when the songwriter is proficient in more than one compositional genre, resulting in rhizomatic expressions that need not follow a predictable path.

Trauma, Musical Repetition, and Grief

A few months after McGarrigle’s death, Wainwright was interviewed about the *Lulu* album and his opera, *Prima Donna.* It is a long piece that rehashes a lot of information about his musical family and McGarrigle’s declining health and eventual death. Notably, the interview ends with the following quote:

> The hardest times, he says, are the glimmers of happiness. "I'm doing all these rehearsals now, and things are going so well. At the end of the day I think, 'I've got to call mom and tell her how it's going.' That kind of stops me in my tracks. Then I have to face the undeniable fact: she's gone."[145]

This sentiment is common to anyone who has ever experienced some kind of loss. Whether it is the death of a close family member, a beloved pet, or the end of a friendship or romantic

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[145] Fiona Sturges, “Rufus Wainwright: ‘Our family is a battered ship…’, *The Independent,* April 9, 2010, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/rufus-wainwright-our-family-is-a-battered-ship-1939317.html.

relationship, the moment in the day when one realizes things are no longer the same is a devastating one and it takes time, often weeks or months, to come to terms with this new "normal," especially after a traumatic event.

Cathy Caruth writes in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History,* trauma "brings us to the limits of our understanding."[146] As Caruth defines it, a traumatic event is not "experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event," and this "distortion of reality" can neither be interpreted nor controlled.[147] This type of distorted reality might manifest itself in that which cannot be articulated, but, even so, it often desires to be expressed. Jenny Edkins describes trauma as incapable of being communicated through language (e.g., speech of narration). She explains that individuals are situated as members of social groups and after a traumatic event "this groups betrays us. We can no longer be who we were, and the social context is not what we assumed it to be."[148] Without the language to express the pain associated with the traumatic event, silence becomes one of the dominant reactions, and trauma's unspeakability cannot be reconciled.

As a result of trauma's subsequent silence, alternative forms of communication, like music, are imperative when one has endured emotional trauma. Language, though a socially dominant communicative medium, fails those most in need of expressing emotions and communicating pain after a traumatic event. As an individual works through the trauma, she learns how to navigate the new shape of life after a loss through repetition; day after day she

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[146] Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4.
[147] Ibid., 4-5.
[148] Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7-8.

grieves, but simultaneously goes through the motions of everyday life until those activities no longer seem to be in such sharp relief compared to how things were before loss. These repetitions in everyday life can be understood as grieving rituals, though are not necessarily the same as what Nancy Berns describes as grieving rituals that ultimately assist an individual in achieving some sort of closure (burial, a memorial tattoo, forgiveness, all examples of grieving rituals but not all associated with death).[149] Rather, the repetition of the "new normal" follows the characteristic of mourning that Sigmund Freud describes in which one grieving "turn[s] away from reality" and "cling[s] to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis… "; the process of mourning is thus "carried out bit by bit, at great expense of time and cathectic energy."[150] This type of exhaustive repetition is usually emotionally, mentally, and physically taxing, but creative intervention is often one way that sufferers begin to move past the loss or traumatic event.

Ann Cvetkovich's exploration of trauma and affect affirms that trauma, being ephemeral, "demands an unusual archive" that is often deeply personal, such as memories, testimonies, memoirs, letters, or journals.[151] As many trauma studies scholars have shown, trauma, while causing silence or lacking articulation, often finds expression in narrative forms. I argue that Wainwright's song cycle stands as an example of a musical archive that seeks to impress upon listeners flashes, visions, and fragments of Wainwright's experience with loss and grief. In *Lulu,*

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[149] For a more in depth discussion of Berns' sociological study of closure, types of grief, and American ideology associated with "normal" grieving processes, see Nancy Berns, *Closure: The Rush to End Grief and What It Costs Us* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).
[150] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers of Metapsychology, and Other Works,* Trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), 244-245.
[151] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 7.

trauma is expressed in fits and starts, impressions and snapshots of pain and melancholy rather than a clear, continuous narrative. If part of trauma's affective archive is, as Cvetkovich argues, "the resistance to vulnerability," then a significant way that Wainwright queers the song cycle is through this personal (over)sharing of his emotional journey in mourning.[152] His vulnerability, while perhaps perceived as weakness by some, is a queer act that builds upon affective archives that memorialize, bear witness, and privilege standpoint and experience. "Who Are You New York?", "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent," and "Zebulon" use repetition, understood as a method of adapting to new loss and finding a way to communicate trauma, effectively. These examples show how disorientation, the redundancy of sadness and feeling vulnerable, and meditative reflection can be expressed through musical repetition that borrows from both popular and classical music forms.

Repetition and Working Through

"Who Are You New York?" uses repetition to control the restlessness, uneasiness, and anxiety that lurks in the score and is heard on the album. David L. Eng and David Kazanjian argue that loss, what is left post-trauma, "is known only by what remains of it, by how these remains are produced, read, and sustained."[153] The song's harmonic prolongation, a type of sustain, offers the listener some predictability because it is reminiscent of the minimalist style of Philip Glass rather than the grandiose style of so many other Wainwright songs that are heavily orchestrated or contain wild octave leaps in the melody. "Who Are You New York?" is showy but controlled and seemingly unstable but repetitively structured. It falls within the bounds of the in-between genre, not quite classical, and not quite indie rock or pop. The song's use of the span

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[152] Ibid., 25.
[153] David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, With an Afterword by Judith Butler, *Loss: The Politics of Mourning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 2.

of the piano keyboard coupled with melodic variation present a truly unified marriage between two instruments that one body plays. While not harboring repressed trauma or pain explicitly, Wainwright's performance of "Who Are You New York?" functions as the beginning of his musical working through process, mimicking the therapeutic repetition of trauma in psychotherapy that Freud describes.[154]

The melody of "Who Are You New York?" begins in a swirling fashion with a broken C-sharp diminished seventh chord in the right hand only. The quality of this chord signals discomfort, tension, and uncertainty. These feelings might lead to disorientation, and highlight one way that the music reflects trauma, pain, and queerness; it rejects ideas of normal behavior or presumed expectations. The texture becomes thicker at times, with both hands playing in contrary motion; the overall sense of the piece is one of constant motion, much like the urban bustle of New York City. The accompaniment refuses to settle both rhythmically and harmonically until the final G major chord, a stable chord that gives closure to the song. This restlessness prior to the end is exemplified in the opening crescendo in the piano part; it creates an undulating movement that sweeps the listener away from their present moment as she is folded into Wainwright's constructed existence.

The extremely repetitive melodic line is almost like an incantation, and it is this motif upon which the rest of the song is built. The motif might represent an invocation to someone who

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[154] In a sense, this example of repetition recalls Freud's assumptions about "working through" trauma through repetition. He notes that repetition in analytic treatment "implies conjuring up a piece of real life," or a way of getting back to the initial trauma that has been repressed and is beginning to be remembered through hypnosis. Working through trauma is thus the result of successful treatment that brings about he cessation of resistance to remembering. See Sigmund Freud, "Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psycho-Analysis II)," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XII (1911-1913)* (London: Vintage, 2001), 146-156.

is not physically present (someone absent from life) or muttering to oneself in a self-conciliatory way. The musical motif also has a sense of perpetual motion that is reminiscent of Mendelssohn's *Songs without Words* for piano and Schubert's art song (Lied) "Gretchen am Spinnrade." Richard Middleton writes about how repetition is a stepping-stone into language and culture, and how it connects the listener with emotions and other "social and psychic forces."[155] Musematic repetition, or riffs, are more likely to be "prolonged and unvaried" while discursive repetition, repetition at the phrase level, will be mixed with other contrasting units (harmony, rhythm, melodic improvisation).[156] These kinds of repetitions and the larger units, or sequences, which they create, provide color and variance without necessarily employing much change. Repetition, in small and large units, strives to create order and sense where there might not otherwise be any, especially in music which employs much longer or freer forms that intentionally avoid predictable patterns (classical, prog, or bebop, for example).

Emotionally, the musical repetition produces and sustains some of the characteristics the accompaniment evokes (restlessness and anxiety). It also creates a musical space in which a listener can drift and wander, a kind of mental scurrying away from the draining core themes of the opening track. What remains of Wainwright's traumatic loss comes through in the hypnotic pulse and oscillation of melody and accompaniment. Working through his trauma and loss transitions into remembering the one who is lost near the end of the album.

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[155] Richard Middleton, "In the Groove or Blowing Your Mind?: The Pleasures of Musical Repetition," in *The Popular Music Studies Reader,* ed. Andy Bennett, Barry Shank, and Jason Toynbee (New York: Routledge, 2006), 19-20.
[156] Ibid.

Repetition and Nostalgia

Remembered and revered female figures, women who might represent McGarrigle, Lulu, or great divas of the past like Maria Callas, surface in the second to last song on the album, "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent," a meditative, tonally predictable aria in D major.[157] This aria, which maintains a regular repetition of treble arpeggiations, further factor into the working through process because of the nostalgia it invokes. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* Dominick LaCapra explains:

> Mourning involves a different inflection of performativity: a relation to the past which involves recognizing its differences from the present – simultaneously remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others.[158]

As a song that shares a significant relation to Wainwright's past, the aria's repetition is less restless, and more soothing and tranquil, perhaps marking acceptance of loss.[159] The long melodic phrases recall bel canto arias of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[160] The use of bel canto ties Wainwright's songwriting to art song composition, and where

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[157] The title of the aria references a number of classical pieces, an important link back to the classical genre in addition to form and style. A few examples include Debussy's "Feux d'Artifices" from *Preludes, Book II* for piano, Handel's *Musique Pour Les Feux D'Artifice Royaux*, scored for wind ensemble as well as orchestra, and Meyerbeer's ballet music in Act III of the opera, *Robert le Diable*: "Ballet des Nonnes: Les Feux Follets et Procession des nonnes.

[158] Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 70.

[159] The aria was written prior to McGarrigle's death and her presence at *Prima Donna*'s opening was an important moment in Wainwright's life.

[160] Bel canto is an Italian phrase that translates to beautiful singing, and the style is largely associated with vocal music that was smooth, mainly diatonic, and was rhythmically straightforward. This vocal aesthetic remained popular for roughly two hundred years and informed most of the arias that classical and Romantic opera produced in the recitative (spoken singing) and aria (song form) tradition. See J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, editors, *A History of Western Music,* Eighth edition (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

the song is situated on the album, second to last, hints at Wainwright's emotional tie to the song.

Following the bel canto style, the vocal line demands pitch accuracy, breath control, and an understanding of what classical vocal technique requires of singers – phrasing choices, breath choices, diction, and the ability to work with the accompaniment rather than overshadow it. This is exemplified in the rubato that connects the piano and vocal part. The piano accompaniment does not wait for the vocal line to elongate phrasing or speed it up. Rather, the piano and voice share the responsibility of pushing and pulling the tempo back and forth; they are partners in the aria, different from the operatic aria practice in which the orchestra is accompanying the soloist. "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" thus reinforces Wainwright's role as songwriter, performer, and lyricist.[161]

The aria's role in the song cycle can be interpreted as relaxing some of the emotional tension and exhaustive repetition of mourning, as well as easing the struggle of managing loss in everyday life. It is not a "simple" song, per se, but it does have characteristics of settling and reflection that differentiate it from the darker songs on the album. An example of this, heard on the album but not replicated in live performance, is the inclusion of knocks on the wood of the piano and tinkling, descending treble notes that mimic fireworks exploding and fading in the sky that the diva in *Prima Donna* watches through her Parisian window as she reflects on her life and departure from the spotlight. Sensory signals – the sight, sound, and smell of fireworks -- unite

[161] Wainwright partnered with Bernadette Colomine on the text, likely because it is in French. Colomine provides French language dubbing, voiceover, and coaching services to film, music, and other creative projects. "Bernadette Colomine," *Bernadette Colomine*, n.d., http://bernadettecolomine.com/.

memory and the wordlessness of grief or trauma, but the fusion is kind; it conjures invited memories as opposed to unwelcome violent flashbacks.

"Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent"'s repetition swaddles the listener in nostalgia, a gentle step forward in the grieving process that is by no means a firm conclusion. The sense of calm the music evokes recalls the working through process that makes strides to move past the repetition of repression or trauma, and instead uses reflection and memory to heal. Further, this song is musical reminder of Wainwright's mother and the fading from the spotlight/dying Prima Donna character from his opera.

Never-ending Grief

The last song on the album, "Zebulon," uses repetition as a means of expressing pain while metaphorically refusing to let go of grief. "Zebulon" is a simply-composed song in D major that consists of quarter-note chordal accompaniment; mostly this accompaniment is only in the treble clef, though dominant chords at cadences tend to be fuller and include both treble and bass voicings. The tempo of this song is very slow, constructing a mood for reflection. There is rubato as well that pushes the otherwise static motion forward, but rather than merely pausing at cadences, there are grand rallentandos, or a gradual slowing down, in places that suspend time and sound. These pauses, or prolongations, are exaggerated in this song, and their effectiveness is remarkable. They open up space for remembering, waiting, and fully exploring one's feelings of pain and loss. Prolongation in music mimics the suspension that one feels when faced with death; it creates a sense of timelessness in which one awaits bad news or experiences the initial shock of loss. In "Zebulon," the lack of rhythm in prolonged moments represents a number of actions associated with grief and the heavy emptiness of loss. Pauses in the score or lengthy held notes recall the fear of watching a loved one fade away, fighting to not forget memories or

moments as time passes, and trying to create a blankness or a void to resist committing painful moments to memory. Slowing one's thoughts or taking the time to let a difficult moment register is a conscious activity that requires effort, whereas letting the pain pass in a blur that is rarely remembered is easier and requires less concentrated focus. The repetition, often of pause or silence, is present in "Zebulon," just as it is present in the phrases that crawl forward.

This works counter to the way that "Who Are You New York?" and "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" use repetition to propel the music to cadences and dominant moments of the songs, as well as hints at the process of moving on or through pain. In "Zebulon," the halting of repetition tugs on the emotional guts of the song in terms of how it lacks rhythm and decreases the perpetuation of sound. The slowness in tempo mimics last breaths, or moments of speechlessness that can be common reactions to trauma and loss. In effect, "Zebulon" functions as the final, though unresolved, expression of grieving through music that Wainwright performs on the album. It is queer because it fails to resolve in the last measure, offering a different way of concluding. Instead of moving from the dominant chord to the tonic and "finishing," or completing the song sonically, it rests on a massive dominant chord that simply fades away. This decision is significant because it prevents conclusion and closure. The lack of resolution in music generally makes people uncomfortable and is not common practice for western tonal music. Queerness is reflected in this songwriting decision; it refuses to follow the prescribed route, thus transgressing the norm. This decision, in terms of grief and loss, can be seen as purposely avoiding giving a listener a sense of closure. The impossibility of grief having a final endpoint is

mirrored in the repetition of the unstable dominant chord, a chord that yearns for resolution but ultimately sounds unfinished.[162]

Queer Collective Identity and American Popular Song

Philip Brett famously noted in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology* that being labeled as musically inclined or talented might be seen as peculiar, or lying outside the norm, specifically within closeted British 20th century society.[163] Despite this social marking of the musician as other, being musical was a privileged position that amassed cultural capital. Following a long history of the artist in society, the non-hegemonic connotation of "musical" lacked the deviance, or what Brett calls the "oppressive hostility," that "queer" or "gay" (or other painful slurs) inspired.[164] Following this line of thinking, the artist gave something beautiful to society, but the homosexual artist took something beautiful away. Wainwright's career, but especially the *Lulu* album, is linked to sexual identity and the lineage of gay American composers, particularly in the ways that he approaches songwriting.[165] The gay sexuality of American modernist and popular composers/songwriters does not inherently queer their compositions, but situates the music as something different, often special, beloved, and American in a way that might appear obvious, but is more subversive than presumed.

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[162] The lack of closure is what Freud identified as a characteristic of melancholia in which the object of loss is not known or is irretrievable to consciousness. Mourning, however, is the process by which one replaces what has been lost with an abstraction, or an object that replaces the lost individual (Freud, 1957).

[163] This is presumably true for men and women musicians/composers, though Brett focuses on homosexual males in chapter two, "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet."

[164] Philip Brett, "Musicality, Essentialism, and the Closet," in *Queering the Pitch: The New Gay and Lesbian Musicology,* 2nd Edition, ed. Philip Brett, Elizabeth Wood and Gary C. Thomas (New York: Routledge, 2006), 11.

[165] As I noted previously, Wainwright's sexuality does not "queer" his compositions *inherently*, but it would be reductive to overlook the classical and popular lineage from which he emerged. Further, his sexual identity should be recognized as influential to his songwriting because he is a very personal songwriter; his sexual identity simply does not define his musicianship totally.

Wainwright's artistic identity follows the trajectory of gay classical composers in the 20th century, such as Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, or Ned Rorem, all of whom were marked as other because of their sexuality.[166] According to Nadine Hubbs, these composers were recognized as representative of the larger "collective identity that threatened to displace the radically individualized identity" they were attached to as white males, which granted them authority to be creatively relevant.[167] Hubbs notes that in "Anglo-American queer vernacular," "musical" was "code for 'homosexual,'" implying that one belonged in an "exceptional class (exalted in one case, stigmatized in the other) of persons possessing knowledge and preoccupations alien to the majority."[168] Additionally, perceptions of hegemonic masculinity or the lack thereof, directly correlated with the Americanness of the music that was composed by the likes of Bernstein, Copland, and Rorem, as well as Virgil Thomson (who was perceived as more feminine than Copland, for example).[169] Wainwright's masculinity, what I argue is a new masculinity that does not follow prescribed and restrictive gender roles for males especially in regard to grieving, is partially shaped by the history of the marginalized gay artist from whom he draws musical inspiration. Several of Wainwright's songs, those written in the vein of the Great American Songbook, gesture toward the marriage between classical music and popular vernacular song, specifically following the styles and aesthetics of George and Ira Gershwin,

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[166] Queerness in American gay modernists' classical music has a strong tie to national music, and how gay composers in the 20th century created the sound of an America that they were themselves marginalized within. See Nadine Hubbs, *The Queer Composition of America's Sound: Gay Modernists, American Music, and National Identity* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2004).
[167] Ibid., 9.
[168] Ibid., 66.
[169] Ibid., 13. Though popular music styles like ragtime, blues, and jazz are, arguably, quintessentially American, classical works like Copland's *Rodeo, Billy the Kid,* and *Appalachian Spring* are key examples of modernist works that created nationalist classical music.

Cole Porter, and the aforementioned classical composers.[170] Such songs, "True Loves" for example, contribute to *Lulu*'s queerness because they, again, reject strict genre boundaries, but also draw from musical traditions closely tied to the marginalization of queer American composers.

Wainwright's identities – sexual, national, and artistic -- are conveyed in the music from which his songwriting style emerged. His national identity does not only hail American or French-Canadian national identity; his sexual identity follows a queer lineage; and his artistic identity stems from a broad spectrum of musical influences. Wainwright's emotional vulnerability and personal experiences also affect his identity. His identities, not unlike his songwriting trends, encompass both/and tendencies and reject a strict dichotomy. In a sense, Wainwright's identities are rhizomatic because they are informed by varying cultural and subcultural influences (e.g., American, Canadian, gay, folk, classical, performance art). These at-times conflicting but intermingled identities -- referred to from now on as queer collective

[170] George and Ira Gershwin and Cole Porter wrote popular songs that comprise the Great American Songbook and stem from American popular music (jazz, musical theatre, and Vaudeville songs) from the early 20th century. These songs are considered part of the American popular song canon and are considered "standards" because of the "universal appeal" of the songs including beautiful and memorable melodies, catchy lyrics, and timeless sentiments of love, adoration, heartache, and dreams coming true. The Gershwins' and Porter's popular song repertoire includes songs that are widely recognized as part of the Great American Songbook (the Gershwin brothers' "Someone to Watch Over Me" and "Embraceable You," and Porter's ""Anything Goes" and "I Get a Kick Out of You," to name a handful). See Eric R. Bronner, "The New 'Standards' for Singers: The Next Generation of the Great American Songbook," *Journal of Singing* (March/April 2007, Volume 63, No. 4), 457-462, CINAHL Plus with Full Text, 106137255. For further reading see and Alec Wilder and James T. Maher, *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) and William Knowlton Zinsser, *Easy to Remember: The Great American Songwriters and Their Songs* (Jaffrey, N.H.: David R. Godine, 2000).

identity -- create a niche from which Wainwright emerges as a distinctive artist born of a complicated musical lineage.

Wallowing in Sorrow

Camp aesthetics, often found in the composers' compositions mentioned above, such as exaggerated emotional expression elevate the way that the songs that channel the Great American Songbook deviate from classical aesthetics and embrace popular styles. While camp has a distinct tie to homosexuality and gay culture, it is reductive to associate camp only with homosexual art, artists, or gender and sexuality expressions.[171] John Dollimore argues that camp is not a gay sensibility, but an "invasion and subversion of other sensibilities" via parody, pastiche and exaggeration."[172] Susan Sontag wrote that camp is meant to "dethrone the serious" through playfulness and theatricality.[173] The camp sensibility is contradictory: seriously frivolous, favoring "style over content, aesthetics over morality" and "irony over tragedy."[174] To this end, it appears that camp does not belong in one particular genre. The hybrid genre's core sensibility is that which takes on aspects of other sensibilities, and pastiche fits particularly well within this gesture toward multiplicity and fresh interpretations of previously well-explored musical forms and styles. Camp is not woven through Wainwright's songs because it is a marker

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[171] Camp is a potentially dangerous concept to apply to *Lulu* because it risks lessening its authentic emotional impact. However, Wainwright's musical sensibilities often approach camp performativity, and camp's influence in several songs on *Lulu* is part of Wainwright's unique songwriting style. In particular, "Give Me What I Want and Give It to Me Now!" and "The Dream" are decidedly *not* songs that exude melancholy, but are musical homages to cabaret's campy style.

[172] Jonathan Dollimore, "Post/Modern: On the Gay Sensibility, Or the Pervert's Revenge On Authenticity," in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject,* ed. Cleto, Fabio (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 224-225.

[173] Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp,'" in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject,* ed. Cleto, Fabio (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 53-65.

[174] Ibid., 62.

of his gay sexuality; camp is a marker of his stylistic restlessness. His use of camp at such a serious and melancholy point in his life queers the expectations that camp cannot express the serious or the traumatic.

Camp aesthetics accentuate the role queer collective identity, and thus melancholy, play in the more flamboyant, chipper, or melodramatic songs on the album. An example of how queer collective identity manifests is found in the melodic contour of "Sad With What I Have," the second song on the album. This song is reminiscent of blues or jazz standards, and the cool hues of the great American songbook evoke Gershwin and Porter. This is exemplified by the slight slide a step below the first note of the vocal line (in the score it is notated as a grace note) so that the song rests on the first note, the leading tone, which is an unstable note to begin on. This indicates a resistance to establishing the root, A-flat, which is uncommon in classical art song, but a welcome compositional move in vernacular song. Across the entire song, whose form is rounded binary (A A'), accidentals flatten the melody, making it sound melancholy and jazzy. It is a space in which the grief found in the music is elevated, and the drastic difference between the songs preceding and following it gesture toward the complexity of the song cycle as a whole.

There are a number of chords in the piece that directly break common practice rules of composition. Most notably, the major lowered mediant chord (which should be a minor chord in a major key) functions as a C-flat major triad, but is spelled E-flat, G-flat, B-natural in the manuscript. It is a confounding chord, decentering and misleading to look at, but sounding open and consonant though it does not appropriately resolve at the end of the period. This chord stands out in this song because it gives the listener an example of two central components of Wainwright's songwriting style. First, it exemplifies how Wainwright's classical influence falls away when he is writing music for the popular audience; second, it situates "Sad With What I

Have" as part of the American songbook lineage — it sounds bluesy or jazzy without being a strict blues or jazz song. It is of the jazz standard variety, the more accessible, mainstream kind of jazz that crooners, following the Tin Pan Alley tradition like Bing Crosby and early Frank Sinatra, embraced. Was this Wainwright's artistic choice to misspell the chord, or, while editing, did he rework it in order to make the chord more easily "readable"? I argue that this disarming yet sweet flat-Major chord was the result of Wainwright not working within one specific genre. Wainwright's refusal to adhere to common practice rules means that he need not spell chords so that they are theoretically "correct," but could intentionally reject these rules and choose to write to achieve the aural quality of the music he desired. This, in and of itself, is very much in line with popular music common practice, but visually, it demonstrates the lack of sense that comes with emotional upheaval.

Romanticism and the aesthetic musical choices of Gershwin and Porter appear once more in "True Loves" and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose." Their texts speak to the issues of queer collective identity, including loneliness. The songs' sonic aspects contribute some of the most poignant music on the album that speaks to pain, love, loss, grief, and even self-disgust.

"True Loves" borrows its musical aesthetic from a combination of the Romantic composers and Gershwin, especially his piano preludes and the lush romance of the most recognizable theme of "Rhapsody in Blue." The music begins with simple legato piano accompaniment with sustained chords in the right hand, but these long ties soon shift to waves, or rolls, in the right hand while the left hand puts more space between the single low note and the rest of the broken chord. The music becomes busier, generating a more passionate variation on the A section with chordal tremolos in the right hand that mimic shimmering water. As the piece shifts into the B section the meter becomes unstable, again a signifier of jazz influences. This is

an exemplary song in the cycle because the accompaniment constantly changes even though the melodic line, more or less, remains similar. This growth that the piano part shows climaxes in a Gershwin-esque outpouring of gut-wrenching sound before shrinking and slowing, returning to material from the very beginning. It is a song that mimics the pain of love as well as the devastation of loss in a way that recalls the swells of full orchestra at the end of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake*. This emotional journey, however, is self-contained, limited to piano and voice, and lasts almost four minutes.

"What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" also expresses love and pain in the music, but it much more closely resembles Chopin and Debussy than Gershwin. It is in 6/8, and shifts between being felt in 2 so that the song has a gentle, regular lilt and being in a waltz tempo (in measure 55 for example) so that it has a pulse of two groups of three in some measures. This inconsistency is a piano part issue; the melody line follows the rhythms that are written (again mixed meter is all over this piece) which present a sophisticated relationship between the accompaniment and the melody line. This is the cabaret-style song. The voice sings the melody above the accompaniment, but as I have stated previously, Wainwright is neither the leader nor the follower; he is both, a way of queering the traditional song cycle performance. His compositional choices in this case are both authentically serious and campy, following the lead of several classical composers who were part of the French cabaret scene – Debussy, Satie, Milhaud, and Schoenberg.[175] This combination of seriousness and camp recalls the blend of

[175] The stylistic characteristics of cabaret songs are rather loose, stemming instead from various combinations of popular music genres and forms: "There is no distinctive musical form that can be called 'cabaret': all the composers who have worked in cabaret have drawn on existing folksong, popular song or operatic parodies for their inspiration. Traditions have evolved, so that in particular the slow waltz as used by Satie ('*Je te veux,*' '*Tendrement*') is recognized as a

classical and popular influences, notably, gay American songwriters mingling with the cabaret influence of French composers like Satie and Poulenc. This combination of American and French cabaret influence echo Wainwright's identity: one that is inclusive, non-prescriptive, and offers alternative, or deterritorialized, forms of expression.

Ragtime and Rhumba: Dueling Styles, Dueling Emotions

Ragtime, an American vernacular form that preceded the jazz standards/cabaret-style that "True Loves" and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" emulate, drastically shifts the mood in "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!".[176] Though ragtime does not appear to draw from European classical traditions from the Romantic era, the style influenced some classical composers like Debussy and Satie. Notably, two of Debussy's piano solos, "Golliwogg's Cake Walk" and "Le Petit Negro," both employ ragtime rhythm as the main rhythmic motifs of the piece. These songs are playful and whimsical, employ chromaticism, and use Joplin-inspired dance rhythms. The dissonance in the melody and accompaniment that appear in Wainwright's "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!" echoes the rhythms and chromaticism of Debussy's songs, while also drawing from both classical music and Scott Joplin's popular ragtime.

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cabaret style…". *Grove Music Online,* s.v. "Cabaret," by Klaus Wachsmann/Patrick O'Connor, accessed February 18, 2016,http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

[176] This dance form written for the piano is notable for its syncopated rhythm, the short-long-short rhythm that privileges off-beats rather than down-beats. It was most popular in the late 19th/early 20th centuries and was commonly linked to African American communities. Scott Joplin is perhaps best known as the composer of a large chunk of American ragtime, including songs like "Maple Leaf Rag" and "The Entertainer." Though ragtime, which is in duple meter, is assumed to be faster moving because of the connection between syncopation and dance, often the songs were not meant to be played fast; rather, the syncopated movement of the rhythm in the right hand complements the steady quarter or eighth notes in the left hand, mimicking the interrelatedness between hands as in classical piano music. See David A. Jasen and Gene Jones, *That American Rag: The Story of Ragtime from Coast to Coast* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000).

Like other songs in the cycle, “Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!” frequently rejects or ignores common practice, and thus flatted notes or chordal substitutions queer the C major tonality. The right hand contains the ragtime rhythm that sometimes doubles the melody line, while the left hand contains a leading, driving bass in step-wise octave sixteenth notes that shift to broken chord eighth notes; this completes the ragtime rhythmic relationship with the right hand. “Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!” can be understood as a Joplin-Debussy hybrid, a union between white classicism and black vernacular that also includes a third rock element with the gymnastic, heavy vocal melody line that adds a driving force to the song. I link this to the heaviness and spirit of vernacular song that is augmented by the unwieldy melody that floats above the intricate piano part. The power and anger of the song leans heavily toward the spirit of rock and roll despite its ragtime rhythms and Debussy-esque quality of the piano part. The influence of Joplin’s music is obvious, but I argue that “Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!” has a ferocity that much of ragtime lacks. It is impassioned, uncontrolled, and angry at its core. The song is technically virtuosic because it is a busy, difficult-to-play song, and at times is quite dissonant. This dissonance evokes anger, resentment, frustration, and pain from rejection or misunderstanding. In these heavy, dark sounds queer collective identity once again emerges. Even without the lyrical content, this is a song that is striving to take up space, become visible, and be heard. It appears to be intrusive compared to the three songs that come before it and the songs that follow, standing out among the rest of the cycle that is often slow, dark, and melancholy sounding.

“Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!” is an important example of Wainwright’s agency in songwriting, specifically in terms of how he expresses his identity. The fire of this piece creates dissonance with the melancholy heard on other tracks, and might be

seen as an emotional outlier that refuses to follow prescribed norms. Sara Ahmed writes about the "unhappy queer," or the "the queer who is judged to be unhappy" by hegemonic society.[177] She explains: "the judgment of unhappiness creates unhappiness, in the very performance of the failure to recognize the social viability of queer relationships, in its failure to recognize queer love."[178] Such circumstances create opportunity for individuals who are marginalized or silenced to succumb to the painful side effects of invisibility, becoming "sad or wretched, because they are perceived as lacking what causes happiness, and as causing the happiness in their lack."[179] In "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!", the music and the performer/composer, Wainwright, become the unhappy queer in this song, or the unhappy, angry character; he is a figure that is contrary to the flamboyant spotlight-hungry diva figure that reeks of gay stereotype. The dark, rhythmic movement and strength of this performance shakes the complacent listener while Wainwright revolts against the oppression his musical influences experienced. It is an example of the ugly reality, perhaps the realization of how little power one has to change a bad situation, and the outrage that comes from being excluded from history and from normative understandings of life and love. The combination of the classical/ragtime piano accompaniment and the aggressive voice creates a triad of volatile emotion that expresses displeasure and unhappiness, but does not rest in self-indulgent melancholy. Instead, it explodes with self-indulgent fury.

"The Dream" is the bright-eyed answer to "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!". While the latter is demanding respect and adoration, the former is reflecting upon the nature of success and failure. The music suggests this clearly. "The Dream" is marked as a

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[177] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 93.
[178] Ibid.
[179] Ibid., 98.

rhumba, a common pop-rock rhythm that is based on Cuban antecedents. It is in 4/4 time with some measures of 7, which can be felt as elongated measures or heard as prolonged harmonies. It is an aurally straightforward piece in A-flat major and this stable tonality reflects the brightness of the song's overall aesthetic. Its classically-tinged runs in the right hand mixed with the pop-rock rhythm resist the pop-rock genre. It is an extremely challenging piece of music to play at speed while singing, and the effect on the album is a dazzling, triumphant song that resists the prevailing sounds of melancholy, anger, or despondency.

If "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!" represents what Ahmed calls the "unhappy queer," "The Dream" answers back with the idea of being "happily queer." Ahmed explains that the happy queer is

> a form of social hope, a sign of 'how far we have come' or hope for a world where discrimination has been overcome. The risk of this hope is that it reimagines the world *as if* there is no discrimination: and as if in bearing new life, the world itself will become bearable in the time of the arrival of new life.[180]

The brightness in "The Dream" is queer, and speaks to a different kind of queer collective identity that Wainwright presents based not in anger but hope, and perhaps even happiness. Ahmed notes that "[q]ueers can be affectively alien by placing their hopes for happiness in the wrong objects, as well as being made unhappy by the conventional routes of happiness, an unhappiness which might be an effect of how your happiness makes others unhappy."[181] Further, being happily queer recognizes unhappiness that "is concealed by the promotion of happy normativity."[182] The music supports the drive to be happy while also using its complexity to queer the notion of masked happiness, or happiness that is performed as a result of rejecting

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[180] Ibid., 113.
[181] Ibid., 115.
[182] Ibid., 117.

queer identity. "The Dream" creates space where the happy queer has never been welcome before, or has only been welcome in camp parody; simply happy music in gay culture is often assumed to be disco or glitzy pop, rarely music that mixes accompaniment similar to Chopin *Polonaises* with a Latin beat. The music suggests that having a dream does not equate success, and striving for that dream is not easy. Musically the song builds upon its early themes and motifs until it reaches a place that is closer to uncontrolled frenzy than triumphant glory. These sounds are, like "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!," fresh and desirable after the chromaticism and chaos of parts of the sonnets that they are sandwiched between. However, the music explores a completely different color palette, embracing difference rather than rejecting it and creating space for pain to be expressed in creative, positive, and highly visible ways.

Conclusion

In his work on writing, trauma, and the contradictory desire to express pain in order to heal, Marc Nichanian states: "Art is mourning… and there is no art without mourning."[183] As this chapter has explored, creating art plays a vital role in working through trauma and mourning a significant and deeply personal loss. Without space and time to explore the many emotions that grief brings, it is possible that sufferers might never work through the disruptions that accompany trauma. Finding a way to articulate pain is fundamental to resurrecting day-to-day functions that are considered "normal." Beyond everyday life, articulating and expressing grief publicly is also essential to breaking down artistic expectations and genre norms. Using emotional pain as a catalyst, Wainwright recorded *Lulu* as a departure from his own songwriting

[183] Marc Nichanian, "Catastrophic Mourning," in *Loss: The Politics of Mourning,* With an Afterword by Judith Butler, edited by David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 99- 101.

and recording traditions only to end up with an album that entered the public realm as an archive of feeling; in his case, an album that explored grief and mourning unapologetically.

Lulu, at its core, is an album about not only living one's life, but feeling one's life. Thus, the emotional spectrum of this album comes through in the music; some songs are bright, hopeful, and energetic while others are dark, brooding, and hollow. Yet *Lulu* is connected thematically: death, grief, and love are pervasive throughout the twelve songs on the album. Based on the score analysis, *Lulu* can be understood as a song cycle that queers songwriting common practice because of its destabilizing and deterritorializing compositional choices. Wainwright's songwriting decisions reflect his identity as a gay artist, following an American lineage of queer songwriters. Further, his engagement with the Great American Songbook, a mixture of popular and classical musical markings, song forms, diatonic tonalities, and extra-musical effects such as pedal markings and silence culminate in a song cycle that is fixated on grief and non-verbal expressions of trauma.

The following chapter focuses on vocal expressions of trauma and grief. Building on Deleuze's and Guattari's theories of rhizomes, the connection between gender, vulnerability, and multiple song styles in Wainwright's vocal music and text are explored. This analysis offers another opportunity to consider the ways that Wainwright's genre-fluidity creates space for marginalized, non-hegemonic, or non-mainstream expressions of loss to be heard.

CHAPTER III. QUEER VOCALITY AND BEAUTIFUL GRIEF: RUFUS WAINWRIGHT'S GRIEVING THROUGH SONG

The queer voice speaks from a space of marginalization, voicing its presence when its absence is expected. A queer voice also breaks performative norms and expectations of gender roles. Rufus Wainwright's voice does many of these things at once. As a gay man his voice has grown out of a politically marginalized lineage; as a popular singer/songwriter *and* a classical composer, his music mixes styles and performance practices. As a bereaved son, he publicly and shamelessly grieves the loss of his mother through performances, both recorded and live, of *All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu.* Taken as a whole, Wainwright's vocal performance on the *Lulu* album exposes these characteristics because of the songs' emotional and personal text and the mixed styles used to express intimacy, vulnerability, and resistance to upholding traditional male gender norms.

This chapter's focus is on moments in which Wainwright's voice exemplifies queerness; in other words, instances in his vocal performance that stray from musical or gender expectations. I argue that his vocality (the articulation of sound and language) attains queer characteristics when it draws from musical styles, such as crooning or *bel canto* operatic singing, that are rooted in vulnerability (emotional or social) or intimacy (closeness in sound as well as emotionally open). Wainwright's emotional vulnerability apparent in *Lulu*'s text and his vocal performance reflects his personal turmoil of dealing with mother Kate McGarrigle's cancer and working through her death.

As part of his working through process of loss and grief, Wainwright performs in several different vocal styles. Different from vocality, vocal style refers to the characteristics of singing associated with musical genre (e.g., bel canto in early 19th century opera; favoring vocal

characterization over agility in dramatic opera and art song; or scatting in 20th century jazz).[184] In order to best explore the styles Wainwright performs and their relation to his grief, I explore the songs on the album that best represent these emotional and stylistic shifts.[185] Wainwright performs "Martha" and "Zebulon" in a simplistic folk-style that expresses sorrow, sadness, and pain through carefully chosen silences and a resistance to creating a regular musical pulse; he croons "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?", privileging close singing and intimacy in relation to the microphone; and he uses the classical bel canto style in "Who Are You New York?" and "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent."[186] These different vocal performativities highlight Wainwright's versatility as a vocal artist, generate creative space for expressing grief through vocalization, and allow the text he wrote and set to melodies to support or contradict the music – both the vocal line and the piano accompaniment. Wainwright's vocal performances, as a result of stylistic variety and emotional vulnerability, work together with the album's song cycle form and compositional deterritorialization (discussed

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[184] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Singing," by John Potter, accessed February 18, 2016, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/.

[185] In this chapter I chose not to discuss the three Sonnets, "Give Me What I Want and Give It to Me Now" and "The Dream." Wainwright's performances of the Sonnets closely mirror the bel canto ("Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink" and Sonnet 10: For Shame") and crooning style ("Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face") discussed in this chapter. As textual analysis figures into this chapter's methodology, the Sonnets' texts, which Shakespeare wrote, are incongruent with the rest of Wainwright's songs, for which he composed music and wrote text. Vocal performances of "Give Me What I Want and Give It to Me Now" and "The Dream" do not deviate significantly from the majority of Wainwright's catalogue; that is to say his voice lacks an exceptional vulnerability that I identify as a component of queer vocality. Also, I do not analyze the songs in this chapter in sequence because I group them according to vocal style. Since this chapter does not solely focus on lyrical analysis and the song cycle lacks a through-composed narrative, I take the liberty of analyzing the chosen songs out of order so as to develop the argument of how Wainwright queers his vocality and grieves through song.

[186] Bel canto singing shares the same characteristics as bel canto phrasing discussed in chapter two.

in chapter two) to queer the album. Wainwright's song cycle, as an in-between genre that privileges aspects of both popular and classical musical composition, remains consistent and faithful to neither, resulting in a multi-dimensional and collaborative collection of songs.

Theorizing the Queer Voice

In this chapter, I wish to interrogate what makes Wainwright's voice capable of expressing many different emotions through different music styles. This is not a skill that every vocalist has. Indeed, the most emotionally compelling voices share particular characteristics, many of which are understood as feminine traits such as vulnerability, tenderness, and delicacy. Jeff Buckley, Michael Stipe, Freddie Mercury, Sylvester, Nina Simone, and Louis Armstrong are several artists who have similar vocal qualities to Wainwright in terms of vocal timbre, vocal range, use of breath, and occasionally diction. Such qualities do not themselves define vocality, but are rather folded into its definition.

Vocality is a form of expression made with the voice that joins linguistic and musical elements, or the "sonic material of articulation."[187] From an anthropological perspective, the "voice is the embodied locus of spoken and sung performance"; thus, vocality has "also become a metaphor for difference, a key representational trope for identity, power, conflict, social position, and agency. Vocality, in this light, is a social practice that is everywhere locally understood as an implicit index of authority, evidence, and experiential truth."[188] While vocality

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[187] Steven Feld, Aaron A. Fox, Thomas Porcello, and David Samuels, "Vocal Anthropology: From the Music of Language to the Language of Song," in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology,* ed. Alessandro Duranti (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 328. See also Leslie C. Dunn and Nancy A. Jones, *Embodied Voices: Representing Female Vocality in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[188] Ibid., 341. For further discussion on vocality, the material voice, and multivocality see Carolyn Timmsen Amory, "Human Vocality: Monody, Magic, and Mind," (PhD diss, State University of New York, 2009), RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (1967 to Present only),

need not only refer to musical expression, Wainwright's vocalization set to music is my primary concern, and my interrogation of his vocality as queer is closely linked to what else is heard that is nonmusical. In order to contextualize the aesthetics I link to Wainwright's vocality, I turn to Roland Barthes' writing on the voice as a method of meaning making in order to begin to identify what listeners hear that lingers in the ears and affects the heart.

Barthes' theory of the "grain" of the voice provides a foundation for understanding one key paradox in vocal singing: how does the voice, which is in the body, function as a separate entity? Further, how does language, specifically text set to music, negotiate the musical attributes of vocalization? Barthes' theory explores the role language plays in vocal expression, working through the distinction between "pheno-song" -- the aesthetic pieces of the sung expression including style, genre rules, and the language structure -- and "geno-song" -- the body's presence in the singing voice. While pheno-song contains culturally coded and assimilated aspects, geno-song does not; geno-song produces sounds that come from the voice's physiology. The voice is both noncommunicative and communicative, thus producing "a dual posture… of language and music."[189] The importance of the "grain" of the voice to vocality lies in the extracultural possibilities that can be heard in singing styles that might not fit into the neatly defined boxes of classical singing or the traditional expectations of popular singing. The "grain" heard in these voices offers new possibilities, opportunities, and methods of expressing joy, pain, urgency, displeasure, or disappointment through musical expression. In Wainwright's case, the "grain" of

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2009-03637; Juria (Julie) Choi, "Constructing a Multivocal Self: A Critical Authoethnography," (PhD Diss, University of Technology, Sydney, 2013), https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/bitstream/10453/24078/1/01front.pdf; Katherine Meizel, *Multivocality* (forthcoming).

[189] Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *Image-Music-Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 181.

his voice is where his grief rests. As he sings, his emotions are drawn out and listeners identify particular qualities of his voice: whether the timbre is bright or dark; how he forms, enunciates, and articulates words as he sings; or, how his breathing sounds to the listener. These qualities are specific to Wainwright's vocality and, in my study, are considered queer depending on the extracultural possibilities in the performance. Some examples might be of performance possibilities that transgress boundary lines of performance practice, expectations of vocal performance, and affective characteristics (such as hearing crying or a stifled sob in the singing, the raspy nature of a previously silenced voice, or an affectless voice that sounds depressed).

Further elaborating upon the idea of the relationship between the body and the voice, Mladen Dolar, following Barthes, notes:

> The voice is the flesh of the soul, its ineradicable materiality, by which the soul can never be rid of the body; it depends on this inner object which is but the ineffaceable trace of externality and heterogeneity, but by virtue of which the body can also never quite simply be the body, it is a truncated body, a body cloven by the impossible rift between an interior and an exterior. The voice embodies the very impossibility of this division, and acts as its operator.[190]

The voice, existing in this dual state, interior and exterior, seeps into the listener's consciousness, and this disembodied recognition cannot help but be affective. This could mean that there is a strong reaction of love or hate, or an unidentifiable feeling altogether. Regardless of the reaction, the listener's processing has already occurred, and the sender of the voice has already exposed himself or herself. The listener, or the "subject," is affected as a result of the exposure "to the power of the Other by giving his or her own voice, so that the power, domination, can take not only the form of the commanding voice, but that of the ear."[191] As a result, vulnerability is revealed to the listener because the interior discloses its intimacy; the "obscene side" that is

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[190] Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 71.
[191] Ibid., 80.

vulnerable and "revealing too much" is pitted against the "uncanny side," or that which should not have been revealed.[192] Thus the voice is "an authority over the Other and… an exposure to the Other, an appeal, a plea, an attempt to bend the Other."[193] The vulnerable voice affects the listener because the listener registers vulnerability or intimacy through sound. The voice is a force that can connect with and impact a subject that is not of its body, creating an affective exchange that crosses bodily boundaries that might otherwise be unable to be breached.

Listeners hear and recognize the affective voice coming from what Freya Jarman-Ivens describes as a third space, or the site of queer vocality. The queer voice can be identified and misidentified, capable of having multiple gender identities because it traverses this third space. Thus, queer vocality exists within the paradoxes, contradictions, and "no man's land" between what the ear hears and the voice produces.[194] The voice both "serves and exceeds the semiotics and syntax of the spoken word; it articulates semiotic meaning and, in its bodily nature, offers both another dimension to that meaning and another meaning altogether."[195] Echoing Barthes and Dolar, the material voice assists in connecting the body and language, giving language meaning through inflections, speed, accent, and the tone and timbre of the voice.[196] The voice need not be tied to language; however, language cannot exist without the voice. The voice as a mechanism for expression is neither stable nor clearly understood because of its location in the body; as Dolar notes, the voice is interior, yet it is heard by the listener outside of that bodily

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[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid.
[194] Freya Jarman-Ivens, Q*ueer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 4.
[195] Ibid.
[196] Ibid.

boundary. Therefore, Jarman-Ivens argues, the queer voice comes from a space that evokes that which is changed, altered, or unconventional.

Technology and the Voice

One important aspect of vocality is that it is not only located physically in or near the voice, but includes the ways sound is produced, meaning that technology (examples include recording techniques, amplification, recordings of performances, file sharing, and uploading performances to the internet) is part of the creative process. Indeed, as Wayne Koestenbaum writes: "A record can't limit the voice's meaning; a voice, once recorded, doesn't speak the same meanings that it originally intended."[197] In this chapter, the recorded voice plays an important role to the idea of queer vocality. I argue that Wainwright's vocality is influenced by technology and functions within the third space that is open to a masculine voice expressing typically feminine qualities such as vulnerability, intimacy, melancholy, and grief.[198] For example, the close miking of Wainwright's voice on this recording creates, via recording technology, a manufactured sense of closeness and intimacy. One is not, in fact, in a small cabaret venue with tea lights and a few dozen people, but the reverb of the recording creates that kind of atmosphere. The smallness that is created also evokes the salon setting where song cycles were frequently performed. These kinds of sonic peculiarities create the so-called third space through technological means that highlight the queer vocal performativity one hears on the album.

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[197] Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Mystery of Desire* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1993), 51.

[198] Jarman-Ivens references Karen Carpenter, Maria Callas, and Diamanda Galás as examples of how technology queers these artists' vocalities. For further discussion on technology and the queer voice see Q*ueer Voices: Technologies, Vocalities, and the Musical Flaw* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

Wainwright's use of amplifying technology makes his voice sound close, but not affectless or "perfect." The flaws, as well as the grain, heard in his voice assist in giving his voice a "real" sound, and the emotions one identifies in his vocal performances correspond to melancholy and mourning. Wainwright's use of recording technology does not "fix" or intensify his voice beyond assisting in sound projection.[199] Rather, his vocality is similar to opera legend Maria Callas' vocal flaws that defy the "gendering technology" of opera, which abides by the *fach* system.[200] Callas' vocal flaws — breaks in register, singing too sharp or too flat, a shrillness in her high register — are important contributions to how Jarman-Ivens classifies Callas' voice as queer, or as breaking operatic norms and expectations of operatic vocal beauty, accuracy, and capability. A particular similarity between Callas' opera singing and Wainwright's performance on *Lulu* is the emotional transparency the listener can hear in both their voices. Extreme emotion affects anyone's speaking or singing voice, but in the opera/classical world, these effects resist the "operatic logic of vocal perfection."[201] Wainwright's use of the bel canto style on a popular music album was a similarly bold move as Callas' refusal to be cast only according to her *fach*. Indeed, critical reception and popular opinion did not force Wainwright to stick to one vocal style as he wrote and recorded *Lulu;* he used his vocal flaws – sliding or scooping into pitches, poor enunciation, and breaking out of traditionally male ranges –as a catapult from which he revealed his grief as he sings from the highly emotional "third space."

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[199] Karen Carpenter's voice achieved a cyborg kind of perfection through recording technology, while Diamanda Galás' resistance to "beautiful" singing throughout her career has been a political choice that transgresses gender norms, allies with marginalized communities, and intentionally manipulates both classical and popular musical forms.

[200] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices,* 122. *Fach* refers to a singer's vocal quality that situates him or her in a specific vocal category: Lyric Coloratura Soprano, Dramatic Coloratura Soprano, Lyric Mezzo-Soprano, etc. One's *fach* quite often determines operatic singing roles, something Callas frequently eschewed, playing roles that were not meant for her particular *fach.*

[201] Ibid.

The Mourner's Cries

While many artists talk about the impact close deaths have on them (death being a somewhat natural companion to creativity), Wainwright's frankness when talking about his personal loss is often arresting. Wainwright's description of his mother's last moments in an interview roughly one month after her death reinforces how her absence was wound into his musical identity:

> The farewell became, as Rufus recalls, inevitably, an impromptu performance: "We sang to her as she lay there… as we were having this jamboree, her breathing became more laboured and she made a moaning noise. One of the nurses said this could go on for four days and we had already exhausted the back catalogue. Then Kate breathed a little differently, it was like she was saying, 'Hold on, I'm going to end this show', and she died. I was looking right into her face, her eyes were open, and my aunt Jane was holding her hand. It was an amazing experience..."[202]

This excerpt reveals Wainwright's vulnerability during those early months without his mother, a vulnerability that he did not rein in either while he was speaking or singing. Furthermore, this example, one of many, shows the variances in the grieving process: grief fluctuates in intensity and how one mourns alternates as well. Such inconsistencies are reflected in the *Lulu* music, the vocal styles Wainwright uses to express himself, but especially in his emotional state as he mourns.

I posit that this apparent inconsistency is a result of the perception that grief is only expressed through negative or melancholic emotions, when grief often takes on many different shapes, from laughter to mania to recklessness. Though mainstream American culture recognizes five stages of grief as a way of understanding the grieving process from a psychological perspective, it is misleading to package grief as something that follows a pattern, occurs in a

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[202] Tim Adams, "Rufus Wainwright: 'I was looking right into her face when my mother died,'" *The Guardian,* February 20, 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/feb/21/rufus-wainwright-prima-donna-feature.

certain order, or even has a starting and ending point.[203] Beginning with McGarrigle's diagnosis, Wainwright's sense of his mother's health was tested, as anyone who receives frightening health news knows; the contemplation of her passing, as Adams mentions, more or less begins the grieving process, and if death does not occur, that process may be interrupted. However, the fear of what is coming, something that is very keenly reflected in songs like "Zebulon" and "Martha" figure both into mourning and melancholia; the "unknowable" or unidentifiable feelings affect both these psychological and emotional experiences.[204]

The discomfort/malaise "unknowable" feelings cause a mourner has been discussed in the past as a dichotomous concept. Freud describes the difference between mourning and melancholia as a difference between reacting to a loss and experiencing the effect of a loss that cannot be articulated.[205] Put another way, mourning is a process where the mourner eventually reaches a point where she can form a new attachment, while melancholia is a depression, a state

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[203] See Dr. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's *On Death and Dying* for a foundational understanding of the grieving process as a five-stage cycle (New York: Scribner, 1969). Within psychology, grief is sometimes discussed in relation to the binary of normal and abnormal, echoing Freud's melancholy/mourning distinction. Such studies focus on the medicalization of bereavement as an extreme reaction to grief, often closely related to trauma or existing mental illness. See Emma Penman, Lauren J. Breen, Lauren Y. Hewitt, and Holly G. Prigerson, "Public Attitudes About Normal and Pathological Grief," *Death Studies,* Vol. 38, Issue 8 (2015): 510-516. doi: 10.1080/07481187.2013.873839; Julia Bandini, "The Medicalization of Bereavement: (Ab)normal Grief in the DSM5," *Death Studies,* Vol. 39, Issue 6 (2015): 347-352. doi: http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.bgsu.edu:8080/10.1080/07481187.2014.951498.

[204] The fear of what is coming is also relevant to "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With A Rose?" though these songs will be discussed in relation to torch song and unrequited love in a later section of this chapter.

[205] Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," in *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers of Metapsychology, and Other Works,* Trans. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957).

of subconscious, unexplainable dejection.[206] Judith Butler posits that a mourner "accepts that by the loss one undergoes one will be changed, possibly for ever," and the "transformative effect of loss… cannot be charted or planned."[207] Within American culture, there is a sense that mourning is a private experience, and while that may often be true, mourning is also a communal process that "furnishes a sense of political community of a complex order… by bringing to the fore the relational ties" of dependency and responsibility within a society.[208]

To explore this idea, I consider the intimate expressions found in *Lulu* that signal private aspects of Wainwright's mourning. When one is engulfed in grief, feelings of loneliness can be pervasive; connecting with art is one way that the emptiness of solitude can be alleviated.[209] As stated in an interview with Tim Murphy in *New York Magazine.com,* "'It's more important to keep moving at this point and tread water,' Wainwright says. 'If you stop, there's a chance you'll go under.'"[210] With this idea of sinking in mind, the way in which grief challenges how we perceive ourselves as autonomous and in control of uncontrollable situations becomes important;

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[206] Freud views melancholia as the result of an "object-loss which is withdrawn from consciousness," a depression that is characterized by "painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity," and low self-esteem. He explains that the melancholic might know "*whom* he has lost but not *what* he has lost in him," suggesting that there is a lack of recognition about the loss, an unconsciousness that is not found in mourning. The consciousness of mourning can lead to pain, feelings of despondency, and disinterest, but the assumption is that working through mourning remedies those feelings (Ibid., 244-245).

[207] Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 21.

[208] Ibid.

[209] For an anthology that connects mourning, politics, and art, see *Loss: The Politics of Mourning*, With an Afterword by Judith Butler, David L. Eng and David Kazanjian, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[210] Tim Murphy, "Il Divo," *New York Magazine,* April 18, 2010, http://nymag.com/arts/popmusic/profiles/65495/. The lyrics of "Zebulon" echo this sentiment exactly ("Skating on the ice of song/ About to go under") in the first verse, which establishes a sense of disorientation.

it is also crucial to understand that grief, being a transformative power, does not encourage one to "stay intact."[211] Rather, it is the falling apart aspect of grief that is often feared, but can lend itself to nonviolent, cathartic, and creative ways of experiencing loss.

Wainwright's performances of songs steeped in grief emerge from a space of isolation and sorrow, an unfamiliar space that often induces fear. Religious studies scholars and Tibetan Buddhists know this space as the *bardo of dying,* a concept that stems from Tibetan grieving rituals; the *bardo* is the "in-between" space between life and death or the time and space "that extends from diagnosis until death."[212] Wainwright's songs "Martha" and "Zebulon" play with this concept, and though they are not precisely laments in the traditional forms or sorrow songs that were born out of African-American spirituals, the songs have certain qualities that resemble the vocal traditions that mimic aspects of pain and grief. The irregular rhythms, heavy silences, and instances of singing that sound more like speaking are queer aspects of his vocal performance. When taken with the lyrics of these two songs, grief is heard through the creation of a new space, or a *bardo* in Wainwright's voice, that reveals vulnerability and pain.

Wainwright's performances of "Martha" and "Zebulon" encompass the bardo of dying in part because these songs express the "gaps or periods in which all possibility of awakening is particularly present… One of the central characteristics of the bardos is that they are periods of

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[211] Butler, *Precarious Life,* 23.

[212] Stephen M. Barber and David L. Clark, "Introduction," in *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory,* ed. Stephen M. Barber and David L. Clark (New York: Routledge, 2002), 5. See also Robert E. Goss and Dennis Klass, "Tibetan Buddhism and the Resolution of Grief: the *Bardo-Thodol* for the Dying and the Grieving," *Death Studies,* 21 (1997): 377-395. doi: 10.1080/074811897201895.

deep uncertainty."[213] As I interpret them, Wainwright's songs expressing bardos are not reflecting upon a defined event – the actual moment of death, for example – but an overall disorienting time that disallows closure or peaceful emotional resolution because of the uncertainty that surrounds the time and space. Due to this classification, Wainwright's melancholy songs are neither laments nor sorrow songs, but more closely reflect the folk tradition that was the foundation of his mother's songwriting. However, Wainwright does not follow the narrative structure of a ballad, but creates impressions of moods, moments, and feelings that more closely resemble the way that traumatic experiences can strip individuals of language or linear narratives. This muddled structure and style is an example of how Wainwright queers his expressions of melancholy. It also permits bardo, as a result of being suspended in time and space, to be acknowledged as a queer concept, allowing for new and previously untraveled paths of understanding to be created as a result of uncertainty. For Wainwright, bardo is communicated through the grain of his voice, the opening up of the third space to attempt to express the awfulness of his mother's prolonged illness.

"*Call Me Back"*

"Martha" expresses the bardo of dying because the vocal performance plays with strength and fragility, isolation and pleading not to be alone, and uncertainty that is portrayed through

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[213] Sogyal Rinpoche, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993), 104. Melissa Solomon plays with this concept in respect to lesbian bardos, not only acknowledging that bardos are in-between life and death, but also sleep and dream, and the space between illness and death that Sedgwick theorized. In an endnote, Solomon writes: "Bardo" may be likened to the space between sections 'a' and 'b' in a piece of Romantic music; the listener is suspended in the transitional space before the arrival of something new, whose properties s/he can't yet know or predict. Like one useful variety of writerly transition, it allows no rest" (212). Melissa Solomon, "Flaming Iguanas, Dalai Pandas, and Other Lesbian Bardos," in *Regarding Sedgwick: Essays on Queer Culture and Critical Theory,* ed. Stephen M. Barber and David L. Clark (New York: Routledge, 2002).

deliberate tempo fluctuations. The lyrics begin "Martha it's your brother calling/Time to go up north and see mother/Things are harder for her now"; these lines provide enough background for the listener to get the sense that brother and sister -- Martha and Rufus --are close but lead autonomous lives, and none of them – mother, father, brother, sister – live in the same geographic region on a regular basis. This physical distance factors into the bardo, and how not being together perhaps heightened the uncertainty during McGarrigle's illness. The second verse -- "Martha it's your brother calling/Have you had a chance to see father? Wondering how's he doing and /There's not much time/For us to really be that angry at each other anymore" – reflects upon the bardo temporality, and the realization that life, being short and indeterminate, should not be spent fighting. This call back to Wainwright's and his father's history of bad blood – made public in "Dinner at Eight" (*Want One*) -- appears particularly regretful, and bears the shadow of McGarrigle's and Loudon Wainwright III's volatile marriage and subsequent divorce when their children were small. "It's your brother calling Martha (2x)/Please call me back" follows, serving as a musical resting point in the song. Wainwright's vocal performance here is pleading, and the repetition of the lyrics emphasizes his probable disappointment and frustration. Additionally, the held "Please" reinforces the need to be heard; the song makes it appear that Wainwright is merely leaving a long message on Martha's answering machine. As the elder sibling, his pleading is a poignant expression of bardo, the realization that the family dynamic is shifting but the future remains unknown. The next two verses incorporate idyllic descriptions of Martha balancing work as an artist, wife, and mother, and the song concludes with the refrain "Please call me back."

Though this song describes Martha, Wainwright's loneliness is the focal point. His isolation is heard in the breaks in his voice at the end of phrases, as well as in the openness of his

vocal performance that gives his voice a palpable sense of sadness, loneliness, and the desire to talk during a difficult time. This openness and honest desperation closely resembles folk ballads in which one person is talking to another who is frequently not there. Such intimacy is appropriate given the McGarrigle/Wainwright folk songwriting tradition. As noted previously, sadness, pain, and the difficulty of not knowing how to navigate loss or pending loss are not dealt with in one ideal way. Wainwright's vocal performance of "Martha" offers a non-dichotomous way to navigate the uncertainty and difficulty of loss and grieving; or, how to perceive bardo as a space of "in-betweenness" that does not discriminate one loss from another, only creates space and an undeterminable amount of time with which to come to grips with the situation. This happens in cases of personal loss like Wainwright's, as well as national and communal losses; for many Québécois, McGarrigle's death was a national loss as the McGarrigle Sister's music embodied French-Canadian culture and touched many fans, especially in Canada, the US, and the UK.[214] *Lulu,* particularly the tracks "Martha" and "Zebulon," gave the public a musical lifeline to continue to process McGarrigle's passing. Wainwright's voice, and the spaces for grief he created with it, may have queered his usual performances, but normalized grieving McGarrigle's loss for Canadian fans especially.

"*The Ice of Song"*

"Zebulon," one of the album's most popular songs, exposes Wainwright's wounds of grief and the vulnerability he was experiencing during his mother's illness, specifically her hospitalization in Montréal. Album reviewers and critics have described "Zebulon" in a myriad

[214] For an example of a press release that speaks to McGarrigle's popularity see Tony Russell, "Kate McGarrigle obituary," *The Guardian,* January 19, 2010, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/jan/19/kate-mcgarrigle-obituary.

of ways. *Sputnik Music* described "Zebulon" as "achingly beautiful" and the "album's best track [that] quietly burns with pain and loss."[215] *Music OMH* referred to "Zebulon" as

> a simple tribute to his late mother, [that] closes the album in beautiful fashion. The slow, portentous piano chords act as a backdrop to lyrics which could be the defining key of the entire project – "My mother's in the hospital, my sister's at the opera, I'm in love, but let's not talk about it." It's a gorgeously sad song, up there with the best of Wainwright's back catalogue.[216]

As reviewers note, "Zebulon"'s lyrics offer an example of Wainwright's queer artistry in the juxtaposition of things that likely should not go together in the same song. Lyrics such as "My mother's in the hospital, My sister's at the opera" are examples; also, "And we'll have some tea and ice cream," the last line of the song, confuses the seriousness of the hospital with meeting an old childhood friend for a drink, a rendezvous, a chat, or a snack. Additionally, the direct address to "Zebulon," who was a friend/crush of Wainwright's in high school, breaks down the barriers of what appears to be a private conversation. The audience hears these comments, snatched from a man's lonely grief, making the song extremely personal, but yet again blurring the line between public and private, rendering it a performance that emerges from the "third space."

The blending of public and private space is reflected in "Zebulon" in the way that silence stands in sharp contrast to sound in the *Lulu* recording. "Zebulon"'s greatest strength, and the reason the press perceives it as such a remarkable song, is its use of silence to emulate boredom, despair, and the fatiguing act of waiting. This use of silence is found in several of Wainwright's earlier songs; "Leaving for Paris No. 2," "Not Ready to Love" (*Release the Stars)*, "In a

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[215] Peter Tabakis, "Rufus Wainwright - All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu," *Sputnik Music*, July 9, 2010, http://www.sputnikmusic.com/review/37830/Rufus-Wainwright-All-Days-Are-Nights-Songs-for-Lulu/.

[216] John Murphy, "Rufus Wainwright – All Days Are Nights: Songs For Lulu," *Music OMH*, April 5, 2010, http://www.musicomh.com/reviews/albums/rufus-wainwright-all-days-are-nights-songs-for-lulu.

Graveyard," (*Poses*), "Pretty Things," "Want" (*Want One),* "This Love Affair," and "Memphis Skyline" (*Want Two*) use fermatas, rests, and grand ritardandos to create space and a kind of sonic heaviness that recalls sadness, despair, and grief, although not the grief of a close personal death. "Candles" (*Out of the Game*) is a post-*Lulu* song that initially mimics the starkness of "Zebulon," and again is a song about Wainwright's mother, or more specifically, her absence.[217] In these types of songs, the grain of Wainwright's voice gives the songs depth, vulnerability, and the aforementioned closeness that the torch song examples also provide. The difference, I argue, is that the melancholy songs contain grain as a way of giving the vocal performance authenticity that hails Wainwright as the mourner, as well as marks him as existing within the bardo of experiencing his mother's illness and eventual death. All of the aforementioned songs are about losing an object of love, but only "Candles" and "Memphis Skyline" specifically speak to death.[218] Wainwright's vocality in these songs sounds flat, sometimes defeated, other times regretful; notes are elongated to simulate stillness or emptiness, and the piano or guitar accompaniment is simple and spacious. Similarly, "Zebulon" uses sparse piano accompaniment to draw attention to the voice's simplicity and the lyrics' nostalgia, or a possible break with reality during the stressful period of grieving.

There are certain lyrical couplets that envelop "Zebulon" in feelings of depression. "Skating on the ice of song /About to go under" might be a reference to slipping under the heavy pull of depression, stress, worry, uncertainty, and fear. These feelings come back with the couplet "Who's ever been free in this world? Who has never had to bleed in this world?" This

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[217] "Candles" will be discussed further in the Conclusion of this dissertation.

[218] The latter is a song about Jeff Buckley's drowning in the Mississippi River on May 29, 1997 (Lydia Hutchinson, "Remembering Jeff Buckley, *Performing Songwriter,* May 29, 2014, http://performingsongwriter.com/jeff-buckley/).

addresses the reality of the fragile body and the strength of will it takes to survive the world. It might be a reference to oppression, marginalization, or social ills particularly of the queer community, but within the context of *Lulu,* I interpret it as a recognition of that which none of us can escape: loss, pain, sadness, and feeling like our lives are falling apart before our very eyes when someone we love is sick or forever silenced through death. The line "All I need are your eyes…" could be an indicator that Wainwright was trying to escape his own reality and view life through someone else's experience. Though death is inevitable, perhaps he was searching for postponement. With his sister away at the time, Wainwright appears to use his memory of his childhood friend to manage the situation in Montréal when his mother was in the hospital.[219]

Returning to the notion of vulnerability, "More like someone who belongs in the human race" exposed Wainwright's personal feelings in that moment, how his sadness, possibly even regret, rendered him inhuman at that point in time as compared to Zebulon's humanity. The vocal performance of this line that was captured on the recording gives it an almost inhuman sound; it is not technologically manipulated and does not sound robotic, but the low note that Wainwright seems to retreat below ground to read recalls the bottomless depth of depression and isolation. The openness of Wainwright's voice, even at the lowest end of his vocal range, creates a sound that swallows the listener and pulls them down beneath reality. It is a vocal achievement that relies on the grain, and vocal flaws to some extent, to make an impact; without the body in this example, the sound would be flat and muddy instead of cavernous and raw. The grain further illustrates the untethered emotions Wainwright expressed in "Zebulon," giving the end of the

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[219] Martha Wainwright performed the singing role of Anna I in Kurt Weil's *Seven Deadly Sins* with the Royal Ballet at the Royal Opera House in London during this time. See Luke Jennings, "Seven deadly sins? Make that eight…," *The Guardian*, April 28, 2007, http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2007/apr/29/dance.marthawainwright.

song a fading ending that reflects the unending process of healing rather than the illusion of a definitive end point.

Vulnerability and the Vernacular

In order to make sense of the variances in vocal performances on *Lulu* and how they are rooted in grief, it is necessary to consider the ways that the songs discussed in this chapter differ in terms of vocal quality and style. While "Martha" and "Zebulon" were sung in a style that clearly stressed sadness and isolation, others, such as "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?", employ a popular vernacular style to express vulnerability, a common feeling associated with loss. Wainwright's stylistic choices were not random; I argue that he made such decisions to better exemplify the in-between genre he created when he wrote the song cycle. His queer vocality thus is the result of using the vernacular voice to create a new space for popular singing to merge with classical performance traditions.

The vernacular voice, with its looser performance styles and freedom of emotional expression, is important in investigating how Wainwright's emotional vulnerability opened a portal through which his grief could be identified, heard, and transmitted to the listener. I argue that Wainwright's queer vocality is a vernacular appropriation and a by-product of grieving through music in this study. Richard Middleton's concept of the "unhindered voice" becomes crucial to understanding how the emotional rawness and grain heard in his voice resonates within his listeners. Middleton explains that the "unhindered voice" mimics hysteria in its "defensive reinforcement of patriarchal markers accompanying their simultaneous fracturing."[220] The male singer, he suggests, suffers a hysterical fantasy that can be understood as a result of the

[220] Richard Middleton, "Mum's the Word: Men's Singing and Maternal Law," *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music,* ed. Freya Jarman-Ivens (London: Routledge, 2007), 113.

movement of an "imaginary phallus, from its 'normal' place up in the throat," thus creating a gender crisis that surfaces in the voice.[221] While I do not mean to insinuate Wainwright or his voice is at any time hysterical, the "unhindered voice," the voice that does not follow prescribed gender norms, represents queer vocality and, specifically, the refusal to stifle his grief. Thus, a core characteristic of Wainwright's queer vocality is the vulnerability heard in his vocal performance; this vulnerability emerges from the "third space," or where Wainwright's gender, grief, and the vernacular style mingle.

Though Wainwright's queer sexuality is not the reason for his grief in these songs specifically, his identity as a gay man is part of a larger history of mourning and marginalization within the LGBT* community. In her discussion on what makes a life "grievable," Judith Butler considers the collective losses of the LGBT* community: "We have all lost in recent decades from AIDS, but there are other losses that afflict us, from illness and from global conflict; and there is the fact as well that women and minorities, including sexual minorities, are, as a community, subjected to violence, exposed to its possibility, if not its realization."[222] Pervasive fear and grief associated with HIV/AIDS affected Wainwright as he came of age at a time when sex equaled death for gay men in particular. Being marked as other continues to perpetuate marginalization in the LGBT* community despite advances in civil rights in recent years. This marginalization is similar to, but *not* the same as, the marginalization communities of color regularly experience. As a result of being othered in society, the vernacular voice, or the

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[221] Ibid., 114.

[222] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life* (New York: Verso, 2004), 20. For further discussion on queer loss specifically related to the LGBT community see J. Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) and Heather Love, *Feeling Backward: Loss and the Politics of Queer History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009).

marginalized voice specifically linked to the African American voice, finds a way to be heard despite its cultural silencing. The vernacular voice might be identified as the black voice, the ethnic voice, or the voice laden with a sorrow and grief that stems from deep and profound oppression.[223] Queer voices, especially queer voices of color, also embody the overwhelming grief that is ultimately folded into queer identity.[224]

Though Wainwright is white, and thus more visible within culture as the result of US legislative advances granting more rights to LGBT* individuals, his use of vernacular vocal style pays homage to the lineage of African American vocalists. Wainwright has stated that Nina Simone's music, in particular, showed how it "was possible to incorporate…high ideas into pop music."[225] The lineage of other queer African American female singers — Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Billie Holiday — and Louis Armstrong's gritty jazz voice provide a popular music precedent for eclectic, powerful voices singing from spaces of marginalization in popular culture.[226] Importantly, Wainwright cites Al Jolson as an early influence, following Kate and

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[223] See Jon Cruz's *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) for a discussion on how spirituals and sorrow songs helped to create black culture and high cultural artifacts. For a recent discussion on how hip-hop functions as a contemporary sorrow song, following W.E.B. DuBois' sorrow songs of pain and hope, see Joseph Winters, "Contemporary Sorrow Songs: Traces of Mourning, Lament, and Vulnerability in Hip-Hop," *African American Review* 46,1 (2013): 9-20, Professional Development Collection, 96441830.

[224] Sara Ahmed addresses these concepts through the examples of the "melancholy migrant" and the "unhappy queer." See Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[225] Will Hodgkinson, "Judy and me," *The Guardian,* May 6, 2004, http://www.theguardian.com/music/2004/may/07/rufuswainwright.popandrock.

[226] Jonathan Ross Greenberg notes "Armstrong's singing embodies characteristics of singing style" that were new to the "mass-mediated, white-controlled entertainment industry," but his style was derived "from conventions of African American communication in the United States." A "particularly African American conception of the performance of music and language in both

Anna McGarrigle's love of Jolson, Stephen Foster, and the minstrel tradition that informed some of their own songs.[227] Wainwright's use of the vernacular voice is not thoughtless appropriation; his exposure to vernacular voices and styles stems from his childhood and the exploration of influences informing his songwriting. Vernacular voices and songs that specifically speak to hardship, grief, and the challenge of visibility in white, or mainstream, culture have affected and sustained Wainwright's musical lineage.

A vocal tradition that has created space for vernacular voices to express hardships and struggles is that of torch singing. The torch song, stemming from the crooning tradition, is performed in a naked, relatively unadorned fashion. Wainwright's appropriation of torch singing on *Lulu* is heard in songs like "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" Such songs privilege the narrative structure, similar to songs like "Martha" and "Zebulon," rather than vocal virtuosity, emotional depth rather than traditionally beautiful singing. Stacy Holman Jones' *Torch Singing: Performing Resistance and Desire from Billie Holiday to Edith Piaf* describes the lineage of the torch song, and importantly, the "embodiment of a relationship of intimacy and hostility that is both provocative and participatory" in the style.[228] Wainwright's music aligns with torch singing far more than blues, and thus this

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speech and singing" informed his vocal techniques. Jonathan Ross Greenberg, "Singing Up Close: Voice, Language, and Race in American Popular Music, 1925-1935" (PhD diss, University of California, Los Angeles, 2008), 150, RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (1967 to Present only), 2008-06314.

[227] "The Work Song" (*Love Over and Over,* 1982) is a strong example of the influence minstrelsy had on the McGarrigle Sisters; also see Anna McGarrigle, "Obituary for Kate McGarrigle," *Kate and Anna McGarrigle,* January 26, 2010, http://www.mcgarrigles.com/uncategorized/obituary-for-kate-mcgarrigle.

[228] Stacy Holman Jones, *Torch Singing: Performing Resistance and Desire from Billie Holiday to Edith Piaf* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2007), 24. More than a dissemination of vocal style in torch singing, Holman Jones' work critically considers how female torch singers' performances actively resist the narratives of torch song and gendered expectations of women in this musical

tradition, which several other queer vocalists have also followed, is a vernacular style that lends agency to Wainwright's queer performativity and, crucially, grieving through song. Holman Jones defines the torch song as "a story, a narrative sung primarily by jazz singers and nightclub performers" that developed in the United States during the Tin Pan Alley era.[229] Drawing from several musical traditions including French chanson, English parlor song, ragtime, jazz, and (later on) swing, torch songs are typically gendered songs (that females perform) and often about unrequited love or a relationship.[230] It is a song in which text is the primary component, as opposed to melody, and the narrative connects the performer to the audience.[231] During the Tin Pan Alley era, composers shifted from third person perspective to second person ("I love *her*"/"I love *you*").[232] This perspective shift "combined with use of the microphone and amplification, made an intimate and 'conversational' style of singing possible and desirable."[233] This intimacy, however, was primarily heterosexual in nature, making any queer love or desire invisible within the public sphere. Even when a singer was not heterosexual, their performance was read that way, further solidifying the standard performativity of the torch song. Singing a torch song is both an intimate expression and one that invites audience engagement; this is to say that the pleasures and pains of performance are tightly wound together in the torch song and how the singer "is both *not* performing herself but also *not not* performing herself..."[234]

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genre. For a history of vocal style in torch singing, see Michael Pitts and Frank Hoffmann et al., *The Rise of the Crooners* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2002).

[229] Ibid., 18. The earliest torch song is said to be Francis Carco's "Mon Homme," first performed in France in 1916 (18-19).

[230] Ibid., 18-20.

[231] Ibid.

[232] Ibid., 20.

[233] Ibid.

[234] Ibid., 39.

The audience must discover what kinds of emotional connections are created through the performance of torch song. In Wainwright's case, he is using intimacy or close singing and first and second person perspective of the narrative to authenticate his experiences and emotions; his use of "me" in "True Loves" and "I" in "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?," for example, situates Wainwright's voice in an intimate relationality to the listener. The auditory closeness allows the listener to hear the grain in Wainwright's voice: how his audible breath contributes to creating mood, specifically melancholy, in the songs; how fragility creeps into Wainwright's otherwise strong vocal performance in the slight crackling of certain notes. These flaws remind the listener that these performances are steeped in personal loss and pain. In doing so he is resisting traditional gender norms that leave the emotional vulnerability to female performers, while also using the "third space" to explore vernacular appropriation.

The "Unhindered" Voice

The link between vulnerability and the vernacular in Wainwright's vocal performance on *Lulu* are especially noticeable in the songs "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" These songs follow an elite vocal lineage rooted in torch song, and Wainwright's vocal performance emulates the crooning style's long phrasing and round sounds. His performance emphasizes pain, melancholy, isolation, and insecurity rather than comfort or sensuality. Further, crooning is a way of connecting the narrative of these songs, as well as distancing the narrative text from Wainwright, an example of the performing and not performing dichotomy Holman Jones notes. Wainwright's vocality in these three songs, in particular, blur the gendered lines of masculine and feminine emotional expression as the text dwells on issues of melancholy, loss or the fear of loss, and the tension between isolation and opening oneself up to love.

The Crooner's Torch

The crooner was historically identified in the minstrel era (early 19th to early 20th century) as a female or feminine performer in blackface (e.g., mammy crooning to her baby on the plantation). Owing to the lack of technological amplification at the time, crooning at this point was not the nearly whispered vocal performance it became in the 1920s onward; rather it was sentimental singing that required vocal projection from performers. As crooning shifted from live stage performance to recorded vocal performance with the advent of radio, the crooner became associated with sentimentality *and* white masculinity, challenging hegemonic notions of masculinity during this period.[235] Crooning, as performed by white males, was singing without the aid of amplification and designed for small, intimate spaces. An untrained voice that evoked emotional responses – comfort or sensuality – crooned, and it was originally not limited to the male voice. The kind of vocality the crooner embodied was the important piece that eventually made it a popular form of singing: "a natural type of voice – effortlessly modulated rather than classically trained – was best suited to the radio mike. An everyday, casual, off-the-street and into-your-living room voice."[236] Additionally, such singing on the radio accompanied selling products using pop songs, further underscoring the natural (and

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[235] For discussions about the shift from live stage performance to radio broadcasts and new recording technologies that enhanced the sentimental crooning style, see Allison Maura McCracken, "Real Men Don't Sing: Crooning and American Culture, 1928-1933," (PhD diss, The University of Iowa, 2000), RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (1967 to Present only), 2000-08519. See also Byrd McDaniel, "Crooning, Country, and the Blues: Redefining Masculinity in Popular Music in the 1930s and 1940s," *NeoAmericanist,* Vol. 6., ED.1 (2012): 1-14, Humanities International Complete, 85482266.

[236] Pitts and Hoffmann et al., *The Rise of the Crooners,* 13-14. See also Paula Lockheart, "A History of Early Microphone Singing, 1925-1939: American Mainstream Popular Singing at the Advent of Electronic Microphone Amplification," *Popular Music and Society,* Vol. 26, No.3 (2003): 367-385, RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (1967 to Present only), 2003-03625.

trustworthy) voice that was heard in so many homes. While he did not limit his vocalization to only crooner-sounds (staying six inches from the microphone or maintaining a wispy vocal tone), Wainwright approached the vocal performances of "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With A Rose?" with a close, intimate, and vulnerable vocality in which the grain of the voice created space for his grief. At the same time, the text of these songs do not only explore Wainwright's mourning for the loss of his mother, but the grief that the character Lulu (Wainwright's muse, nemesis, and alter-ego) feels for Wainwright's coming of age, partly due to this deeply personal loss.[237] In other words, the loss of his mother propelled Wainwright into normative adulthood, including commitment to his partner, eschewing hard drug use and promiscuity, and becoming a father as his 40th birthday coincided with mourning his mother's death.[238]

Wainwright models his grief-laden performance after singers like Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, and k.d. lang, who create long phrases at times to set a melancholic mood, express feelings of stopped time (waiting for a lover, sitting with pain, experiencing the silence of

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[237] Lulu's presence as a shadow in Wainwright's life cannot be overlooked completely as a cause for both antagonism and inspiration in his life. Her presence on the album is significant because Wainwright has mentioned numerous times over the years in press and in performance how Lulu was both a blessing and a curse. Wainwright describes Louise Brooks' Lulu as a temptress of sorts: "I have to pay tribute to that dark spirit, because once you've flirted with her and danced with her, you can never forget her." See Richard Ouzounian, "Sex, drugs, and divas: Rufus and his icons," *Toronto Star,* June 11, 2010, http://www.thestar.com/entertainment/2010/06/11/sex_drugs_and_divas_rufus_and_his_icons.html.

[238] Wainwright talks about his engagement to Weisbrodt and deciding to be the biological father to close friend Lorca Cohen's child in 2010. Jim Windolf, "Q&A: Rufus Wainwright on Liza, *Lulu,* and Proposing," *Vanity Fair,* last modified December 6, 2010, http://www.vanityfair.com/culture/2010/12/qarufus-wainwright-on.

death), or vent frustration, sorrow, or hopelessness.[239] These female voices serve as models through which Wainwright queers torch song and the crooning style through the use of the gender-bending, or "unhindered," voice. He employs vocal choices such as singing in a higher than typical range and using a softer and lighter timbre; Wainwright's vocal performance is non-traditionally masculine, emphasizing emotional vulnerability as well as intimacy. Wainwright's vocality thus expresses both/and rather than merely he or she, an aspect that closely relates to Jeff Buckley's vocal style.

Buckley is an artist Wainwright both admired and envied, and in relation to the idea of queer vocality, vulnerability, and, at time, the vernacular, I argue that Buckley's vocality set a precedent within popular music for Wainwright's *Lulu* performance.[240] Shana Goldin-Perschbacher argues that Jeff Buckley's vocality is transgendered because it "resists identification with his biological sex."[241] As a cisgendered, heterosexual male, Buckley's gender transgressions are heard because he "disturb[s] notions of rock masculinity and influenc[es] listeners' conceptions of their own identities."[242] Buckley emulated and identified with the female vocalists he drew inspiration from: Nina Simone, Judy Garland, opera singer

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[239] In a significant scholarly contribution focusing on Sarah Vaughan's vocal performance, Elaine M. Hayes suggests that Vaughan's "warm, silken, crystalline, iridescent, and dreamy" voice detracted attention from her "black authentic voice" and granted her more agency as a woman of color. Her vocality did not necessarily mark her as African-American or a jazz singer, giving her widespread appeal within American popular culture. Elaine M. Hayes, "To Bebop or to Be Pop: Sarah Vaughan and the Politics of Crossover" (PhD diss, University of Pennsylvania, 2004), 78, RILM Abstracts of Music Literature (1967 to Present only), 2004-11182.

[240] James Sandham, "The Small World of Canadian Music: Rufus Wainwright, Jeff Buckley, and Leonard Cohen," *Canadian Music Hall of Fame,* n.d., http://canadianmusichalloffame.ca/the-small-world-of-canadian-music-rufus-wainwright-jeff-buckley-and-leonard-cohen/.

[241] Shana Goldin-Perschbacher, "Not With You But of You: 'Unbearable Intimacy' and Jeff Buckley's Transgendered Vocality," in *Oh Boy! Masculinities and Popular Music,* ed. Freya Jarman-Ivens (London: Routledge, 2007), 215.

[242] Ibid.

Janet Baker, and Billie Holiday, for example, and did not change pronouns when singing from a female perspective. He also frequently sang in a much higher vocal range than that with which a male would typically be comfortable, so that his voice "conveyed his identifications and his feelings, and seduced his listeners, seeming to entice them into an intimate relationship with him."[243]

Wainwright's appropriation of torch song and the crooning style shares Buckley's resistance to formulaic singing and the tendency toward intimate performance style. The two singers are also connected through their transgression of previously constructed genre boundaries.[244] For example, Buckley's voice has a powerful vulnerability about it that made songs like his cover of Cohen's "Hallelujah" legendary. The intimacy and emotional pain mimics that of the "holy and…broken Hallelujah": the moment of surrender, release, or perhaps forgiveness.[245] This can be likened to the acceptance of and resistance to both love and pain Wainwright communicates through the texts of "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" as well as the vulnerability expressed in these torch songs. Further, Wainwright's vocality is closely linked to Buckley's "transgendered," intimate singing style in that the "unhindered voice" emerges from the previously identified "third space," rendering the sound unexpected, unpredictable, and vulnerable; in essence, the queer voice is the "unhindered voice" that does not only produce musical sound or language, but palpable affect that listeners interpret as emotion.

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[243] Ibid., 217. Singing in the upper part of one's range is different than singing in falsetto in that falsetto is often unusually or unnaturally high.
[244] Ibid., 216.
[245] Wainwright's cover of Cohen's "Hallelujah" is much less dynamic, though still highly regarded by fans. It features simple arpeggiated piano accompaniment and a bel canto vocal style as compared to Buckley's freer and impassioned rendition.

Singing the Blues

Dissatisfaction, unhappiness, and apathy are the main lyrical themes in the first torch song example, "Sad With What I Have." These negative feelings are communicated through the lyrics and bluesy, jazzy, and melancholy singing. Blue notes in the melody and the vocal dips on the word "sad" at the beginning of phrases accentuate the vernacular aspects found in this song, and the close miking transports the listener to a dark cabaret lounge regardless of where she is listening to the song. The casual apathy heard in Wainwright's voice is reminiscent of other popular music vocalists with dark timbres: Tom Waits and Leonard Cohen, for example. Wainwright's voice in this song sounds like it is coated by cigarettes and smoky bourbon, aging him, maturing his voice, and packaging his bored discontent as something that harkens back to crooning and torch singing of the 1930s – 1960s. The sadness Wainwright expresses in this song is a darker iteration than other crooning songs that dwell on having the blues. For example, Nat King Cole's renditions of "Mood Indigo" and "Am I Blue?" are mellow, slow, and performed in Cole's characteristic smooth-as-glass vocal style. They lack the haunting quality that Cohen's "Famous Blue Raincoat" has, or the gruffness of Waits' "Blue Valentines." Wainwright croons "Sad With What I Have," but his interpretation more closely resembles Cohen's and Waits' raw and warbled performances than Cole's silky delivery.

Muddled textual references emerge from Wainwright's croon. "Sad With What I Have"'s text contains traditional words and phrases found in thousands of popular songs, whether they are about depression, isolation, lost love, loneliness, or death: "sad," "blue," "sun," "moon," and "bright." These words may be clichéd, but they are effective choices in songs. Less common word choices like "unimpressed," "depressed," "motionless," "cad," "lad," and "Bluebeard" and "Blue boy" signal that Wainwright is drawing from a more nuanced lyrical pool to express

displeasure, ennui, or loneliness.[246] These textual examples situate "Sad With What I Have" as a timeless standard that does not use slang or popular culture references to mark the song's place in history, but rather borrows classic phrases from songwriters like Nöel Coward or, as discussed in chapter two, George Gershwin.[247]

As key words from the text indicate, "Sad With What I Have" is not only a song about melancholy, it is also a song about realizing that the love one has in one's life sometimes has to be the bright spot on bleak terrain. This is a theme common to marginalized communities of color as well as queer communities. In the song, Wainwright, being the protagonist, explores his pain, sorrow, and confusion with text that highlights the juxtaposition of loneliness within a relationship. The phrase "Then I think of you/ How could someone so bright love someone so blue?" could be Wainwright speaking to his partner (now husband) Weisbrodt about how Wainwright cannot understand why he is loved; "Guess the world needs what I have/And what you do" might refer to Wainwright's extroverted talent and public persona and Weisbrodt's introverted work within the performing arts, as well as how Weisbrodt grounds Wainwright, settling him down from his previous promiscuous, wild days.[248] The final triplet, "Guess the

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[246] Specifically, Wainwright clarified that the phrase "Blue boy doesn't have a thing on me" is referring to Thomas Gainsborough's *The Blue Boy* painting. He explained that he "always tend[s] to reach into my broth of ideas that is usually pretty full." Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.

[247] Coward was a closeted gay man his entire life, but some of his work has been considered subversive and political. In particular, some of his lyrics have been identified with his persona, but women sang them. *The Queer Encyclopedia of Music, Dance & Musical Theater,* (San Francisco: Cleis Press, 2004), s.v. Coward, Sir Noël. In his resurrection of Judy Garland's 1963 Live at Carnegie Hall performance, Wainwright performed Coward's "If Love Were All" and has performed it outside of that context as well.

[248] Weisbrodt has made the decision this year to vacate the Artistic Director position for Toronto's Luminato Festival, an annual festival celebrating Canadian visual and performing art and the many cultural communities in the region. He has occupied the position since 2011. See David Paterson, "Jörn Weisbrodt, the creative force behind Luminato on why this year's festival

world needs both the sun/And the moon too/Sad with what I have except for you," solidifies this not as a song of isolated sadness, but a love song that recognizes how one person's love can often save one from completely disconnecting with life. However, despite the "happy ending" resolution, Wainwright's vocal performance emphasizes the angst and turmoil as he ponders these mixed feelings. This personal anguish closely aligns with the structure of torch song lyrics; their guts do not speak directly to love, but the turmoil associated with love. In this song, Wainwright's sadness stems from the grief he feels about his mother's illness/death, but his other internal struggle that feeds the depression is his lack of self-worth or the resistance to traditional or normative paths to happiness (commitment, marriage, family).

While "Sad With What I Have" stresses angst within a relationship and focuses on one person ("you"), "True Loves" interrogates not one true love, but many loves that are emotionally significant to Wainwright. "True Love"'s lyrics queer the torch song narrative structure and increase the multiple meanings of this song because it lacks clarity in regard to whom Wainwright is addressing. These true loves can include mother/son, sister/brother, friendship, or self-love (especially after the years of abuse that Wainwright inflicted upon himself).[249]

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could be the best ever," *Post City Toronto*, June 4, 2014, http://postcity.com/Eat-Shop-Do/Do/June-2014/Jorn-Weisbrodt-the-creative-force-behind-Luminato-on-why-this-years-festival-could-be-the-best-ever/; David Wheeler, "Jorn Weisbrodt looks back on his legacy at the Luminato Festival," *The Globe and Mail*, June 9, 2016, http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/jorn-weisbrodt-looks-back-on-his-legacy-at-the-luminato-festival/article30375308/. Also: "About the Luminato Festival," *Luminato Festival*, n.d., https://luminatofestival.com/pages/luminato-festival/history/.

[249] Wainwright's wild twenties are routinely cited in interviews, particularly his excessive drug use. In particular, his abuse of crystal meth nearly killed him, and he temporarily went blind in the time leading up to entering rehab (with the help of Elton John, no less). For a frank and thorough discussion of this period in Wainwright's life, see Anthony DeCurtis, "MUSIC; Rufus Wainwright Journeys to 'Gay Hell' and Back," *The New York Times,* August 31, 2003,

Wainwright's vocals on "True Loves" sound mournful, tired, and resigned in the first phrase ("A heart of ice is easily melted"). The second phrase grows a bit louder, gaining some strength, power, and resilience ("A heart of stone is easily thrown away"). By the middle of the song, and again at the end of it, Wainwright is in full voice, though there is a devastated quality to his voice that I hear as both accepting and resisting despair. The climactic moment near the end of the song establishes resoluteness and stubbornness: "And if you need me I'll always be here/A heart of stone never goes anywhere." This is a lyric that reads as sinking into one's misery, growing comfortable, making peace with unrequited love (or loves). A hallmark of the torch song, unrequited love in this case does not only refer to romantic love, but to the bonds of family and friendship, and respect for one's own shortcomings and struggles. Though Wainwright sings in first person, the narrative perspective does not clarify who "I" is addressing or who "you"/"your" is.

The phrase "true loves" refers to joyful and painful ideas and feelings, and a variety of people who represent the 'true loves' in Wainwright's life at the time of this album's conception. Wainwright was in love with Weisbrodt, a point also referenced in "Zebulon" ("I'm in love, but let's not talk about it"); he was not, however, immune from doubt or the fear that comes along with love, commitment, and trusting another person. Other loves in his life included his mother, his sister, and the rest of his family. Within these multiple affections, Wainwright's grieving comes through, while also offering an example of how the ideas of love, friendship, and family are often redefined in queer communities. Family, for instance, need not mean those whom one is biologically related to, but those whom one finds solidarity, compassion, support, and

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http://www.nytimes.com/2003/08/31/arts/music-rufus-wainwright-journeys-to-gay-hell-and-back.html.

understanding in light of queer sexuality or stigmatizing factors such as homelessness or a positive HIV status, common experiences in LGBT* communities from which biological family might reject and turn away. “True Loves” is about wanting to love and being afraid of losing love, acknowledging one’s strengths and weaknesses on the quest for happiness or peace, and turning away from love (“a heart of stone”) versus letting oneself be vulnerable (“a heart of ice”). Someone willing to be more vulnerable might toss away a person not willing to love, or not ready to love.[250] Thus, “It’s the true loves that make me want to cry” indicates the difficulty in balancing happiness and the fear of loss, in conjunction with the urge to flee or abandon the prospect of any intimate relationship (romantic, platonic, familial) because, ultimately, it will end either because of a disengagement in life or by necessity through death (“It’s the true loves that make me want to say goodbye”).

In a December 2010 interview, Wainwright spoke with *Vanity Fair* about the pervasive subject matter of the *Lulu* album: “Well, you know, I think the minute you mention death, people run for the hills—unless it’s heavy metal. People do not like death.”[251] This public acknowledgment of the overarching theme of the album is a moment of recognition for the listener; “True Loves” is addressing big issues, not only a bad break-up or the loss of love, but loss overall. “So take your true loves down to the river” might be a burial, “and I will watch you here on the corner” could point to a spiritual “watching,” an out-of-body experience of watching over one who is grieving. This interpretation provides grounds for a clearer understanding of the couplet (“A heart of ice is easily molded/A heart of stone is easily hidden away”). If “ice” is

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[250] "I'm Not Ready to Love" (*Release the Stars*) was arguably a reflection on his newfound love with Weisbrodt in 2006/2007.
[251] Windolf, “Rufus Wainwright on Liza…”, 2010.

malleable, then it can change, and a person who is of the living can change, or move beyond pain and grief given enough motivation and time; however, stone is not malleable and left untouched does not change, a clear connection to the dead.

Wainwright's performance of "True Loves" creates musical space for multiple expressions of grief while also stylistically falling in line with torch singing and crooning. However, the vocal line is not his only concern, and playing the piano accompaniment himself queers the torch song and crooning tradition which primarily focuses on the singer's voice and the lyrics rather than an instrumental accompaniment coming from a backing band or accompanist. Similarly, Wainwright's vocal delivery and self-accompaniment of "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" exemplifies the same torch singing crooning characteristics and thematically similar text. "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" uses traditionally Romantic imagery of the rose as a fragile, delicate, beautiful object and contrasts the flower with the shortcomings of human beings ("How would it ever get me high?"; "How would it ever get me by?"; "How would it ever get the guy?"). The dream/nightmare pairing is the other focal point of this song's lyrics, highlighting the binaries of good/evil, light/dark, hope/despair, and life/death ("Never does the dream come true/Without the night/ Never does the dream come true/Without the nightmare").

"What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" is a self-indulgent song that talks around the fear of vulnerability and feeling frail or inadequate. The song's text speaks to the inability to trust oneself with something as fragile as love, and hints at the fear of being alone. Wainwright explained "What Would I Ever Do With A Rose?" "directly correlates with Lulu from *Pandora's*

Box."[252] These themes relate to queer temporality[253] and how Wainwright's appropriation of torch song is a way of expressing the personal loss of his mother as well as mourning for his youth, including the dangers of love and sex. Wainwright's first-person narrative in "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" stresses the incongruity he recognizes in his life, the perceived inability to perform his adult masculinity in socially acceptable and expected ways. His mother's suddenly vulnerable health compounds the incongruity of expectations of adulthood with the surreal experience of becoming a caregiver to his mother. Emotional sensitivity and the ethics of care are both embraced and rejected in "True Loves" and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?"; these songs address an active resistance to moving on to the next stage in his life. The emotion heard in the crooning style not only expresses grief over McGarrigle's illness/death (and possibly the regret of not being able to heal her), but also a bittersweet nostalgia for the personal loss of Wainwright's reckless youth, something that he is nostalgic for though he recognizes he was on a one lane highway to certain death.[254]

The examples analyzed in this section tie together the prevalence of grief in Wainwright's text and vocal performance with a melancholy that emerges from his queer

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[252] *Pandora's Box* refers to the 1929 George Wilhem Pabst German silent film. Wainwright, Salerno, May 2016.

[253] See chapter one in which I discuss Halberstam's concepts of queer space and temporality.

[254] For example, in a 2009 *Details* interview, Wainwright mentions that he has "done every drug" but his crystal-meth addiction was rock bottom, and also refers to cruising Montréal bars at age 14 looking for guys. These are experiences that he talks about fairly regularly in the press (whether he wants to or not is unclear, but interviewers continually ask him those types of questions) as events that are associated with sexual and identity experimentation. However, he also reflects upon the rape he suffered in London as a teenager and how that experience saved his life: "I needed a smack upside the head, and after the assault I didn't have sex for about 10 years. It really straightened out my loose behavior." See Jonah Weiner, "The Confessions of Rufus Wainwright," *Details,* last modified 6 years ago, http://www.details.com/story/rufus-wainwright-all-days-are-nights-songs-for-lulu.

("unhindered") voice. "Sad With What I Have," "True Loves," and "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" situate Wainwright and Lulu at odds with one another; their mingled voices represent the both/and concept addressed in relation to Buckley in these torch song appropriations. While "Martha" and "Zebulon" explore highly personal experiences, these three songs emphasize the protagonist that is both the vulnerable self and the marginalized Other. The vulnerability that Wainwright draws out of the queer "third space" results in a clash that a listener hears as feminine and masculine, vulnerable and powerful, and intimate and somewhat distanced. These "ands" are important to the nature of the "unhindered voice," as well as queer temporality and space (in which things develop on their own timelines and planes). At its core, the queer voice that is created out of the fluidity of gender expression is an extension of the rhizome that extends forward, backward, and sideways so that new paths might be formed and explored.

Romanticizing Grief

Thus far, I have identified two vocal styles through which Wainwright expresses grief: folk/ballad singing and torch singing/crooning. The last two songs that best exemplify Wainwright's queer vocality are "Who Are You New York?" and "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent," both of which privilege the bel canto style of classical singing, or the lyrical and elongated phrasing Western art music vocalists used in a variety of classical works, but especially in 19th century Italian opera. Jarman-Ivens notes that "in *bel canto* where the 'natural' voice becomes most fiercely linked with the 'perfect' voice in discourse," the ideal sound is unachievable despite extensive training. Imperfections heard in the bel canto style "speak of

'failure.'"[255] This style of singing not only prioritizes smooth phrasing and pure vocal tones, but also manages breath control so as to avoid audible breaths as much as possible. Wainwright stresses the romanticism of grieving through the bel canto style, which becomes a way for him to access the "third space" in popular music because it deviates from vernacular styles. "Who Are You New York?" and "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" are more carefully performed songs than the emotionally gushy torch songs. It is a controlled emotional expression, as a lot of classical music is, but does not completely lack popular aesthetics like audible breathing or sloppy enunciation.

The vocal performances of "Who Are You New York?" and "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" introduce the album's tone to the listener, situating it immediately in the bel canto singing style. Wainwright's elongated phrases and legato singing in these songs recall Henri DuParc's and Hector Berlioz's French art songs; these composers' songs differed from the German art song tradition because they channeled French nationality and the floridity and beauty of French text rather than the chromaticism and angst of late German Romanticism. This mixture of styles contributes to the individual songs' queerness, while also situating the songs in the larger Romantic tradition. This is not a tradition that Wainwright employed only on *Lulu.* His performance of "l'Absence," a song from Berlioz's *Les Nuits d'été* song cycle, recorded live at the Fillmore in San Francisco in 2004, is an example of how he previously queered the bel canto style while retaining the French art song aesthetic earlier in his career.[256] The queerness is heard in the popular/classical mixture of Wainwright's voice as he accompanies himself on the piano; his breathing is almost excessively audible due to the amplification of his voice, and despite

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[255] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices,* 106.
[256] "L'absence – Rufus Wainwright," YouTube video, 4:59, posted by "icaro2020," October 23, 2008, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PG-8o1mLmAU.

being a fluent French speaker, his enunciation lacks clarity; this lack of enunciation aligns itself with popular music and not opera or classical art song performance. The lyrical phrasing has a rawness to it that situates it within popular appropriation of art song, making the performance seem forced at times. A more recent performance of "l'Absence", however, shows how Wainwright's voice has matured; in this 2011 performance, an orchestra accompanies him and he more effectively performs the bel canto style with clearer enunciation and more controlled breathing.[257] It is possible that his French aria, "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent," grew out of his earlier love affair with French art song, despite his more frequent public discussions about Italian and German opera's influence on his songwriting.

Taken out of *Prima Donna's* context, "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" is the classical aria that "Wainwright the Classical Composer" wrote, but that "Wainwright the Popular Singer" sings. This was not the first time he recorded an opera aria as a popular artist. In addition to his renditions of Berlioz art songs, Wainwright recorded "Au Fond du Temple Saint" from Georges Bizet's *The Pearl Fishers* with David Byrne.[258] This duet, which two popular artists perform, attempts to bring the classical aria to popular music, possibly mainstream popular music. Though its measure of success is subjective, what should be noticed from this effort is that Wainwright and Byrne both possess recognizable and unique voices that do not succeed in sounding like classical voices on this track, but do not resist classical aesthetics either. While these French arias do not sound as polished and practiced as a professional opera singer's interpretation, the emotional weight of the aria is accessible. Wainwright's voice sounds, in both of these examples, tender and warm, expressing love of the aria if not dynamically interpreting the libretto that pits

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[257] "Rufus Wainwright, Absence (Les nuits d'été - Hector Berlioz), House of Rufus," Vimeo video, posted by "Lys," 2011, https://vimeo.com/27320512.
[258] David Byrne, *Grown Backwards* (Nonesuch, 79826, 2004) compact disc.

two close friends against one another because of a woman. Stylistically, Wainwright performs the aforementioned arias and art songs similarly – one that showcases his warm baritone, affinity with the musical styles, and blurry diction. While he knows as a student of classical music the techniques of singing classically and vernacularly differ, his resistance to adjusting to one or the other queers performance practice standards in both styles. This performance choice can be linked to Callas' flawed voice. The "breaks and variability of tone" open the "third space of the queer voice" in Callas' voice; her vocal expression allowed multiple voices to be heard in "multiple body parts (head, chest, and throat) that [became] partial objects, burdened with gendered meanings."[259] I do not contend that the occasional variables in Wainwright's voice weaken his vocal power. In a similar way as Callas, when Wainwright's voice does break, he is creating room for alternative expressions of emotion in order to explore grief, loss, isolation, and love from various perspectives and through unexpected musical traditions.

Bel Canto's Influence

"Who Are You New York?"s lyrics do not speak to despair, grief, or isolation in quite the same way as other songs on the album; however, that does not discount this song as functioning as a vehicle of mourning. Initially a song written for a film soundtrack that never transpired, Wainwright reworked "Who Are You New York?" to function as part of *Lulu.* The lyrics address identity, or the inability to settle on identity. Though the "you" in this song is New York City, substituting Wainwright's identity crisis for the city's is plausible because of his close ties to New York City.[260] The lyrics begin "Saw you on the corner/Saw you in the park/Saw you

[259] Jarman-Ivens, *Queer Voices*, 106.

[260] New York City locations are featured in many of his songs ("Peach Trees" and "Art Teacher" [*Want Two*], "Poses" [*Poses*], and "14th Street" [*Want One*] are a few notable examples) and the city remains one of his and Weisbrodt's residences.

on the platform /Of Grand Central Station…" and continue to name different landmarks of New York City and Long Island. These lyrics thus reflect incessant seeking for something that perhaps cannot be found or set right after a radical change. This includes a sense of dislocation and shock of the literal disappearance of the New York skyline after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, as well as the result of the emotional toll 9/11 continues to take on Americans, especially New Yorkers. Taken collectively the lyrics highlight wanderlust and restlessness, perhaps as a result of despair or the inability to work through grief. It is not a song about contentment or depression, as several others clearly are, but a song about finding a sense of home or comfort when one is feeling otherwise displaced.

This song's lyrics and vocal performance can also be perceived as a way of dealing with the lost feelings one encounters in the aftermath of a trauma: feeling displaced or otherwise out of sorts can be a reaction to the part of grief that does not include feeling sad. It might be linked to the shock of having to adjust to a new reality – one in which the object of loss is no longer present – or the denial of the loss altogether. The periodic return to and repetition of "Who are you?" is a way of attempting to recall the present or pull oneself out of shock. Wainwright's relationship to the song might be extremely personal – perhaps the locations he names are places he had experiences with his mother – or it could be distancing, a way of negotiating feeling alone by recalling familiar places. Through the process of reclaiming this composition written for another purpose for his album, Wainwright (re)attached personal associations to the lyrics and the vocal performance, situating it as a way of reinterpreting bel canto vocal style to address the complex emotional state in which he was writing and performing.

"Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent"'s text/libretto is in French, and this song is the only one on the album that is not set in English. This opens up a multitude of possibilities for textual

interpretation. This aria can be interpreted as a performance of the aria that the Prima Donna sings in his opera; it could be understood as Wainwright reinterpreting the text from his perspective; or, it might be an expression of any one of the characters that embody Lulu expressing herself. As a stand-alone aria that was included on this particular album, I interpret Wainwright's performance as multivocal, similar to the way that Callas' voice is perceived as queer. Wainwright is performing his Prima Donna, while simultaneously performing *as* the Prima Donna/Lulu character. This is also another instance in which the listener senses McGarrigle's presence and absence. Wainwright's performance of "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" is popular and classical, authentically expressing his own loss and embodying his character's, and recalling his mother's voice through song.

The text focuses on the idea of fading into the night, settling at home while the young and virile continue to enjoy life in Parisian streets. The first verse ("*Les feux d'artifice t'appellent/Descends dans la rue*") speaks to fireworks falling, fading into the streets. The end of the second verse ("*Et l'amour n'est plus attendu*") translates to love is no longer expected, gesturing toward the end of life, aging, moving beyond physical desires or needs. The next two verses again reflect on no longer needing to be the star or the center of attention because it is enough to stay at home and watch the young be young ("*Je reste… je regarde*…"). The sentimental, legato-phrased song is a love letter to youth and a fond farewell to living, or at least living as one had been accustomed. Wainwright's life changed drastically when McGarrigle was no longer healthy; there is a sense of regret as well as resignation to the changes that are ahead in his vocal performance. The singing aesthetic is traditionally beautiful, and I argue the least popular-sounding on the album, but the vocal performance possesses a complexity and a maturity that contradicts the simplicity of the text. This song discusses the possibility of death

and future loss without ever naming it, a choice that only makes the song more effective in conveying grief that does not yet bear a proper name.

Conclusion

At the core of Wainwright's vocality is a vulnerability that grabs hold of many listeners and refuses to let go. His voice crosses many stylistic and genre boundaries as he performs the *Lulu* song cycle. At the core of his vocality is a reluctance to fall in line with strict vocal traditions, expectations, and performance practices. These refusals and subsequent appropriations of vocal styles allow Wainwright's voice to emerge from a created "third space" in which vulnerability, intimacy, and new imaginings of how one publicly expresses or shares a profoundly personal loss. Wainwright's queer vocality is thus vocal expression that embraces the lengthy process of mourning as not merely a negative experience, but an event in one's life that opens up previously unknown spaces for remembrance, introspection, and personal growth.

These personal experiences that ultimately lead to growth and healing do not occur in the course of one day, one week, or while recording one album. As chapter four will explore, Wainwright took *Lulu* on the road and shared the song cycle, his grief, and his ease in singing across musical styles. In doing so, he not only shared his "unhindered" voice, but queered his performativity as he performed the song cycle in a mourning gown with an accompanying visual component. While this chapter explored how blurring gender norms can affect vocality, chapter four considers how queer performativity and gender fluid identity function in a live performance setting that is mediated by fan-captured YouTube videos. The palpable nature of Wainwright's grief will be analyzed based on such videos in order to show yet another facet of Wainwright's performance capabilities and emotional vulnerability as he grieves through song.

CHAPTER IV. PLEASE HOLD YOUR APPLAUSE: RUFUS WAINWRIGHT'S QUEER PERFORMATIVITY AND RE-MEMBERING KATE IN LIVE PERFORMANCE

I have spent a great deal of time watching Rufus Wainwright perform "live" on YouTube. Wainwright's live performances do not fascinate me because they mirror the pristine recordings, but because they reflect the "anything-can-happen" sensibility of live performance. That is to say, live performance could potentially include exposing technical vulnerabilities or blanking on a passage or set of lyrics; this is often not the case in most popular music performances (punk being a notable exception), and in classical music anything short of perfection is unacceptable. Mistakes, fumbling through difficult passages, or forgetting text are realities of Wainwright's performances and *Lulu* was no exception. Though these occurrences often yield laughter in live shows (Wainwright tends to play the ham when he fumbles a passage or sings the wrong lyrics),[261] I argue that these anomalies function as something different during

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[261] Since I began to consider Wainwright's performativity within the context of this dissertation I have struggled with the reasons for his regular performance errors. While some errors are laughed off and seem intentional because he draws attention to them with a chortle, a comment, or a facial cue, other errors, such as completely forgetting an entire section of music and starting over, are glossed over in a manner that indicates that attention should not be paid. It is likely that Wainwright's self-deprecation over errors is part of his on-stage performativity. A reviewer for the March 2, 2015 show in Perth, Australia writes that during this performance Wainwright "happily made more mistakes than you'd see in a pre-show dress rehearsal." Jade Jurewicz concludes: "Rufus Wainwright reminded you that in order to be a professional musician, professionalism isn't always a must. Sometimes the simplicity of raw emotion, authenticity and undeniable talent are more than enough to captivate and move an audience." Jade Jurewicz, "Rufus Wainwright kicks off Australian tour with 'spine tingling' Perth performance," *The Courier Mail,* March 2, 2015, http://www.couriermail.com.au/news/national/rufus-wainwright-kicks-off-australian-tour-with-spinetingling-perth-performance/news-story/5d3ffe080df2c2e8d1075636f4f4bc27?=. Fans generally respond positively to these kinds of mistakes, while the less-devoted are more critical, as evidenced by numerous discussions on the fan forum throughout Wainwright's career. My interrogation of Wainwright's performativity during the *Lulu* song cycle considers performance mistakes as examples of weakness, stress, or

the song cycle, where no mistakes should be made and were not acknowledged in these videos. I identify such errors as closely tied to the grief and fatigue that he experienced while on tour. This grief escapes Wainwright's otherwise professional demeanor in fits and starts: snatches of pain heard in the piano music's wrong notes, in his slightly flat voice, in his sloping posture at the piano. With these variances and hitches in a classically performed song cycle, Wainwright's grief in the performance becomes evident and marks moments of disruption in classical performance practice. Grief, pain, and high emotions thus color and trouble his performativity during the first half of the show, all of which are less apparent in the flawless recording.

On December 9, 2010 – about eight months after beginning the *Lulu* tour – Wainwright performed at The Egg in Albany, New York. One fan captured nearly the entire show on her phone, and uploaded all but two songs of the song cycle to YouTube, available to anyone with a screen and an Internet connection. In doing so, this fan and YouTube user granted individuals lacking access or means to see Wainwright in person an opportunity to experience live versions of the song cycle; watching live fan-captured videos is an easily accessible option because of the prevalence of the Internet. While live performances are meant to reproduce a recorded song's sound and mood, videos of live performances that are uploaded onto the Internet preserve the integrity of a live musical moment so that they can be experienced at a later time. This is because such videos capture a significant aspect of live performance – the inability for performers to stop and correct mistakes. The live musical moment is frozen and circulated within digital space, whether it was a perfect performance or a bona fide disaster.

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lack of focus as opposed to pre-meditated so as to get a laugh or spice up a show. Proof for this theory lies in the inconsistency of Wainwright's errors during the *Lulu* tour and fan comments on the forum that discuss his performance weaknesses and triumphs. These comments will be further emphasized in chapter five.

Videos captured during *Lulu* performances clearly demarcate the differences between the two versions of *Lulu* – the studio recording and the live show. Wainwright's live performance of *Lulu,* as a song cycle while dressed in a Victorian-inspired, deplumed, black mourning gown, create a separate musical and theatrical experience for the audience. Wainwright's live performances are unlike a reproduction of a piano concerto, for example, which would involve live musicians, but otherwise sound exactly the same as the recording; his live performances are not radically different, but they have subtle nuances that make them more vulnerable performances overall. Watching these performances on YouTube creates yet another musical and theatrical experience for the viewer, a mediated live experience that enhances the idea of live performance because of YouTube's accessibility.

In this chapter I investigate Wainwright's *Lulu* performances that have been recorded and posted on YouTube by fans. Using performance analysis, I consider how these recorded performances reveal the grief permeating Wainwright's performativity; his grief, which might appear to resemble camp aesthetics, is rather part of the fluidity of gender expression. I originally anticipated piecing together a representative collection of fan-posted videos to stand in for one complete show. However, after stumbling upon a nearly complete string of videos, I settled on the December 9, 2010 performance because it gave me, as much as possible, a sense of consistency as a viewer. To fill in the two-song gap and create a full rendition of the song cycle, I chose Wainwright's final performance at Northampton, Massachusetts of "Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face" on December 15, 2010 and his penultimate performance in Wilmington, Delaware of "Sonnet 10: For Shame" on December 14, 2010. These videos were selected for their consistency in time and space, all being in the last week of the tour in the eastern US, for

their clarity in sound and visual quality, and the balance that the audience member recording the performance afforded both Wainwright and the visual art behind him.[262]

The examples of unexpected performativity I glean from these performance videos indicate how Wainwright's presence on stage deviates from previous performances. This complicates the perception of Wainwright as a cis-gendered, at-times-campy entertainer. His serious and humorless performativity was a means of communicating his pain to his audience members in a way that simultaneously laid bare and masked his emotional vulnerability. The live song cycle, which included video that featured close-ups of his made-up eye, recalls his mother's presence, re-membering[263] her vitality even as he mourned her death on and off stage. The live performance videos, once captured and uploaded onto the YouTube website, provide individuals who view these videos from home with a live experience that queers the consumption of Wainwright's classically-inspired song cycle. Such queering is the result of how viewers watch the videos: out of order, with large gaps in between viewings of consecutive songs, perhaps even repeatedly viewing one song and skipping over another. Live performance videos do not preserve the performance practice of one song following the next as a live performance of the song cycle could.

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[262] It is important to note that the videos used for this chapter's analysis are representative of other versions from different performances on the same tour. For example, Wainwright's entrance was always the same, as were the visual images and costume worn in the first half of the show. The set list never deviated, nor did the tone of the song cycle change from date to date on the whole. Slight deviations across videos in song tempo or musical accuracy do not significantly alter the mood or impression of the entire song cycle. This disclaimer recognizes the impossibility of watching every single performance video, which is neither important to the crux of this project nor a practical methodology.

[263] This term will be discussed later in this chapter in depth.

Liveness and Re-membering in Digital Space

Wainwright's live tour recreated for a physically present audience his technologically captured, and thus definitive, performance of *Lulu.* Philip Auslander explains that the concept of "live" is an "effect of mediatization," and the "development of recording technologies… made it possible to perceive existing representations as 'live.'"[264] Liveness is dependent on the existence of that which can be recorded, and specifically concerns itself with performances that are experienced at "the time of… occurrence."[265] Fundamentally, Auslander argues that live performance and mediatization are intricately connected and mimic one another in the contemporary moment through "mediatized reproduction."[266] Mediatization is thus "explicitly and implicitly embedded within the live experience," examples of which saturate the Internet, particularly websites like YouTube.[267]

The fan-captured *Lulu* YouTube videos recreated the performance for individuals watching online, offering not an in-the-moment version of liveness, but a mediatized version in digital space.[268] This integration of live musical performance and mediated images is reflected in

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[264] Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture,* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 51.
[265] Ibid.
[266] Ibid., 31.
[267] Ibid.
[268] In a recent article in a Special Issue on live performance of *Rock Music Studies,* Alessandro Bratus discusses "authenticity as a set of text-based effects of meaning" in relation to live events that are staged or took place "prior to the moment of its mediated reproduction." Bratus' article recognizes the complicated relationship between authenticity and mediatization in manufacturing liveness, particularly in relation to bearing witness to a performer's identity. See Alessandro, Bratus, "In-between Performance and Mediatization: Authentication and (Re)-Live(d) Concert Experience," in "The Live Concert Experience," ed. Nick Baxter-Moore and Thomas M. Kitts, special issue, *Rock Music Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): *41-61.* doi: 10.1080/19401159.2015.1129112. Also related to technology and live performance, Anne Danielsen and Inger Helseth study the effect of auditory and visual dimensions of live performance that do not align with the performers' actions on stage (e.g., lip-syncing or pre-recorded/synthesized sounds). See Anne Danielsen and Inger Helseth, "Mediated Immediacy: The Relationship between Auditory and

Wainwright's live performance of the *Lulu* song cycle, but also in the very technological amplification of his voice even as he sings in, quite often, acoustically perfect theatres and opera houses.[269] He further accomplished technological integration with the use of visual media to heighten the drama of performance as well as using visual cues to represent the presence/absence dichotomy of his mother, or re-member her as he grieved through music. Re-membering need not only be something that is done in a live setting, but can be perpetuated within digital space, capturing the essence of the performance for others to experience so long as the artifact and the digital platform exist simultaneously.[270]

Scholarship surrounding live music and digital space lends credence to the "authenticity" of fan-captured live performances that are later viewed online. In a sense, uploading concerts is a way to bridge a cultural gap and reach audiences who cannot physically go to the theatre or club to experience live musical performance.[271] Social media has thus widely influenced music

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Visual Live Performance in Contemporary Technology-Based Popular Music," in "The Live Concert Experience," ed. Nick Baxter-Moore and Thomas M. Kitts, special issue, *Rock Music Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 24-40. doi:10.1080/19401159.2015.1126986.

[269] The use of a microphone to perform a song cycle is itself a moment in which the purity of his classical performance practice breaks down and mediatization steps in to offer the audience a direct link to popular performance practice.

[270] For example, because I watched these videos before hearing the album in full, I connected quickly with the images I saw on my computer screen and the performativity I read as laden with pain and an almost gothic romance. I did not see a gay man in drag on stage, but an artist delicately and stoically bleeding himself emotionally dry; I did not hear a pretentious attempt of a popular artist "doing" classical music, but a singer who was splitting his time between the 19th century and the 21st century. Even before I knew these songs bore the shadow of Kate McGarrigle's death, I had the sense that they were important somehow and connected with the music and performance accordingly. This I owe largely to the fact that they were filmed live performances and not music videos.

[271] Steven Colburn's study on filming concerts for YouTube considers how filmers of live performances "supplied a demand from culturally dislocated YouTube viewers." See Steven Colburn, "Filming Concerts for YouTube: Seeking Recognition in the Pursuit of Cultural Capital," *Popular Music and Society,* 38, 1 (2015): 64. doi: 10.1080/03007766.2014.974373.

consumption without the influence or interference of the music industry.[272] YouTube, as Michael Strangelove posits, "is a social space," a "virtual community" in which contemporary cultural politics are reflected, supporting both "cooperation *and* conflict."[273] In Wainwright's case, captured live performances have the potential to reach otherwise unknowledgeable listeners because his music does not align with the cultural politics of the mainstream music scene (particularly radio airplay). Fabian Holt asserts that "Video extends the range of communication, adding another element of sensuous stimulation, information and entertainment," particularly for those who might otherwise never see a live performance as it was intended.[274] In fact, Wainwright has expressed his pleasure that fans captured these performances live:

> I'm very happy that a lot of it has been captured on YouTube because it was one of the most challenging and difficult and emotionally dangerous tours I've ever performed and so I'm grateful that it was captured and that people come back to it and use it as a symbol of grief. I like, in a weird way, that we didn't film it professionally, that it's still from a very personal angle from someone in the audience. That makes it even more human.[275]

Through YouTube's virtual live performance videos, Wainwright can reach more people, many of whom might discover his catalogue similar to how I did, which is to say more or less accidentally.[276]

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[272] Ibid., 61. For discussion and analysis of online music communities and YouTube, see Jessa Lingel and Mor Naaman, "You Should Have Been There, Man: Live Music, DIY Content and Online Music Communities," *New Media & Society,* 14, 2 (2011): 332-349, sm.rutgers.edu/pubs/lingel-NMS2011.pdf.

[273] Michael Strangelove, *Watching YouTube: Extraordinary Videos By Ordinary People* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 4.

[274] Fabian Holt, "Is Music Becoming More Visual? Online Video Content in the Music Industry," in "Locative Media and the Digital Visualisation of Space, Place and Information," ed. Francesco Lapenta, special issue, *Visual Studies* (Vol. 26, No. 1: March 2011), 52. doi: 10.1080/1472586X.2011.548489.

[275] Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.

[276] One thing I've never heard announced at a Rufus Wainwright show is a request for audiences to abstain from photography or video recording. In fact, Wainwright has, on occasion, called out to the audience for someone to please record a particular song. It is common knowledge in the

As fan-captured videos of Wainwright's performances show, live performance videos bear exclusivity official music videos, which also saturate YouTube, lack. Holt argues that "live footage has news value and is unique, while also being an infinite source. There can be many live versions of a song, but usually only one official video."[277] Even in the *Lulu* song cycle, different versions of live songs had slightly different outcomes; for example, in some performances Wainwright played flawlessly, in others he made minor or noticeable errors. In some performances he was moved to tears even as he played and sang, while in others he was stoic and in control. These nuances make the performances stimulating to watch in repetition, as well as increase their affective power because of their slight differences. *Lulu* marks a departure from Wainwright's spare live performance style because of its use of mediatized visual images to further underscore the concept or theme of the song cycle; these images stand as a silent witness to Wainwright's mournful performance of the song cycle and his re-membering of his mother.

The vulnerability expressed in Wainwright's grief-laden live song cycle is another aspect that sets it apart from the majority of his previous performances, many of which have been undeniably campy. Auslander remarks that "live performance is identified with intimacy and disappearance, media with a mass audience, reproduction, and repetition," while Peggy Phelan describes performance as "honor[ing] the idea that a limited number of people in a specific/time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace

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fandom that Wainwright Googles himself and thus does keep an eye on what exists with his name on it on the Internet. It is my estimation that he recognizes that his art can be promoted through word of mouth as well as the sharing of videos and photographs. As he is not part of the mainstream music scene, it makes professional sense to embrace what shared live footage can do for a lesser-known artist.

[277] Holt, "Online Video Content," 52.

afterward."[278] The song cycle -- the music, Wainwright's costume, and the vast eye (or eyes) in the background -- rejects notions of mass media, embracing instead smaller forms like film shorts or multimedia installations in a gallery. These extra-musical objects are not meant to make the performance gaudy or more flamboyant in the way pyrotechnics are used at the Superbowl, for example; mediatized images and Wainwright's microphone signal his participation in the art song/popular music divide, loyal to neither classical nor popular music. Wainwright's video-captured performativity enables his audience, current fans and those who have yet to discover his music, to experience the darkness, sadness, and intimacy of this poignant tour as much as they desire. Using a combination of old and new media, loyal followers, new fans, or curious viewers are able to experience the emotions *Lulu* promotes years after the original tour.

Queer Performativity and Fluid Gender Identity

Wainwright's performance of grief in front of a paying audience is, as mentioned above, an integral part of his performance of the *Lulu* song cycle as a whole. Judith Butler's understanding of gender performativity and how power is inscribed on the body provides a basis upon which to read Wainwright's live performance of *Lulu* in costume as not merely a subversive part of queer or gay culture, but as a way of talking back to dominant culture's understandings of femininity, masculinity, and public grieving.[279] Butler's understanding of gender builds upon Monique Wittig's suggestion of a pre-established naturalness to the body, and Michel Foucault's belief that the body is "a surface and the scene of a cultural inscription"

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[278] Auslander, *Liveness,* 41. Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 149.

[279] See chapter one in which I discuss the concept of Lulu, specifically the custom-designed mourning gown Wainwright wore in each song cycle performance.

once the body is destroyed and transfigured.[280] This action of transfiguration, or the manipulation of a previously determined marking, signals a "prediscursive multiplicity of bodily forces that break through the surface of the body to disrupt the regulating practices of cultural coherence a power regime imposes upon that body;" thus the body is marked.[281] Butler explains that Mary Douglas furthers the idea of bodily demarcation, suggesting that the contours or boundaries of the body "establish specific codes of cultural coherence," and when these are broken, taboos mark the body as other or abject, creating the binary of "inner" and "outer" identities (which are themselves a fiction because the surface of the body cannot achieve impermeability).[282] Despite this impossibility, culture imposes boundaries upon the body, as a way of attempting to achieve stability. With this boundary in place, a body can be "read" and thus normalized or marked as abnormal. In Wainwright's case, the gay male body in grief is marked as abnormal within the public realm. The combination of Wainwright's sexuality and grief is the basis of understanding his performativity as queer.

The body's surface politics come into focus as the constructed gendered body is considered based on what is present and absent; that which is excluded or denied is signified by absence — clear gender markers for instance. As noted in chapter three, vulnerability in a male voice defies heteronormative expectations of hegemonic masculinity traits like strength, composure, and masking emotion. A male body that is vulnerable challenges similar prescribed gender norms, and often can be seen as disconcerting because that body is displaying weakness openly to the public. Butler notes that there are "figures of fantasy" -- normative gender roles --

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[280] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 129.
[281] Ibid., 130.
[282] Ibid., 131. See also Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Routledge, 1966).

which support heteronormativity and heterosexuality, creating norms as well as fictions. Identification is thus an "enacted fantasy or incorporation," but there is an idealized and normative coherence desired. These performances of identification are merely on the surface of the body, or a manufactured or fabricated essence sustained through "corporeal signs" which, being "outer," "constitute its reality."[283] The performance of gender is the result of attempting to live up to a fictional true gender ideal. *True gender,* being a fabrication and fantasy "instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies," can neither be true nor false, only "produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity," i.e., mainstream culture.[284] Wainwright's grief is both clearly authentic (he began practicing live versions of these songs within weeks of McGarrigle's death) *and* performed through the live show. It is thus both a fiction or fantasy and a reality in so far as he shares with the consuming public. He is not a staple in mainstream popular music; however, his performativity, in all its aspects, is not directed at the mainstream. Wainwright's masculinity, femininity, and his expression that falls somewhere in between the two reveals to audiences a spectrum of himself, but not his entire essence. My identifications of queer moments in his performativity in this analysis are much more closely tied to his subversive or unorthodox artistic choices than his sexual identity, unless his sexuality specifically affects his music.[285]

Wainwright's queer performativity in the *Lulu* show is somewhat related to Butler's explanation of drag as a method of resisting heteronormative modes of identity and outwardly

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[283] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 136.
[284] Ibid.
[285] As noted in the previous chapters, this is sometimes the case, but not exclusively so. I reiterate this point so as to continue to dismantle the reductive assumption that "queer" equates to "gay sexuality," a belief that much of mainstream American society, especially the homophobic sector, has yet to move beyond.

rejecting heteronormative interpellation. Gender performance is fluid and has the ability to shift across boundaries allowing for the practice of drag to be discussed as imitation rather than a performance of one's biological sex. Butler emphasizes: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself -- as well as its contingency."[286] Drag, she explains, "plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender of the performer," noting that three dimensions of corporeality are in play: "anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance."[287] Thus, parody serves as the vehicle for expression of gender identity in culture. As a postmodern concept, such parody does not assume an original: "the parody is *of* the very notion of an original."[288] The larger purpose of this type of gender performance is to deprive hegemonic culture of natural, normal, essential, or absolute types of gender construction. Mainstream culture might simply read the drag queen as abject, subversive, and deviant (or perhaps merely entertaining), but her performance is far deeper than that, and while her body can certainly be read as resisting cultural norms and standards of beauty, her performance can also be read as a way to break down the binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, straight/gay, and even high art/camp entertainment. It is at this point that Wainwright's drag, the wearing of a mourning gown, enters into parody, and even flirts with the boundaries of camp. Choosing the mourning gown in lieu of a suit or trousers/collared shirt/sport jacket combo that he wears frequently in solo performances is a subversive act that does not allow mainstream culture the chance to mark the body in drag as one thing only. Wainwright in a mourning gown is not precisely or facilely drag, parody, camp, or a gesture of gay identity, thus challenging presumed expectations of femininity, masculinity, and identity of a mourning body.

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[286] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 137.
[287] Ibid.
[288] Ibid., 138.

The beginning of Wainwright's performance exemplifies how his body, dressed in the mourning gown, is a conglomeration of identities, all of which share an air of grief.

As the song cycle begins, Wainwright enters, silently and solemnly. The train of his black plumed mourning gown trails behind him. He takes a seat at the piano and pauses a moment to prepare. In this performance video from December 9, 2010, Wainwright appears hunched over the piano, as if his gown is weighing him down.[289] There is light blue eye shadow beneath his eyes, a cosmetic choice that augments his presumed fatigue and isolation. Wainwright does not make eye contact with his audience or acknowledge them in any way; nor does his audience applaud when he glides across the stage, uncharacteristic of a typical Wainwright performance. As he performs the opening song, "Who Are You New York?" his voice sounds flat, and his vocals are broad and unsupported at the ends of some phrases, as if he is lacking breath. His diction is poor, though not precisely slurred; this gives the sung phrases a hint of dejection. On the recording, "Who Are You New York?" is bright and crisp with clean piano runs and dynamic control, but in this live performance, the piano is sloppy in spots, giving the song a feeling of losing control. At the completion of the song, Wainwright snatches his hands away from the keyboard, still in the slouched posture; it is almost as if, in his dour costume, he is sulking. Douglas Gordon's video of Wainwright's eye, magnified to an outlandish degree, looks out at the audience. It is heavily shadowed, black and spongy-looking, opening and closing occasionally, almost as if in boredom or a near-catatonic state.

As Wainwright's opening entrance and song imply, there is no one way of living or performing female or male, or negotiating the unknowable path of grief. Instead, there is

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[289] "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 1a Entrance & Who are you New York? Sad with what I have," YouTube video, 7:45, posted by "BlueScarfLady," December 11, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMqjmWHZW6U.

flexibility, fluidity and agency in crossing boundaries to fit one's personal definition of identity rather than one the dominant culture deems appropriate, whether that is in daily life or in extraordinary circumstances like a deeply personal loss. In terms of male public grieving, seeing that which is not typically encouraged in Western society that privileges hegemonic displays of masculinity defaults to marking the overly emotional male as abject (i.e., other, deviant, unmasculine). Because gender requires repeated performances and cannot be held within boundaries, "the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction."[290] And yet a major problem with the idea of true gender identity as related to grief is that grief cannot be expressed beyond limited moments in which men are able to cry and express deeply painful loss in predictable ways.

When one grieves he or she cries or is depressed, but also could become aloof, overly excitable, anxious, unexpectedly cheerful, or completely reckless. Society offers different gendered scripts for men and women in mourning, though the experience of bereavement is subjective because it is such a personal experience. The pressures of social norms, however, expect rather than allow women to grieve more openly than men, echoing Freud's beliefs about women's weaknesses and tendencies toward hysteria. Julia Kristeva posits that women are more susceptible to melancholia and lengthy depression because of the matricidal urge one feels as a first step toward autonomy. A woman both identifies with the mother and feels this urge to eradicate her, resulting in "an implosive mood that walls itself in and kills… secretly, very slowly, through permanent bitterness, bouts of sadness," or suicidal urges.[291] While men also have the same psychic urge toward matricide in order to become autonomous, heterosexual men

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[290] Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 141.
[291] Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia,* Trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 27-29.

lack the introjection that women have which fuels the depression. Wainwright's gay sexuality could easily be used as an excuse for his public displays of grief, however, saying so is reducing his personal loss and pain to a gay stereotype. Wainwright's choice to publicly grieve the loss of his mother while rejecting traditionally masculine grieving expectations (donning the mourning gown, purposefully repeating the performance for a year, occasionally breaking on stage) is an example of his gender fluidity in performance and how using drag as a component can be useful in troubling, or queering, performance expectations. He has, perhaps, more freedom to do this because he is gay, but throwing off social norms is a resistant performance rather than a stereotypical performance. Though I argue his performance is a public show of strength and persistence despite his private pain, the vulnerability he exudes marks him as powerless, weak, and potentially abject or other because he is not tamping down his grief, but letting it out in a flood of music and emotion. His public grief exists within a paradox of the straight/gay binary, but his performativity, the way he performs the gay male in mourning within the musical performance, actively works to deconstruct that dangerous dichotomy. The straight/gay binary must not be upheld because it has the potential to reduce gay men in grief to stereotypes, a fairly equal danger to the similar issue between "over-emotional" women compared to "rational and stoic" heteronormative men. Wainwright's performativity as the gay son in mourning is presented in a highly visible way because he is on stage, but it is important to not exclusively link his sexuality to his grief.

I want to emphasize that the grief that is inherently part of the performance is authentic and thus not exaggerated merely for an audience. By authentic, I mean that Wainwright's grief over McGarrigle's death was inextricable from his performance of the song cycle; it was not something he could turn on or off, but accompanied him over the course of that year and likely

continues to do so to some degree.[292] Wainwright, I argue, is not enacting a parody of grief. He is, on the contrary, expressing his version of grief, which nonetheless encompasses three aspects of physical performance in music: the real person, the persona, and the character.[293] For Auslander, the persona, different from lyric personae discussed in chapter one, "is usually based on existing models and conventions and may reflect the influence of such music industry types as manager or producers;" in other words, the public image the performer puts forth for consumption is the persona the audience sees, not the real person.[294] Auslander points out that popular musicians do not perform "personae exclusively in live and recorded performances; they also perform them through the visual images used in the packaging of recordings, publicity materials, interviews and press coverage," as well as other marketed materials like music videos.[295] In Wainwright's case, the singer/songwriter who openly discussed his mother's final

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[292] Recent performances that I have attended revealed that Wainwright still includes McGarrigle's memory in some way or another. "The late, great Kate McGarrigle" is one way Wainwright describes his mother and introduces songs that she wrote or songs he wrote about her with that epithet. Sometimes he plays such songs without comment, though fans in the know recognize the connection. For example, a performance at Kent, OH in 2014 and Chicago, IL in 2015 both began with "Beauty Mark," a song from Wainwright's first album that is a jaunty, cheerful love song to his mother.

[293] Philip Auslander, "The Physical Performance of Popular Music," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology,* ed. Derek B. Scott (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 314.

[294] Auslander cites Lorraine Daston's and H. Otto Sibum's definition of persona in this chapter: "a cultural identity that simultaneously shapes the individual in body and mind and creates a collective with a shared and recognizable physiognomy… Personae are creatures of historical circumstance; they emerge and disappear within specific contexts. A nascent persona indicates the creation of a new kind of individual, whose distinctive traits mark a recognized social species" (306). For the purposes of my argument, I consider the idea of the persona as recognizable to an audience cautiously because of the relationship between tropes and stereotypes, particularly for a queer performer.

[295] Ibid., 308.

moments in the press or on stage is not the character, Lulu, but the persona-version of Wainwright.[296]

Wainwright performs a character that is either related to Lulu or a version of her in some *Lulu* songs. This happens in the Sonnets and the aria, for example, because the text is not autobiographical or his own; however, in "Martha" or "Zebulon," the Wainwright persona and real person blur more than is perhaps usual for a performer. His queer performativity is located in these instances and examples. Wainwright shares stories about real people and experiences with the audience, and while the audience has no reason to trust that all he is saying is "true," his emotional vulnerability on stage encourages the belief that he is bonding with his audience, sharing stories that pain and loss have shaped. It is a mark of his humanity, and an opportunity for audience members to imagine a connection to the artist, even if the bond itself is temporary.

In this chapter's performance analysis, I am most interested in these moments of elision and uncertainty, the blurring of the real person, or what people think is the real person, and the persona. These moments, especially when visual media is involved, looming large and silent on a screen, queer audience expectations and Wainwright's performance habits. Located within these performance habits are aspects of camp performance rooted in gender fluidity that do not cheapen his music or the live production but situate it within a particular heritage of music and theatre that popular music does not favor today.

As the cycle transitions to "Sad With What I Have," the eye closes tightly and the focus is on its stillness as it seals shut, rather than its sluggish blinking.[297] The media's background is

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[296] Wainwright in performance represents the persona, while Lulu, who Wainwright embodies in some performative aspects, is the character. The "real person" is an unknowable entity to audiences.

[297] BlueScarfLady, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JMqjmWHZW6U.

black and, with the eye closed especially, the textural difference signifies an intimacy and closeness as the audience can notice the details of the eyelid in a way one usually only can from close range. This cinematic aesthetic of stillness and minimalism is not what comes to mind when one thinks of visual effects at a live musical performance in this advanced age of technological achievement.[298] Because it is a mostly static video, it neither energizes the audience nor tells a clear visual story as an accompaniment to the music.[299] The eye appears to be a live thing that is clearly familiar (it is in fact Wainwright's eye) and a distant other. This is a visual example of how Wainwright's persona and himself are conflated and confused in the live performance, an example of his queer performativity as well as gender fluidity.

In "Sad With What I Have," Wainwright's use of "I" in the song represents a moment where he is both himself and other because the lyrics speak to his insecurity, depression,

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[298] For example, Muse's show on June 16, 2007 at Wembley Stadium in London, a major stop on the H.A.A.R.P. tour, featured a significant amount of multimedia and several giant screens that alternately featured close-ups of the band and computer generated moving and still images. During their song "Supermassive Black Hole," the visual images showed robots – alone or in multiples – appearing to strut along in time with the drumbeat. It both added to the energy and spirit of the performance as well as summoned post-apocalyptic images of cyborgs to accompany the lyrics. "Muse-Supermassive Black Hole(Live At Wembley Stadium)," YouTube video, 2:01, posted by "Alif Nafiz," March 4, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dHqGF5ekRYk. Wainwright's use of visual media to project a mostly static image stands in stark contrast to the dynamic visuals in a large arena show.

[299] Fan reactions about the use of the video are mixed though most fans seem to respect the choice even if they didn't aesthetically care for it. One fan notes that he or she found the staging "too repetitive" (WutheringHeights, "London, Sadler's Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 15 2010, accessed September 28, 2015), while another describes the "oily looking eyes [as] a bit unpleasant" (samboss, "London, Sadler's Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015). Yet others thought Gordon's video enhanced the mood. One fan wrote that it was "clear that everything about the type of lighting, costume and the film in the background was thought about and matched the themes of the album" (choola, "London, Sadler's Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 13, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015).

displeasure, and ennui. In this performance, he manages to break down the barrier between real person and persona through an error. Overall, his vocals closely resemble the recording, but he flubs the piano part in the penultimate phrase ("Sad with what I have") of the song. This mistake is enough to jar the listener and bring attention to Wainwright's fallible humanity as a performer and person.[300] As if he is deaf to these small errors, he begins "Martha" with nothing more than a breath in between songs.[301] There is strength in both piano and voice at the start of "Martha," and until a few brief errors occur halfway through the song it sounds as if Wainwright has settled into the performance and has lost himself in this song, a vocation to his sister. His body becomes looser and he sways slightly as he reaches across the keyboard to reach the high tinkling arpeggios. Yet all the while, the audience is aware that Martha is a person Wainwright, not Lulu or the other, loves, again weakening the divide between persona and person. During this song the media background changes to white and it becomes clear that the eye isn't actually suspended in space, but is part of a facial landscape (again, his facial landscape). The pale skin tone

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[300] Wainwright's flaws in live performances are a regular occurrence, and fans feel differently about these errors. Within the context of *Lulu* live shows, mistakes seemed inevitable because of the challenging nature of the piano and vocal parts. One fan who attended the Southampton date, the first stop on the tour, acknowledged how Wainwright's emotional state affected his musical performance: "you could tell Rufus was wrecked physically, emotionally… he was trying so hard to not make any mistakes but I think everything just caught up with him at this show" (Toddland, "Southampton Guildhall 11th April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* May 9, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015). Two nights later in London some fans shared the anxieties they felt as Wainwright performed. One forum user described feeling nervous, explaining that those feelings "affected my overall perception of it, I was concerned that critics would pick up on the fluffs as a sign of under-rehearsal…" (WutheringHeights, "London, Sadler's Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 15, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015). These examples indicate that fans take Wainwright's performances very seriously because they both expect high performance standards and worry critics or less devoted fans will admonish him if he makes noticeable mistakes.

[301] "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 1b Give me what I want & Martha," YouTube video, 5:52, posted by "BlueScarfLady," December 14, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnCJbBtNi7M.

accentuates the eye's lashes thickly coated in mascara. To this point, the eye has remained active, but dry; no tears have been shed, or threatened to fall. The audience members who are familiar with Wainwright's relationship with his mother and know that her death was recent, however, appreciate that the emotions being played out on stage come from a real place; it may only be a matter of time before the visual images reflect that.

The assured and introspective rendition of "Martha" creates a sense of vulnerability in the musical space that is shattered as the opening bass sixteenth notes begin their frenetic ascent, signaling the beginning of "Give Me What I Want and Give It To Me Now!"[302] The performance of this song is highly energetic, angry, and ruthless. However, it is a sloppy performance that makes the fervor and power of Wainwright's voice slightly less effective, again recalling the audience to the performer, exposed and alone on stage. The tempo is quick, almost too fast, and the piano solo in the middle of the song suffers from a sudden tailspin into jumbled chords. Contrasting with this lack of control is Wainwright's terse, but still, body; he appears to hold himself rigid in the torso as his lower arms tear across the keyboard. When the song ends, the tension is broken, however the silence leads not to a climactic release but surprise at the abrupt conclusion. When Wainwright begins the next song, "True Loves," the division between the artist and the person are clear once more, and this tender yet gut-wrenching interpretation of this song about loneliness and isolation erases the impassioned messiness of the first four songs. Wainwright's word painting is effective, and the song, while evoking melancholy, is also triumphant in the clean performance. His body echoes this success, relaxing from the tension of "Give Me What I Want And Give It to Me Now!", as if he is communing with the piano, collaborating with it, not going to battle. It is at this moment that his performativity and the

[302] Ibid., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnCJbBtNi7M.

struggle to remain in the moment as a performer, not a grieving son, is perhaps strongest. "True Loves" is a song about many of Wainwright's own beloved family and friends, but the performance hides the man from the audience, and it is the persona that is heard and seen, decked out in a mourning gown and a staid, set countenance.[303] These examples indicate that one aspect of Wainwright's queer performativity is that he complicates the divide between real person and persona; Wainwright, the man and Wainwright, the performer are tangled together under the umbrella of public mourning.

Camp Performativity and the Temporality of Grief

As many of his press interviews have revealed in previous chapters, Wainwright is not a grim or severe performer. He is self-deprecating, at times flippant, and consistently resists musically hegemonic performance styles or sounds. In comparison to popular arena acts such as Maroon 5, U2, or Mumford and Sons, disparate acts that might include members of the same fan base but do not offer much similarity by way of their musical output, Wainwright's classically influenced and (melo)dramatic performativity may be read as camp. That is not to say, however, that it is "low art" or less affective; in fact Wainwright's music could arguably be held up as an example of more sophisticated music that is not radio-friendly.[304]

Jodie Taylor writes that in "queer terms, camp is both an approach to performance – putting on a show – and a method of revealing the performativity inherent in all social roles,"

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[303] Ibid., "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 1c True loves & Sonnet 43," YouTube video, 8:39, posted by "BlueScarfLady," December 12, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMIqArRGU6Y.
[304] See chapters two and three for specific examples of how Wainwright's music mixes popular and classical styles and aesthetics to create a sound that does not fall in line with mainstream conventions and standards.

making it a political act and an act of mockery, or parody.[305] While Taylor's study considers more closely what is camp-sounding, I am more concerned with the entire performance packaging, following what Freya Jarman-Ivens offers as a sophisticated definition of camp in relation to a performer's collective performativity that includes text, context, and performativity. She explains that popular music that explores camp aesthetics, though imbedded with cultural critiques of valuelessness, can and does create oppositionality – "opposition to a perceived 'mainstream' (of which high culture may be a part)" – despite the belief that camp equates to fun and critical meaninglessness.[306] Queerness in camp performance can act as the conduit to camp's value as a mode of political resistance or performative subversion. Camp need not be reductive, simple, or overtly highlighting homosexual aesthetics, as Sontag and other scholars have theorized. Instead, Jarman-Ivens argues that "camp's relation with popular culture" presents "a parodic challenge to presumed norms of gender/sex relations."[307] This interpretation of parody and camp is imperative to grasping the originality and ingenuity of Wainwright's live show as a means of exploring his own mourning and offering his audience an unexpected, dramatic theatrical and musical experience.

As discussed in chapters two and three of this dissertation, camp elements do shadow Wainwright's music, but they are not the central element that infuses *Lulu* with emotional complexity. Beyond what is heard or merely seen in performance, camp performance bears what Stan Hawkins calls an "artist's own… self-aestheticization," an understanding that performers

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[305] Jodie Taylor, *Playing It Queer: Popular Music, Identity and Queer World-making* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 78.
[306] Freya Jarman-Ivens, "Notes on Musical Camp," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology,* ed. Derek B. Scott (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 192.
[307] Ibid., 193.

"exude a camp sensibility" that is uniquely their own.[308] Wainwright's self-aestheticization is complex and multi-layered, but in this particular performative instance, his performative distinctiveness is centered on pain and grief. Thus, he is not stereotypically campy, in costume, make-up, or singing ironic lyrics as in performances of songs like Garland's "Get Happy," his own "Gay Messiah" or "Old Whore's Diet."[309] In performances of those songs, he channels a combination of political performance and parody, cross-dressing as Garland to reenact her iconic *Summer Stock* (1950) performance, blaspheming Catholicism with a mock crucifixion in "Gay Messiah," and wearing a toga or fairy wings (and little else) over the years for the extravagant and musically muddled "Old Whore's Diet." These performances are political and parodic in that they impart upon audiences Wainwright's political leanings and comfort with his sexual identity.[310]

Wainwright's camp sensibilities in *Lulu* performances are not political or parodic; they are emotional and very personal. "Sonnet 43: When Most I Wink" is an example of how the personal and deeply emotional combine to explore the temporality of grief. In *Mourning Sex,* Peggy Phelan explains, "Temporal art forms such as music and cinema are able to perform the

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[308] Stan Hawkins *The British Pop Dandy* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), 150.

[309] The latter two songs are from *Want Two.*

[310] Scholarship exploring Wainwright's performances prior to *Lulu* focuses on ways in which he uses camp and parody. Sam O'Connell discusses Wainwright's recreations of Judy Garland's 1961 Live at Carnegie Hall show as a means of explaining how creating a cover persona "accounts for the dual presence of both the performer's own performance persona *and* the remembered, or reconstructed, star image or celebrity persona of the covered artist." See Sam O'Connell, "Performing 'Judy': The Creation and Function of Cover Personae in Popular Music in Rufus Wainwright's Judy Garland Concerts," *Contemporary Theatre Review,* 21, 3 (2011): 318. doi: 10.1080/10486801.2011.585981. Oliver C. E. Smith addresses how Wainwright, as a queer Orpheus in "Memphis Skyline" (*Want Two)*, "reestablishes [a] gay connection" between his affinity with opera and the opera queen and the "internalization of…macho values of the dominant heterosexual culture." See Oliver C.E. Smith, "'The Cult of the Diva': Rufus Wainwright as Opera Queen," *Transposition, Musique et Sciences Sociales,* 3 (2013): 1-10. doi: 10.4000/transposition.246.

working through of mourning in the work itself."[311] Wainwright's lengthy live tour accomplishes the "working through of mourning" and the repetition of the song cycle in performance exemplifies the static and dynamic nature of grief. In the December 9, 2010 performance of "Sonnet 43," Wainwright's piano playing and voice appear to replicate the studio recording; there is not much deviation either through mistakes in performance or alternate interpretations of the song.[312] The coda offers an example of how the text, the vocal performance, and the piano part culminate in a musical moment that speaks to the idea of mourning itself. The text ("All days are nights/to see till I see thee, And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me") hints at the feeling of stasis one experiences when apart from someone (perhaps as a result of distance or the finality of death), while the vocal part's low register exudes a dark timbre that is reminiscent of loneliness or melancholy and the piano part repeats chords, creating a sense of repetition and sameness that echoes despair. As a counterpoint to the music, the eyes in the video begin to grow less static: one eye multiplies into several in different sizes against a black background. This happens gradually, and by the middle of the song there are five eyes, all closed, until one blinks. By the end of the song there are seven eyes, arranged in a kaleidoscope pattern. At the conclusion of this song, Wainwright pauses the progression of the cycle briefly to sip water that is on his left side on a small table; it is a short break that ensures that the audience is left feeling uncomfortable and exposed, another feeling that accompanies mourning. Through the performance of music that has a close, personal connection to the traumatic experience of McGarrigle's illness and death, Wainwright takes on a performance aesthetic that explores

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[311] Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 170.
[312] BlueScarfLady, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMIqArRGU6Y.

heightened emotion, as camp does, but specifically concerns himself with exploring mourning and the "temporality of grief," which itself takes a significant amount of time.[313]

Building on the relationship between heightened emotion, the temporality of mourning, and camp aesthetics in the *Lulu* tour, Wainwright's performance of "Sonnet 20: A Woman's Face" in Northampton, MA on December 15, 2010 revealed a shattered, tear-stained Wainwright.[314] In the last show of the *Lulu* tour, close ups on his made-up face reveal tracks of tearstains down his cheeks and neck and an overall miserable countenance. Still, the piano accompaniment is steady though Wainwright's voice starts off weaker than normal. As he sings through the song his voice gains strength, seemingly shaking off whatever tore him apart in the first part of the cycle that evening.[315] By the middle of the song, Wainwright appears to have shed fresh tears, though his voice remains in control. On the video screen behind him, one eye is half open; its dark lashes prominently lacquered with mascara. Another eye looks bare but opens more widely. A third eye on the bottom is mostly closed, completing the disturbing trifecta of the reverse gaze. The images of the eyes are a striking but unsettling accompaniment to the tender and emotional music. As the song winds down, there remains a steady accompaniment and the tempo of the song is fairly slow, plodding in some phrases, gaining momentum in others. The

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[313] Ibid.

[314] "Rufus Wainwright Sonnet 20 12/15/2010," YouTube video, 4:05, posted by "Maryann Z," December 30, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WAq0K4Rort4.

[315] This fatigue is not only noticeable to viewers like myself who took in these performances through fan-captured videos. A Southampton fan wrote on the fan forum: "… I left feeling quite worried for Rufus who seemed to be going through an emotional roller coaster of his own" (MisterAG, "Southampton Guildhall 11th April, 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 12, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015). A forum user at the Wilmington penultimate show commented: "Rufus started a little weak, poor dear, but ended strong. You could really see and hear the fatigue even from the balcony during ['Who Are You New York?']" (Imaginary_Foolish_Love, "Wilmington Delaware 14 December 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* December 15, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015).

overall feeling of the music is of tranquility, however, which contrasts with the dramatic presence of the eyes, enlarged and listless, an eerie presence on stage. The camp aesthetic in this example is not meant to call attention to flamboyance, dark humor, or irony, though some audience members would argue otherwise; Wainwright's camp sensibility channels film noir and the emotional depth of the cabaret. Visuals add an element of tragedy to the theme of love and desire in the song's text; this could heighten the queer aspect of the song itself, speaking to forbidden, unrequited love rather than adoration from afar. Or, for Wainwright, it could be a song of adoration for a loved one that is separated from him as a result of tragedy.[316]

Through this lengthy performative experience, Wainwright not only grieves, but also recreates the circumstances that led to *Lulu*'s creation, recording, and the conception of the tour. Through the very act of grieving, Wainwright was working toward letting go, moving on, and reconfiguring life without his mother. But, as Phelan explains, "working through grief sometimes gives us a way to let the dead be as dead. The work is hard because we must kill our desire to make them live and killing our desire often feels as if we are effectively killing them (again)."[317] This process, while not political in the way that asserting his sexuality is, actively resists social norms and hegemonic expectations of what it means for male bodies to grieve

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[316] One of the most fascinating aspects of Wainwright's artistry is how deeply he touches his fans. This is an issue I will delve into more deeply in chapter five, but it is vital to include here a brief reminder that fans all over the world are affected by Wainwright's joy and sadness. An Oslo fan states: "I think we sometimes forget that Rufus really is a very melancholic soul. Though we hear it in his music, he is always happy and perky on stage and meet and greets. I think his choice of doing the two parts was an excellent choice, where he can really live out his blue composer side in the first half, and completely focus on the music, and then come back and sort of change persona" (mariannesn, "Oslo, Sentrum scene - 22 May 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* May 26, 2010, accessed September 28, 2015). Wainwright's fans respond positively to his emotional extremes and, as so many have expressed, are willing to take unpredictable emotional journeys with him because they trust that they will emerge enlightened after the experience.

[317] Phelan, *Mourning Sex*, 171.

publicly. Wainwright refuses to hide his pain in his live performances, and he uses the familial link of music to mourn and commune with McGarrigle.

In his penultimate performance of the song cycle on December 14, 2010 in Wilmington, DE, Wainwright appears to be in control despite his personal pain. As he begins "Sonnet 10: For Shame," Wainwright's voice is bold and rich, though his diction is poor.[318] The piano accompaniment is spirited and clean, the accelerando free and slightly wild. It is an impassioned performance and Wainwright's body responds to the music, his head and neck swaying to his own phrasing. If he is near tears, or had been crying previously (it is less clear in this video if the smudged make-up is from tears or sweat), his vocal performance disallows the intrusion of grief. There is more hell-fire in this performance than on the album, a stark contrast to the careful and gentle "A Woman's Face." Similarly, December 9, 2010's performance of "The Dream" is a spirited and generally clean rendition, a rousing contrast to the somber sonnets.[319] In this particularly strong vocal performance, Wainwright seems to lose the pretense of grief as his body responds to the frenetic piano part and the demands of supporting his singing with enough breath. Both of these performance examples pulse with perseverance and endurance, echoing the nature of a live musical performance and the triumphs experienced in the grieving process itself.

Wainwright's determination augments his performativity and camp sensibility in this example; the performance is driven and forceful, reminiscent of a climactic showtune after several sweet but painful ballads. Wainwright's camp aesthetics are a conglomeration of breaking normative rules of songwriting, mixing musical styles, and expressing physically and

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[318] "Sonnet 10 & The Dream ~ Rufus Wainwright in Wilmington," YouTube video, 8:06, posted by "inevitabilityHAA," December 19, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8Ew3LRRk8c.
[319] "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 2 a The Dream, What would I ever do with a rose?", YouTube video, 9:18, posted by "BlueScarfLady," December 17, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywoaUg_laIc.

artistically both the suffering he endured during the last years of McGarrigle's life and the new period in which he exists, one in which his mother is only a memory. His vitality in this performance does not cast McGarrigle off as a forgotten memory, marking *the moment* when his mourning concluded. Instead, his resilience marks a moment when he uses music to reconnect with his mother's memory, using the tie that binds the entire family together as a way to endure yet another performance of the song cycle, another day without his mother.

This recollection of his mother's memory is connected to the idea of prosthetic memory, which Alison Landsberg discusses in relation to cinema. She explains that prosthetic memory is "not strictly derived from a person's lived experience. Prosthetic memories circulate publicly, and although they are not organically based, they are nevertheless experienced with a person's body as a result of an engagement with a wide range of cultural technologies."[320] The embodied experience Wainwright performs on stage is, as previously noted, layered and fluid, and finds legs, so to speak, in the music that he produces with his body (piano and voice). Landsberg goes on to clarify that prosthetic memories, through embodiment and engagement with cultural technologies, "become part of one's personal archive of experience, informing one's subjectivity as well as one's relationship to the present and future tenses."[321] That is to say that in live performances of *Lulu* and *as* Lulu, Wainwright's performativity becomes increasingly complex because of his layering of performativity ("palimpsestic performance") and the physical experience of emoting through music; he plays the piano and sings at which point he relays the

[320] Alison Landsberg, *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 25-26.
[321] Ibid., 26.

experience of his Lulu persona to his audience.[322] The relevance of palimpsestic performativity and prosthetic memory to *Lulu* is in the layering of gender fluid performativity and camp performativity, all of which is combined with re-membering Kate McGarrigle in the live tour.

Re-membering Kate

Re-membering goes beyond reminiscing or recalling an individual; it is a process of making the lost individual part of one's everyday life "in our conversations, in our celebrations, in our decision making, and in our resources for living. To remember is to refuse to allow our loved one's memory to go by unnoticed."[323] The active nature of re-membering is a sensible tool for Wainwright as he grieves through music in some of the same spaces in which McGarrigle performed over the course of her revered career. The space itself often meant something to Wainwright making the possibility of re-membering that much more poignant as he performed

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[322] Darin Kerr posits that Wainwright situates his interpretation of Garland's 1961 concert as a palimpsestic performance; in it, Wainwright embodies "either consciously or unconsciously" traces of prior performative practices. For example, in the song "Rock-A-Bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody," which Al Jolson performed in minstrel style and Garland interpreted as a showstopping rendition in her Carnegie Hall concert, Wainwright's performance of the song is layered upon these two iconic performers' versions. Kerr explains that Wainwright launches "immediately into his rendition of the song, a performance written atop the memory of Garland's version, her own performance having been inscribed over the memory of Jolson's." Wainwright creates a rendition that is multi-layered with the troubling political-incorrectness of Jolson's blackface and the, at times, damaging gay stereotypical diva worship of Garland. Darin Kerr, " 'A Whole Hundred Years of Questionable Behavior': Wainwright/Garland/Jolson and Performance as Palimpsest," *Theatre Annual,* 62 (2009): 2, International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance with Full Text, 48654411.

[323] Lorraine Hedtke & John Winslade, *Re-membering Lives: Conversations With the Dying and the Bereaved* (Amityville: Baywood Publishing, 2004), 10. Blake Paxton combined the concept of re-membering with autoethnography in an effort to queer understandings of grief and loss. See Blake A. Paxton, "Queerly Conversing with the Dead: Re-Membering Mom" *Cultural Studies,<->Critical Methodologies,* 14.2 (2014): 164-173. doi: 10.1177/1532708613512273. The reason for the inconsistency between Paxton's "Re-Membering" in his article and Hedtke's and Winslade's use of "Re-membering" in the title of their book and "remembering" in its text is unclear.

his song cycle with his mother's presence and absence continuously surrounding himself and the audience (whether they were familiar with her work or not).

Douglas Gordon's multimedia artwork was used to enhance Wainwright's relatively sparse performance space during the tour. In particular, it functions as a way to re-member McGarrigle through the idea of bearing witness to Wainwright's grief and queer performativity. The visual image of Wainwright's eye (or eyes) assisted in setting the mood and retaining the audience's focus and concentration on the prevailing themes of the song cycle performance. The eye represents many things that lead to dark, uncomfortable, and melancholy feelings. For example, the open eye/eyes could represent insomnia, paranoia, the open stare of shock from trauma, disbelief, watching over the living, resisting the perpetual darkness of death, seeking truth, searching for identification in a mirror, or a gesture of searching for oneself or reflections of another. It might be a way of witnessing death as well as acknowledging desire, and conflating the two. It is also a reverse gaze, a way for Wainwright's eye to look at the audience, watching them watch him grieve. This role reversal queers how the audience consumes the song cycle (the traditional practice is to sit and listen to the performers as music and lyrics come together in collaboration that is well rehearsed), but also more closely connects the audience to Wainwright's potentially isolating performance. While Wainwright's audience likely knew that the eye magnified on stage was his eye, it can also be interpreted as a metaphorical stand-in for McGarrigle's evaporated presence, looking back at her son's audience. The static images are a way for her absence and presence to be renegotiated on stage during this performance that mourns her death, evokes her spirit, and celebrates her musical artistry and talent. Thus, the image of the eye, watching, weeping, and resting in repose comprises a rare accompaniment to Wainwright's song cycle that does not align with strict classical performance practice traditions

of song cycles because of the inclusion of media. It also allows for an unsettling gesture toward re-membering McGarrigle tacitly, juxtaposed with Wainwright's musical performance of grief.

With his mother at the forefront of his mind, Wainwright is not simply sorrowfully singing in a mourning gown and exaggerating the sincerity of his pain and melancholy in his performance in the live tour. Rather, he is, as discussed in chapter three, borrowing from several singing styles to express a variety of emotions (anger, sadness, desolation, joy), which the impassioned performances of these songs emit. As noted above, many song performances are energetic and positive, however, his strength and energy dwindles quickly as seen in "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" As this song about isolation and feeling unworthy of love begins, Wainwright's melancholic performativity returns. In the YouTube performance video, a shot of Gordon's art reveals a return to a white background with a static eye.[324] In sync with the final phrase of the song ("Never does the dream come true/Without the nightmare"), the eye begins to close in a painfully slow manner. Wainwright again pauses after the song to sip water, creating a natural break between the despondency of resigning himself to love he feels he does not deserve and the next song in the cycle, his aria that ponders nostalgia. "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" is not a song about motherly love, but a text that pits the dream against the nightmare; it offers a glimpse into the pain of many human experiences and relationships, including the bonds between parents and children as well as lovers. Wainwright re-members his mother through the act of recalling the experience of loving fearlessly and dreading both commitment and loss. The next song in the cycle, Wainwright's aria, originally written for his opera *Prima Donna,* does not offer many surprising performance aspects; its careful reproduction might be in tribute to the classical style in which it was written, and thus a polished

[324] BlueScarfLady, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ywoaUg_laIc.

and lovely performance is executed because it best supports the traditional aria style.[325] "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" channels McGarrigle's memory powerfully because Wainwright takes on the persona of the life-worn diva, the protagonist of his opera, *Prima Donna,* but also performs a swan song and ode to his mother, who was nearing the end of her life in an eerie parallel to his diva's story.[326] In this example of re-membering, he embodies the essences of women who are not on stage with him physically through his performance of the aria.[327] This includes both what is shared and kept private, and in Wainwright's song cycle, the only clues the audience has access to that explain how Wainwright might be feeling are in the text, the sound of his voice, his physical presence on stage, and the addition of Gordon's eye video. My interpretation of the aria is one of many possibilities, but background on Wainwright's relationship with his mother and the tidbits shared in press interviews give these performances relative context.

The final example of how Wainwright re-members his mother is in "Zebulon," the conclusion of the song cycle.[328] In this version, Wainwright's performance offers several vocal nuances that differ from the album recording. While the song is performed at a very slow tempo on the album, it seems even slower live, allowing for the vocal notes to be sung exceptionally

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[325] The aria's accompaniment is straightforward and simplistic in a way that the more jazz-influenced songs like "True Loves" or "What Would I Ever Do With a Rose?" are not. The consistency of certain songs' accompaniments likely yields cleaner results because there is not as much movement on the keyboard.

[326] For a behind-the-scenes look at the process of staging *Prima Donna* that includes interviews with himself, Kate McGarrigle, Martha Wainwright, librettist Bernadette Colomine, and other important players in the production, see Rufus Wainwright, "Prima Donna: the story of an opera," *House of Rufus,* DVD/CD Box Set (101 Distribution, 2011).

[327] "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 2 b Les feux d'artifice t'appellent," YouTube video, 5:16, posted by "BlueScarfLady," December 15, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4kxuLLbJAQA.

[328] "Rufus Wainwright Lulu Part 2 c Zebulon and Exit," YouTube video, 8:15, posted by "BlueScarfLady,"December 18, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WsArehMfFE.

wide and deliberately, occasionally sliding flat. The lowest notes sound otherworldly and Wainwright over-enunciates (contrary to his typically mushy diction) the "s" consonants, often leading to hissing sounds at the end of words. At the bridge of the song, his voice opens and he pushes the tempo forward, emulating rolling waves gaining momentum. His body throughout is fairly still, and he seems unbothered when audience noises occur (nose-blowing in particular). On the screen in the second verse of "Zebulon," the slow progression of blinking and alternate staring results in an extreme close-up of a tear oozing out of the eye, coating each individual eye lash before it is released at last. At the very end of the song, the closed eye fades into the black background. While his magnified eye weeps, Wainwright appears dry-eyed but exhausted at the end of the song. After a moment of stillness and rest at the piano, he stands without acknowledging the audience, and trudges off stage as the lights dim further. He resembles a ghost, an operatic diva approaching welcome death, a phantom oblivious to the sounds of the living as he exits the stage in silence and without the accompaniment of audience applause.[329]

This performance, with the help of the image of the weeping eye, clarifies without a doubt the core theme of Wainwright's song cycle. When asked about how the grieving process had affected his performance, Wainwright explained that "Zebulon" was the most difficult song to get through in part because it was the final song of the cycle:

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[329] The initial press release on Rufuswainwright.com stated: "*Rufus has asked us to pass on this message to everyone attending his shows on the tour. The first part of the program will be performed as a song cycle with visuals by Douglas Gordon. During the first set, Rufus has asked that you please do not applaud until after he has left the stage. His exit is part of the piece. After a brief intermission, Rufus will return for the second part of the show during which you may applaud to your heart's content.*" Audiences were instructed to hold their applause through an entire intermission, a radical shift from typical Wainwright performance. See Greg Pratt, "Silence, Please: Rufus Wainwright Bans Clapping During His Concerts," *exclaim.ca,* April 22, 2010, http://exclaim.ca/music/article/silence_please_rufus_wainwright_bans_clapping_during_his_concerts.

> The whole concept of the setup was to challenge myself technically both with the piano and the vocals...the vocal gymnastics and then, by the end with "Zebulon" it's kind of this very simple statement where I hope to be, at the point, set free and able to lose myself in the emotions. It's supposed to be a build up for sure and "Zebulon" was the final eruption, partially out of emotion and partially out of relief that this show was finally about to end. I wanted to hook into that energy and use it for all it was worth. I knew at the period I would be more bereft than I probably will be for most of my life considering how close my mother and I were and instead of sitting tight and having those feelings annihilate me I thought it would be best to be on stage and invite them in and create something with them to both help me work through them and kind of show the audience a shade of life that is not often presented, which is utter sorrow.[330]

The performance of "Zebulon" in particular is an act of mourning and remembrance, a gay son's expression of grief and a radically different vision of the type of performance that a popular musician can produce live. It is a queer expression of grief, love, and individuality, performed live and captured on fans' smartphones. "Zebulon" individually and *Lulu* as a whole queered the way audiences consumed Wainwright's music and pressed individuals to witness the mourning of a deeply personal loss.

Conclusion

Watching *Lulu* via YouTube is thus both a mediatized live experience as well as a way of participating in witnessing Wainwright re-membering his mother. Wainwright's use of media in live performance was effective in bridging old performance traditions with new ones and communicating the emotional sincerity that rests at the heart of the *Lulu* song cycle. The total package – the eye videos, the gown, his make-up, his solitude on stage –altered his performativity significantly. He queered expectations of song cycle performance and male public grieving, and created a chaotic camp aesthetic that was in equal parts overdone and minimalistic. In these ways, Wainwright's queer performativity conjured the dark emotions associated with

[330] Wainwright, Salerno, May 2016.

grief and the flashiness of the cabaret all while focusing his energy on barreling through twelve songs of varying style, mood, and difficulty.

Additionally, his queer performativity echoed the grieving process; show by show, day by day, he went through the motions of moving on after a traumatic loss. It is fitting that Wainwright worked through his most musically and emotionally challenging tour while working through the exhausting and agonizing process of mourning the loss of a parent. It is a mark of his family's musical openness and unique relationship with the public that he did all of that with an audience. In essence, Wainwright generated a way of re-membering his mother in those long months of live moments that are now stirring documents archived digitally in online public space.

Pain and grief are boundary-less. These feelings do not function only within predetermined space: a hospital room, a church, private domestic space like a bedroom or an entire home. Pain and grief are carried around inside oneself and though these feelings are often invisible to most people, especially strangers who do not know that an individual is suffering, these unwelcome emotions can feel like a brand that everyone can see. Many people who are in emotional pain zealously guard those feelings and mask them from the outside world. It is a way to protect oneself from being marked as broken or unwell, but that avoidance of transparency tends to make one suffer even longer in silence.[331] Peggy Phelan explains: "Trauma's potency

[331] These assertions are not mere speculation, but have been learned through long-term personal experience. During the initial drafting of this chapter, the 17th anniversary of my father's death came and went, and, like every year since he died, I was filled with alternate feelings of dread, anger, sadness, regret, and exhaustion. Though he has been deceased exactly half my life, September 26 is still an ominous black cloud on the calendar and whether I like it or not, memories I'd rather not recall come flooding back with a vengeance. Over time I've learned to grit my teeth and function, but I've never lost the feeling that I wear a mark, a brand, a physical

comes in part from how well it is contained. When I say trauma is untouchable, I mean that it cannot be represented. The symbolic cannot carry it: trauma makes a tear in the symbolic network itself."[332] As the above performance analysis shows, one of the most important aspects of Wainwright's queer performativity is that he does not hide his emotional pain from his audience. He was open about his grief over McGarrigle's death in the press (which is to say the interviews he gave were also performances involving a persona or personae), on stage, and in the very songs that he sang on the *Lulu* tour. Even when songs were not explicitly about McGarrigle, Wainwright recalled her essence in the very act of live performance. His visual aids allude to the belief that the dead may be silent but are not necessarily absent from our mind's eye. Instead of turning away from his audience and performing as if nothing had happened or as if he already moved past the fresh wound of a close and recent death, he chose to approach that difficult emotional time in a way that recalled his mother and her musical legacy. The following chapter will continue to reflect upon the live performances of the song cycle, turning to fan commentary in order to consider the impact of affect that circulated within the performance space.

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sign that there are things about me that are fundamentally and noticeably different because of that experience.

[332] Phelan, *Mourning Sex,* 5.

CHAPTER V. "IT WAS AMAZING TO BE THERE TO WITNESS IT": AFFECT, ORIENTATION, AND *LULU*'S EMOTIONAL IMPACT ON RUFUS WAINWRIGHT FANS

Watching Rufus Wainwright on stage alone with a piano can be a captivating experience. His comfort in front of an audience is palpable, and his charisma and wry humor come to the fore when he has a live audience to gratify. Even when he is not chatty in between songs or takes a seat at the piano without verbally greeting his audience, his connection to the audience is discernible. There is an energy that encompasses the performance space, and this energy acts as a kind of magnet that draws in the audience's focus to Wainwright. At the same time, Wainwright's immersion in his music, the hum of energy characteristic of live performance, is transmitted to the audience. In my experience attending Wainwright performances, I have observed a range of reactions, from sheer joy and pleasure to obvious distaste and displeasure. While not everyone will enjoy the exchange of energy that occurs in a performance space, or transmission of affect, everyone will be affected in one way or another.

As my experience reading fan reaction posts to live shows on the Rufus Wainwright Message Board has revealed, some audience members feel sympathy or empathy for the range of emotions expressed in the music at any given performance; others reject the connection, disliking the intrusion that other people's feelings, moods, and orientations toward a central object bring. Many audience members might see Wainwright's performances as simple entertainment: one buys a ticket to a show and receives a live performance in return. However, devout fans of the singer/songwriter tend to see his performances differently as their message board posts reveal. Wainwright's performances are not *only* displays of entertainment; his performances are a

conduit through which an audience can commune with a singer they hold close to their hearts, a musician who speaks to them in a way that many other artists across various genres do not.

As chapter four of this dissertation has explored, Wainwright felt and shared grief over his mother's death publicly during the *Lulu* tour. This tour spanned nine months, and brought Wainwright to North America, Europe, Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand. In this chapter, I return to the Rufus Wainwright Message Board fan forum (RWMB)[333] and use virtual ethnography to investigate fans' impressions and reactions, and to identify examples of how affect circulated within Wainwright's performance space during live *Lulu* performances.[334] The way an audience feels within the performance space is an important component to theorizing the queer aspects of Wainwright's performativity.[335] Including fans' voices in this project shows the

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[333] This website is devoted to Wainwright's musical fandom; a "musical fandom" is "one term for a wide range of phenomena and identifications occurring in a variety of different times and places, a term that encompasses a range of tastes, roles, identities and practices." Fandoms are both personal and collective, self-recognized and performed, "a way to declare a social role in relation to popular music that is *both* alienated from industrial processes of music making and affectively engaged with their result." See Mark Duffett, "Introduction," in *Popular Music Fandom: Identities, Roles and Practices,* ed. Mark Duffett (New York: Routledge, 2014), 7. John Fiske has famously defined fandom as "typically associated with cultural forms the dominant value system denigrates," and is thus closely related to the tastes of subordinate groups. See John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media,* ed. Lisa A. Lewis, (London: Routledge, 1992).

[334] Timothy Cooley's, Katherine Meizel's, and Nasir Syed's chapter "Virtual Fieldwork: Three Case Studies" in *Shadows in the Field* provides context for this part of my method – virtual ethnography. Recognizing that the "field" in virtual ethnography is not a physical location where the researcher goes to study human interaction puts the RWMB as a research site in perspective. They write: "Virtuality is only as real as any other cultural production; it has only the meaning with which people imbue it. Focusing on how *people* experience -- and invest power and meaning in – communication technologies returns the "ethno" to virtual *ethno*graphy" (91). See Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, eds., *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology,* Second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[335] Nick Baxter-Moore uses a similar methodology in his study of Bruce Springsteen fans who attend multiple live performances and post online about their experience. Baxter-Moore considers why people attend concerts, how they evaluate the experience, and why they attend

breadth of Wainwright's impact on them and provides examples of experiences I do not have because I did not see *Lulu* performed in 2010. The fan reactions to the *Lulu* live tour that I analyze in this chapter emphasize the nature of emotionally charged space within a musical soundscape, and offer interpretations of how audiences were affected emotionally within that space.[336] In order to encompass the range of audiences' emotions, I will use the term "circulation of affect" rather than "transmission of affect" (the term many scholars use to describe this experience) exclusively; affect does not merely travel along a linear path between two individuals, or one individual and a large group, but inhabits a space completely. Those within said space are affected differently. The circulation of affect within the theatre resulted in the queering of performance space because audiences were required to confront the feelings Wainwright's performance evoked.[337]

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multiple concerts by the same artist during the same tour. One point of differentiation between Baxter-Moore's methodology and my own is his active approach in appealing to online fans via two different Springsteen fan community websites who saw the same concerts he attended, whereas I surveyed older posts from a tour long since past that I did not attend via the official/primary Wainwright forum (which is separate from social media sites on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). See Nick Baxter-Moore, "'Tie That Binds': Springsteen Fans Reflect on the Live Concert Experience," in "The Live Concert Experience," ed. Nick Baxter-Moore and Thomas M. Kitts, special issue, *Rock Music Studies* 3, no. 1 (2016): 80-104. doi: 10.1080/19401159.2015.1129831.

[336] Another important scholar of fan studies, Lawrence Grossberg argues that the fan must be understood as part of an affective sensibility in which "mattering maps" dictate moods, energy levels, and social structure as related to identity construction. Grossberg asserts that fan affect can lead to empowerment and passive or active sites of resistance within a particular subculture of popular culture. See Lawrence Grossberg, "Is There A Fan In the House?: The Affective Sensibility of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media,* ed. Lisa A. Lewis, (London: Routledge, 1992).

[337] I do not include YouTube comments on the videos analyzed in chapter four in this survey because I want to include the voices of fans that I am certain attended the live song cycle performance. Further, the comments posted on YouTube are quite minimal (five or less on each posted video) compared to the breadth of the message board.

Within the context of this study, theatrical experience and queer performance are entangled and contribute to the creation of aforementioned queer space that directly affects the audience. Ann Cvetkovich writes in *An Archive of Feeling*: "Queer performance creates publics by bringing together live bodies in space, and the theatrical experience is not just about what's on stage but also about who's in the audience creating community."[338] The "public" created during *Lulu* performances is a community of audience members who together experience the transmission and circulation of affect. This of course does not mean that each audience member has the same emotional experience or orients himself or herself positively toward Wainwright's performativity. That is to say, some fans did not connect with Wainwright's *Lulu* performance, but instead perceived it as self-indulgent, incohesive, or simply boring. As fan comments from the forum will reveal below, audiences' resistance to the performance did not overwhelmingly influence or negatively impact Wainwright's fans' experiences. However, considering both positive and negative reactions paints a more complete portrait of the collective audience experience and the significance of affect within that space. The affect circulating amongst an audience is not the same as emotional contagion, a point Sara Ahmed makes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion.* Though she refutes the equivalency of emotional contagion and shared emotions, Ahmed acknowledges that emotional contagion is similar to the circulation of affect in a shared space. She explains:

> Emotions in their very intensity involve miscommunication, such that even when we feel we have the same feeling, we don't necessarily have the same relationship to the feeling. Given that shared feelings are not about feeling the same feeling, or feeling-in-common, I suggest that it is the objects of emotion that circulate, rather than emotion as such.[339]

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[338] Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feeling: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 9.
[339] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 10-11.

Emotions appear to travel amongst a crowd, but objects in the room become sticky or laden with affect, and each person will relate to that object differently. The relationality is the central focus in regard to orientation or disorientation. In other words, emotions such as excitement, sadness, happiness, or anxiety travel through the *Lulu* audience, but Wainwright's grief and pain (being the object) is what becomes sticky. Audience members who relate to his grief and pain orient themselves positively toward him, while audience members who fear grief and pain, do not have a similar life experience to relate to, or are neither empathetic nor sympathetic orient themselves negatively, at which point disorientation occurs. The variances in how individuals react to objects and relate to emotions make Wainwright's *Lulu* audiences a particularly interesting community to study through the affective lens.

Affect and Queer Space

Audiences all over the world connect with Wainwright's performance in ways that foster a perceived personal connection with him. However, the connections that audiences foster with one another, though they may not be aware of it at the time, make their live experiences far less isolated than they may think. As Isobel Armstrong explains, people falsely assume that emotion "*belongs* to the individual subject like a possession or its own body, and which cannot be a *relational* experience *between* subjects."[340] In fact, performance space is infused with other people's emotions, cultural knowledge, and anticipations, and though it might be assumed that only the performer/performance affects an audience member, that belief is patently false. Live musical performance is a communal activity, for better or worse, because affect, emotion, and performance space are entangled, feeding off of one another as affect attaches and circulates within space.

[340] Isobel Armstrong, *The Radical Aesthetic* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Inc., 2000), 115.

Wainwright's public grieving and re-membering of his mother within live performance spaces did not only affect himself. The performance space was affected, and so were the people within it. Space is queered when it becomes filled with affect that is contrary to what is expected or unwelcome. The negative feelings associated with grief filter into the space and affect the audience leading to disorientation. For example, an audience member who attends a *Lulu* performance might not expect the abundance of sad-themed songs, and feels angry or uncomfortable within the performance space; because her performance expectations were thwarted, she has a negative or unpleasant experience. I argue that audiences did not *become* Wainwright in mourning, but rather they *felt* Wainwright in mourning. The circulation of affect within those spaces influenced his audience, whether that meant some audience members were moved to tears and felt empathy, others were annoyed with his emotionally gushing performance, or a combination of these feelings at different times or simultaneously. I posit that Wainwright's performance space (the theatre) was queered once his audiences became aware of the affect circulating within that space. This affect rattled their preconceived understandings of his performance because the song cycle performance was atypical for an artist labeled as part of the indie rock genre (as discussed in chapter one); Wainwright's performance was highly emotional, and primed with themes of loss, isolation, and disorientation that turned off some audience members.[341]

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[341] Alfred Schutz writes about the relationship between "inner time" (the "flux" associated with notes, and the flow of music between the "composer" and the "beholder") and "outer time" (the measurable lengths associated with music) in musical performances and experiences. In doing so, Schutz draws attention to the relationship between composer and beholder in which they are "united… by a time dimension common to both, which is nothing other than a derived form of the vivid present shared by the partners in a face-to-face relation…". Alfred Schutz, "Making Music Together,"in *Collected Papers II: Studies in Social Theory,* Edited and Introduced by

The way an audience feels within the performance space is an important component to theorizing the queer aspects of Wainwright's performativity. In many instances, shared grief is the result of the circulation of affect within Wainwright's performance space, including the music itself, lighting, costume, and Gordon's film.[342] Affect and its transmission have been defined, theorized, and applied to a dizzying array of concepts across several disciplines, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, and cultural studies.[343] My use of the term considers the ways in which affect "sticks" to the body, causing an emotional reaction to a particular stimulus. In this case, Wainwright's music and his grief affect his audiences, for better or worse, in very personal and individual ways. This is possible as a result of the "inbetween-ness" in which affect arises, or "in the capacities to act and be acted upon."[344] Such "inbetween-ness" echoes my previous arguments surrounding the genre-hybridity of the *Lulu* song cycle and the "third space" from which Wainwright's emotionally complex vocality emerges. As a result of

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Arvid Brodersen (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976), 170-172. This relationship is important to understanding the assumptions audiences bring to performances of well-known (canonic) works especially. For Wainwright's audiences, this same kind of relationship existed in live performances where audiences had expectations of how songs were to be performed and the rhythm of solo shows.

[342] While this chapter focuses on audience reactions from those who were in the actual performance space, I do not wish to dismiss or devalue those who experienced an emotional connection with *Lulu* and Wainwright via YouTube. I recognize that fans like myself had vicarious emotional experiences in which affect was transmitted through sight and sound exclusively. It would be a misstep to ignore digital space in this era where online space often replaces physical space in significant ways such as the classroom (distance learning), social spaces like bars or cafes (online dating), and even the office (Skype or Facetime interviews and technologically mediated conference calls and meetings).

[343] The introduction of *The Affect Theory Reader* offers a brief but informative breakdown of the schools of affective thought. The editors of the anthology explain: "The concept of 'affect' has gradually accrued a sweeping assortment of philosophical/psychological/physiological underpinnings, critical vocabularies, and ontological pathways, and, thus, can be (and has been) turned toward all manner of political/pragmatic/performative ends." See Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, "An Inventory of Shimmers," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 5.

[344] Ibid.,1.

being "found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise)," affect "circulate[s] about, between, and sometimes stick[s] to bodies and worlds."[345] Bodies react, consciously or subconsciously, to the things that go on around them, but those reactions are not always logical or predictable. They are, however, *felt.*

Teresa Brennan embraces the physicality of affect in defining the transmission of affect as "the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail…enter[ing] into another."[346] The transmission of affect is more than merely sensing another's feelings; it involves taking *on* another's emotions or feelings, but not necessarily mimicking them.[347] For example, Brennan explains that "the content one person gives to the affect of anger or depression or anxiety may be very different from the content given to the same affect by another," allowing an individual to feel similar emotions for completely different reasons, some of which are intensive and others which are more or less banal.[348] Because individuals are "not self-contained in terms of our energies," there is not a "secure distinction between the individual and the 'environment.'"[349] Brennan suggests that "affects evoke the thoughts" that one associates with an experience, space, or interaction.[350] This is to say that one might not connect particular content with a feeling until the transmission of affect occurs, and one is suddenly overwhelmed by a sense of pleasure or foreboding, tranquility or anxiety which may or may nor correlate with another's affective experience within the same space.

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[345] Ibid.
[346] Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect,* (New York: Cornell University, 2004), 3.
[347] Brennan defines feelings as "including something more than sensory information insofar as they suppose a unified interpretation of that information." Feelings are thus "sensations that have found the right match in words" (Ibid., 5).
[348] Ibid., 6. The distinction between intensive and banal importantly does not render one emotion relevant and the other irrelevant.
[349] Ibid.
[350] Ibid., 7.

Another essential theory of affect describes the synthesis of affect, and how it penetrates the body and mind, the physical and the non-physical realm. Patricia Ticeneto Clough explains that affects "illuminate…our power to affect the world around us and our power to be affected by it, along with the relationship between these two powers."[351] That which we are affected by is "what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects."[352] Ahmed describes sticky objects as those that are "already attributed as being good or bad, as being the cause of happiness or unhappiness."[353] This so-called stickiness is a different theoretical take on the transmission of affect that, unlike Brennan's, does not delve too deeply into the physicality of bodies that share physical space (e.g., the functions of pheromones and hormones, smell and room temperature). Environmental factors are frequently associated with live performance experiences, but are typically subconscious processes that, unless specifically addressed, cannot be presumed. There is a possibility, however, that actually being in the physical space changes the concert-goer experience when it comes to the transmission or circulation of affect as compared to the YouTube viewer's experience where those senses are unable to process conditions in the live performance space. However, this study does not focus on those interpretations, but rather concerns itself with what "sticks" to audience members and, as a result, evokes strong emotions that are then shared on the fan forum.

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[351] Patricia Ticeneto Clough, "Introduction," in *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social,* ed. Patricia Ticeneto Clough and Jean Halley, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), ix.
[352] Sara Ahmed, "Happy Objects," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* ed. Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J. Seigworth, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 29. The ideas in this essay appear in long form in *The Promise of Happiness,* published in the same year.
[353] Ibid., 35.

Exploring Feelings: Fans' Impressions and Reactions

Wainwright's transparent grieving in performance, analyzed and discussed in chapter four, disturbed the natural order of a Rufus Wainwright performance.[354] Audiences had to make a choice about whether or not they oriented themselves toward or disoriented themselves away from Wainwright's public grieving. An audience member could choose to disengage herself from the object (Wainwright's performance and emotional vulnerability), thus failing to participate in the reorientation that occurs as a result of reacting to the performance. But those who engage, turn toward, or orient themselves toward Wainwright, in fact become disoriented and part of the queer space. Put another way, they share in the grief, McGarrigle's presence and absence, and Wainwright's act of performing for an audience while experiencing the constant turmoil that is fresh, or even waning, grief.[355]

Wainwright has indicated that he was sensitive to his audience's emotional reactions to the song cycle performance. From the no clapping request to the overwhelming emotions that

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[354] The experience of feeling Wainwright in mourning is an atypical theatrical experience. One might attend a performance of a dramatic opera, for instance, and have an emotional connection to the performance. An opera like Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* might move some audience members to tears because of the notorious prolongation of the famous (and dissonant for the time) Tristan chord (F-B-D#-G#) that does not resolve until the very end of the five-hour long opera; the harmony is introduced in the first chord of the Prelude in Act I and finally resolves at the end of Isolde's final scene, "Liebes Tod," or "Love Death." Feeling a sense of sadness, tension, and then release as in the Tristan chord's resolution is not the same as *feeling* an artist in mourning. It should be noted that Wagner did not write arias in the Italian or French opera tradition, but rather created through-composed productions known as *gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work. For a brief but digestible overview of the Tristan chord and its function in the opera see Stephen Raskauskas, "How One Chord Changed the World: Tristan at 150," *Offmic* (blog), *WFMT,* June 10, 2015, http://blogs.wfmt.com/offmic/2015/06/10/tristan-at-150-how-one-chord-changed-the-world/.

[355] As discussed throughout this dissertation, the gay male body, as a marginalized subject, has frequently been marked as overemotional or too feminine in displays of grief. While men generally are allowed to grieve during certain critical times and in appropriate spaces, their *excess* is seen as unmasculine or linked to a homophobic understanding of "queerness."

circulated within the performance space, Wainwright reflected on how his audiences silently expressed their feelings during the performance:

> …[C]oming out and requesting specifically for no one to applaud at all actually fully gave me a much better sense of what the crowd was actually feeling at the time. That wasn't always a positive experience. There was *[sic]* definitely some people who resented the fact that I kind of muzzled them slightly and that they didn't really have the chance to unload their emotions and discard whatever feelings they might have had for a particular song. They had to treat it as a sole, broad experience. A lot of people enjoyed that or were into the concept of taking that voyage but there were a fair amount of people who felt kind of kidnapped and resented that fact. So I definitely had a better sense of how the audience actually felt and it was very interesting because it was a combination of that palpable emotion, which I couldn't really sense physically meaning with the sound or visuals--I didn't really see the audience so it was really kind of an instinct, but then also very much combined with the theaters themselves. I found that the better theatre I was in, with better acoustics, the more grandiose presentation or with the greatest history like Carnegie Hall and the Royal Albert Hall--that even kind of heightened the experience as well. I had a much better sense of both where I was and who *[sic]* I was performing for and what they were really feeling.[356]

In the following sections, audience members reveal, in their own words, the many ways they were in turn affected by Wainwright's performance and acknowledged or resisted the affect circulating in the performance space.[357] From the hundreds of posts about live performances of the song cycle, several key themes emerged: empathy and personal loss, disorientation and failing to empathize, emotional overload, and bearing witness to Wainwright's grief. These themes offer a framework for interpreting the intricate relationship between orientation, the circulation of affect, and emotional reactions within queer space.

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[356] Rufus Wainwright, Interview via email by Stephanie Salerno, May 2016.

[357] Within the "Live" section of the RWMB, I found individual threads that were sorted by *Lulu* tour performance city. My exploration of the posts via virtual ethnography reveals a breadth of concert reports, analysis, set lists, photographs, links to videos, and both positive and negative opinions of the performance.

Empathy and Personal Loss

One of my research questions as I engaged in virtual ethnography of the RWMB centered on how an audience identifies with pain that is not their own. While many fan posts focus on reporting details about how Wainwright appeared during the first half as compared to the second half of the show, there are some posts in which fans took time to reflect upon Wainwright's pain as a point of connection to their own lives.[358] For example, a fan explains that one reason why she enjoyed the performance was because she lost her "mother to cancer a little while ago" and was able to empathize "totally with him."[359] A fan in attendance at the Oxford show on April 26, 2010 explains that the video of the magnified eye had a significant impact: "…when Rufus was singing 'Zebulon' the eye dropping a tear was very poignent [*sic*] to me, as I was thinking of two close relatives who had passed away on the same day (separate illnesses) 3 years ago on this day."[360] The shared experience of losing a loved one to cancer was an impactful connection for a fan at the Manchester performance, particularly because he or she "lost the light of our line [*sic*] to cancer just 5 days before Rufus etc lost Kate and so I am feeling a similar grief."[361] Yet another fan at the same show did not share a personal loss, but writes: "His mum would have been extremely proud of him and it makes you realise what people go through when they lose their parents."[362] These four excerpts suggest that Wainwright's performance touched individuals who have experienced some kind of personal loss, especially loss to cancer. These audience

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[358] The second half of the show was a relaxed, more traditional Wainwright solo performance filled with piano or guitar-accompanied songs, occasional duets with sister Martha, and light-hearted between-song-banter.

[359] Angie68, "Sheffield, City Hall, Sat. 17th april *[sic]*," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 21, 2010, accessed November 4, 2015.

[360] Artdecobird, "Oxford, Monday 26th April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board* April 27, 2010, accessed November 4, 2015.

[361] rachrumoz, "Manchester, Apollo: Thursday, 22nd April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 23, 2010, accessed November 4, 2015.

[362] johnmerrick2, "Manchester, Apollo: Thursday, 22nd April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 26, 2010, accessed November 4, 2015.

members, and countless others who either did not post or do not visit the fan forum, orient themselves, to use Ahmed's language, toward the aspects of Wainwright's performance that brought pain to the fore. They identify with his loss, turning toward the affect that was transmitted from him to the audience. The audience members I cite here did not necessarily "catch" Wainwright's grief, so much as gently were led to remember their losses as they opened their hearts to feelings of empathy.

These RWMB posters do not talk about how their bodies may have registered Wainwright's pain and in turn empathized, but they do refer to relevant thoughts and memories. Pain is often thought of as "a private, even lonely experience."[363] Pain, ultimately, is "described by many as non-intentional, as not 'about' something," but "affected by objects of perception that gather as one's past bodily experience."[364] Such objects of perception that recall past bodily experience for Wainwright's English audiences perhaps were particular lines of text, musical phrases that sparked a memory or evoked a deeply etched feeling, or the physical presence of Wainwright, silent unless singing and clad in the color of death. It is likely that each audience member connected or bonded with a different moment in the song cycle (a textual or musical phrase, or a gesture of Wainwright's). But once that emotional connection was made, audience members feeling empathetic began negotiating past experiences alongside Wainwright's in that performance space. This is a result of how Wainwright queers the space; he is emotionally open and vulnerable, and audience members who recognize that turn toward that affect.

I found relatively few posts that explicitly share personal stories like the aforementioned on the message board, but have included the small batch here. I believe that this is because fans

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[363] Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, 20.
[364] Ibid., 25.

seemed far more comfortable sharing the emotions they experienced as the result of the performance than private memories associated with illness or death. Nonetheless, those who did share personal experiences indicate that they identify with Wainwright's grief explicitly, recalling the death of a parent, a sibling, or a friend. Others, such as the Manchester fan who did not share a personal story, orient themselves toward Wainwright's vulnerability, but experience a less direct (and possibly less intense) feeling. This suggests that empathy is an emotional connection that requires recognition, that which "is bound up with what we *already know* [italics original]."[365] What some of Wainwright's audiences "already know" is that grief, specifically the ache of loss, cannot be hidden from view or willed away. By embracing empathy, some fans accept the burden of pain that circulates with the theatre during Wainwright's performances. They do not experience vicarious trauma or what Martin Hoffman calls "empathic over-arousal," which mirrors the symptoms of PTSD in several ways and is common in trauma therapists;[366] the audience members who shared similar experiences with death as Wainwright, rather, empathize from a safe distance, engaging with memory rather than reliving their losses.

Disorientation and Declining to Empathize

Not all of Wainwright's audience members were open to deviations in Wainwright's performance style or the vulnerability he exudes on stage. Though most fans appreciated Wainwright's emotional efforts, some were angry that their expectations misaligned with Wainwright's usual cheerful, fun, and less traditional performance practice. While some audience members perhaps did not like the music, the disorientation, or failed orientation toward

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[365] Ibid.

[366] Martin Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also see E. Ann Kaplan's *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005), specifically chapter one, "'Why Trauma Now'?: Freud and Trauma Studies."

Wainwright's emotional state, is of greater interest to my argument. Disorientation is not only related to feeling strange or bad, but it "involves failed orientations" where bodies "inhabit spaces that do not extend their shape, or use objects that do not extend their reach."[367] In other words, disorientation is the result of a person not belonging where they are currently situated, whether that is in a particular space or hegemony at large. In the case of audience members who failed to be open to Wainwright's performance, their disorientation was in direct relation to Wainwright's grief-influenced music and the affect circulating within the performance space that made so many other fans empathize, sympathize, and bear witness to his loss and pain. It is true that not every fan loved *Lulu,* and those who were displeased with the album itself were vocal on the fan forum threads that talk specifically about the album. However, the negative responses to Wainwright's live performance indicate more than not enjoying the music; these comments show that these audience members did not enjoy how it was performed (as a song cycle with conceptual visual components), the restraint that Wainwright asked of the audience, or the mood of the first half of the show overall.

This comment from a Dublin fan offers a sense of how resistance to the circulation of affect in the theatre revealed itself:

> If I'm totally honest… the playlist of tracks from start to finish was hard to 'enjoy' being the best word I can find…. [W]hen he played the last note I was relieved knowing it was over.[368]

Though this fan's entire post is not wholly negative, the prevailing theme of it is that *Lulu* is not an enjoyable collection of songs to sit through, does not mesh with the public image of Wainwright as charismatic, fun, energetic, and entertaining, and the second half of the show was

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[367] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 160.
[368] Anto37x, "Rufus in Dublin," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 30, 2010, accessed November 9, 2015.

what people paid to see. His or her comment thus represents a turn away from Wainwright (the object in mourning) and a failure to empathize as other audience members had. A Los Angeles audience member also bemoans the structure of the song cycle and the rigidity it brings to the performance space, saying that he or she "[w]as not a huge fan of this show. The no-applause thing is a bit too much, it's very uncomfortable and I felt like going to sleep due to the lack of audience participation."[369] A common complaint about Wainwright's decision to perform *Lulu* as a classical song cycle is that the prohibition of applause was jarring. This decision left a lot of fans, particularly those not well-versed in classical performance practice, asking why a popular artist who loves attention and admiration would ask audiences not to cheer him on.

The refusal to accept new performativity is precisely where the friction between bodies oriented toward and bodies oriented away from Wainwright's performativity and affect exists. While examples of fan comments up to this point have suggested overwhelming alliance with Wainwright's affect and even empathetic and sympathetic feelings, audience members who failed to turn toward Wainwright react negatively and see the performance as an expression of hubris, self-indulgence, or even disrespect toward his audience's time and money. At a performance in Birmingham, England, which many fans discussed on RWMB in terms that indicate it was one of Wainwright's best, a very disappointed individual shares his or her thoughts: "Looking at the sad faces around me, I know I'm not on my own making these comments. Perhaps others will follow with their cmments [*sic*]. It was a self indulged [*sic*] narcissistic performance. I go to be entertained and this time I wasn't."[370] This person's play on

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[369] xgunther, "LA date 20 August 2010 @ Greek Theatre," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* August 21, 2010, accessed November 9, 2015.
[370] lashurst, "Rufus at Birmingham Symphony Hall…!," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 21, 2010, accessed November 9, 2015.

the phrase "sad faces" is particularly biting given the thematic material of *Lulu* and the publicity surrounding Wainwright's grief over the death of his mother. Fans who react poorly may not have aligned themselves with similar emotions to Wainwright's or other audience member's affects, but they are highly influenced by the queer performance space. Where they once might have spent an enjoyable, relaxing evening listening to Wainwright's music, during a *Lulu* performance these fans are stressed out, bored, or enraged by the melodrama they witness on stage.

An angry audience member who attended the Ipswich performance posts several negative views: describing the show as "rubbish," noting that he or she walked out of the performance; lobbing thinly veiled insults at other posters on the thread; and referring to Wainwright as "Mr. Wainwright Jr." which may have been an honest error, though his belittling comments about Wainwright's songwriting suggest otherwise. This poster's strong dislike for the performance, the artist, and the online community are apparent in his or her initial post: "Rufus' dad was right - He IS a tit man - well he is a tit!!!...Well done to the heckler who repeatedly pleaded for him to 'just sing his songs'. But I had better things to do with my time than listen to caterwailing [*sic*]. How disappointing."[371] This outright resistance to the group affect in Birmingham and Ipswich is a way of understanding why some audience members experienced disorientation despite their choice to attend the performance. For these people, the song cycle performance failed to cohere as other performances had, and thus became unrecognizable.[372] Rather than embracing the

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[371] Emperor, Ipswich Regent Theatre 29 April, 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 29, 2010, accessed November 9, 2015. The song "Rufus is a Tit Man" is a song written by Wainwright's father, Loudon Wainwright III; it appeared on the elder Wainwright's 1975 album, *Unrequited* (Columbia Records).

[372] Ahmed notes that when "things fail to cohere… disorientation happens" because things "do not stay in place" (*Queer Phenomenology,* 170).

change and attempting to relate to the affect in some way, they went the opposite direction, reiterating Sedgwick's description of affects being attached to other affects. In these examples, fans attach disappointment and sarcasm to Wainwright's grief and other audience members' empathy or sympathy. They did not have tender or sentimental feelings, but are unmoved and disgusted that they did not get what they signed up for (an entertaining night of song, chatter, and well-known favorites). For them, the affect transmitted "sticks" to them, but is attached to ugly feelings or sensations. Some of these undesirable feelings may in fact be related to loss, grief, or pain, but these individuals' resistance to vulnerability transforms whatever they are relating to in their minds to outwardly projected displeasure.

Excessive Feelings

Within the performance space, audiences who are receptive to the affect being transmitted express post-performance feelings that are strong, but not necessarily identifiable. These posts declare emotional hangovers, or the experience of feeling bowled over by the performance and not having the language to adequately articulate those feelings. Such feelings, I argue, are the result of the queer performance space that exposes Wainwright's sensitivity, vulnerability, and bold performance style in the *Lulu* song cycle. In effect, these excessive or overflowing feelings echo the concept of the refrain discussed in chapter two. The refrain is a tool of deterritorialization, a means of opening new spaces. In terms of affect, refrains link affects across "temporal contours," allowing various "intensities" to morph, change, and extend in several directions.[373] This once again resembles the rhizome, and Wainwright's fans that were overwhelmed with emotions experienced the effects of many affects circulating at once. Fans at

[373] See Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie, "An Ethics of Everyday Infinities and Power," in *The Affect Theory Reader,* ed. Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 145-147.

the Sadler's Wells London show on April 13, 2010, are particularly vocal about their performance experience, and several note that the impact of Wainwright's song cycle performance stayed with them after they left the theatre.

The Sadler's Wells performance, the second stop on the tour, was a particularly strong performance on the tour circuit after a nearly disastrous opening performance in Southampton, England on April 11.[374] "Is anyone else still a bit dazed and emotional?" a poster asks three days after the concert.[375] One fan posts about her inability to articulate how Wainwright's performance made her feel: "I still feel rather stunned after last night – when we came out I couldn't quite put what I was feeling into words."[376] Another fan describes Wainwright's performance as "stunning," noting that "Rufus was outstanding – he played and sang beautifully. It was so intense I am still a wreck this afternoon."[377] A third poster speaks to the general enthusiasm and approval of Wainwright's audience that night in London explaining that he or she "didn't hear one negative comment – a guy next to me said to his friend that he didn't know how he felt, he was stunned beyond words."[378] A fan that had been to the Glasgow performance as well as Sadler's Wells reflects that the performance was "brave, honest, and moving… which

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[374] Posts from this thread appear in chapter four in a footnote discussion on the accuracy of the Sadler's Wells show.
[375] LMusic, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board* April 14, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016.
[376] bella_vista, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed November 5, 2015.
[377] Nutmeg3000, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed November 5, 2015.
[378] Domino, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed November 5, 2015.

left me quite stunned and reflective."[379] Yet another fan shares that the performance affected his or her emotional connection to Wainwright's music: "My love for Rufus has expanded to new places after last night, I'm still on a high from the concert and can't seem to get out of it…. I have no more words."[380] A poster describes this performance as having "emotion… passion, and… determination," going on to share that he or she "was so taken by the whole thing that I could not move from my seat" when the song cycle concluded.[381]

Affects are not only sticky, but are involved in a complex circulatory route, one refrain following another; the above fan comments signal that the stickiness of affect lasted long after the theatre's lights came on and Wainwright's body departed the performance space. Sedgwick notes that affects are "attached to things, people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects. Thus, one can be excited by anger, disgusted by shame, or surprised by joy."[382] I suggest that Sedgwick's descriptions of affect imply affect's rhizomatic nature, and posit that audiences experiencing the *Lulu* song cycle were stimulated positively and negatively by the grief, intense concentration, and fatigue that Wainwright was feeling during these performances. The confusing and unclear feelings fans express on the message boards are part of their emotional hangover. For some, recognizing a stellar Wainwright performance does not solely yield joy or admiration, but

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[379] samboss, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016.
[380] mariemjs, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 15, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016.
[381] aliceblue, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed January 15, 2016.
[382] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 19.

devastation ("wreck"), an inability to clearly recognize an intense emotion ("stunned"), or the powerlessness to articulate any feeling through language.

Posters in other parts of England encountered similar emotional hangovers post-performance, echoing the Sadler's Wells fans. A fan in Birmingham brought his or her mother along for her first live Wainwright experience, sharing that "[his or her mother] was totally mesmerized, spellbound, awestruck and [had] many other words of praise!"[383] In the case of the Birmingham fan, similar affect appears to circulate around the pair, perhaps intensifying the mother's experience. The RWMB poster does not describe his or her mother's reaction as painful, but as intense, arresting emotion. The shared musical experiences discussed in relation to *Lulu* exemplify the multiple affects that circulate within the performance space, as well as between two already connected individuals (parent and child).[384]

To make sense of the multiple circulating affects, I turn to Sedgwick's concept of "beside" within space. In *Touching Feeling* she defines "beside" as "compris[ing] a wide range of desiring, identifying, representing, repelling, paralleling, differentiating, rivaling, leaning, twisting, mimicking, withdrawing, attracting, aggressing, warping, and other relations."[385] Similarly, Wainwright's transmission of affect to his audience does not follow a direct path; rather, it is met with twists, turns, resistances, attractions, and a host of other routes it might take before "sticking" to audience members.[386] I argue that the notion of "beside" within queer space

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[383] cutemeerkat, "Rufus at Birmingham Symphony Hall…!," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 21, 2010, accessed November 5, 2015.

[384] This parent-child relationship mimics that of Wainwright's and McGarrigle's, parent and child bonded closely, even in death, through *and* to music.

[385] Ibid.

[386] Sedgwick, 8. Sedgwick discusses the etymology of the term "beside" as related to affect and space, explaining that "[b]eside permits a spacious agnosticism about several of the linear logics

bonds individuals who experience like, though not identical, emotional reactions to the affect in the performance space. The shared experiences Wainwright's audience members feel can thus yield moments of recognition with the affective object that are so powerful they stick with these individuals well into the next day or possibly longer. The "stickiness" of this type of affect also surrounds the process of bearing witness to another's pain, grief, or trauma, a sympathetic action that many of Wainwright's fans are vocal about upon reporting their *Lulu* experience.

Bearing Witness

Whether audience members knew it or not, many of them would spend the duration of the *Lulu* song cycle bearing witness to Wainwright's grief. Cvetokovich describes the process of bearing witness to a trauma survivor as "fraught with ambivalence rather than fulfilling the melodramatic fantasy that the trauma survivor will finally tell all and receive the solace of being heard by a willing and supportive listener."[387] She also notes that witnessing is not the same as confession, a topic feminist scholars Linda Alcoff, Laura Gray, Vicki Bell, and Janice Haaken have explored; witnessing "requires a kind of participation on the part of the listener that is not merely voyeuristic," meaning that it is not simply listening to someone's story, but rather understanding that speaking out, testifying, or breaking silence about trauma is "an ongoing process and performance."[388] The value of bearing witness extends far beyond allowing survivors to speak and be heard; it creates space for the "foundation of a political public

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that enforce dualistic thinking;" this resistance to dualism or linear logics contradicts both "beyond" and "beneath," which are closely tied to "implicit narrative[s] of…origin and telos."

[387] Cvetkovich, *Archive of Feelings,* 22.

[388] Ibid., 93-94.

culture."[389] In this section, I place fan reactions that exemplify how audience members willingly orient themselves toward Wainwright's affect in conversation with bearing witness. Thus, this discussion does not focus on audience members' empathetic responses, but considers their sympathetic responses to his performance where they opened their hearts to his grief, but related quite differently to his affect.

The recognition of Wainwright's pain is found in fan comments from various shows; one fan points out that the "obvious grief seem[s] to [*sic*] much for any man to bear."[390] This recognition of the affect circulating within the theatre indicates that the performance made many audience members feel "sadness"[391] and "awe rather than anxiety"[392] or other variations that describe feeling melancholy and amazed at once. The introspective and devoted fans that post on the RWMB acknowledge that Wainwright routinely evokes strong emotional reactions in his audiences, but even so, *Lulu's* performance reached an unusually intense emotional level. A RMWB poster shares his or her thoughts, admitting that there was a "tear in my eyes [*sic*] through most of it." He or she continues:

> Doing the album as an uninterrupted song cycle was a stroke of genius – it was wonderful being caught up in the deep, intense and rather complex mood, thoughts and feelings

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[389] Ibid., 194-195. The definitions of the process of witnessing cited here span discourse surrounding the Holocaust, incest and sexual abuse, and AIDS victims/survivors in Cvetkovitch's *An Archive of Feelings*.

[390] chamy, "TORONTO, ELGIN THEATRE, 15th JUNE 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* June 17, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015; Unfaded_Charms, "Sheffield, City Hall, Sat. 17th april," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 18, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015; ret, "Southampton Guildhall 11th April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 12, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.

[391] chamy, June 17, 2010.

[392] Unfaded_Charms, April 18, 2010.

> which inspired the album, and distractions like applause or photography would have only detracted from that and broken the spell somewhat.[393]

This comment offers an impression of the sincerity and strength of Wainwright's emotionally charged performance. It was an abnormal Wainwright performance because it was performed as a thematically linked song cycle as opposed to a collection of fan-favorite songs with a few new additions thrown in. The structure of the performance affected how the audience took in the show; as the comment from the Sadler's Wells London performance demonstrates, many audience members played along, or respected that the audience's behavior was as important to the song cycle experience as Wainwright's focused musical performance. This exemplifies the idea of bearing witness as not only being a passive experience for the listener, but an active engagement that respects and honors what the survivor shares, and how he or she wishes to express the traumatizing experience. Fans that oriented themselves positively toward Wainwright's affect were able to more fully absorb the total song cycle experience and immerse themselves in the music, text, and visuals emitting from Wainwright.

Other fans that positively oriented themselves toward Wainwright's affect speak about how the mood of the performance made them feel sympathetic emotions. A Brisbane fan from the October 15, 2010 tour stop describes the mood of the performance space: "…there was something especially profoundly moving about the first act – the pared back richness and emotion of it. it [*sic*] brought tears to my eyes and gave me goose bumps on more than one

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[393] itwasatrickpie, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 14, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.

occasion."[394] Reflecting upon the very emotional Northampton performance, the final stop on the *Lulu* tour, a fan describes the song cycle as:

> Unique, haunting, mesmerizing, sensational, moving, all at once. The no-applause restriction added depth and feeling to the whole experience. There were times when you could tell that Rufus' heart and soul were wide open on the stage. At one point, I think I saw that some of his makeup had run down his face from tears.[395]

Another fan at the October 24, 2010 show in Melbourne pronounces the song cycle as an extremely tense experience. He or she goes on to depict the way that silence in particular affected the space:

> [The silence] is a wonderful device on a lot of levels though – it forces each member of the audience to be alone with their own thoughts and feeling, to not be able to take their cues from the people around them, to experience some of that loneliness and aloneness that comes with grief – being surrounded by people yet unreachable.[396]

The introspection shared here echoes the various descriptions of trauma, grief, and mourning that have been discussed in this dissertation to this point. The affect circulating within that performance space did not only draw certain fans to focus on grief; it seemingly wormed its way deeply into their bodies and minds so that Wainwright's pain manifested itself as a visceral and yet somewhat distant discomfort in audience members. This kind of affect is noted at the Sadler's Wells performance, calling specific attention to Wainwright's aria:

> [T]he emotional tension rose from song to song, it was raw and got inside your head. it wasn't only a listening experience, when he got to "les feux" I felt physical pain, as I understood it will [*sic*] be over in no time. his interpretation of the song was like nothing I've ever heard.[397]

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[394] bruisesroses, "Brisbane Australia, QPAC Concert Hall October 15," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* October 17, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.
[395] Joel_N, "Northampton MA 15 December, Calvin Theatre," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* December 16, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.
[396] roman_candle, "Melbourne Australia, Palais Theatre, October 24," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board*, October 24, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.
[397] danielle2020, "London, Sadlers Wells, 13th April," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board*, April 14, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.

Yet another fan comments on the impact of "Les Feux d'Artifice t'Appellent" as well as the concluding song, "Zebulon:"

> I have to admit that during *Les Feux D'Artifice* I got a little choked up. That was the moment when it became evident that the spell broke and Rufus's protective bubble burst. You could tell that up until that point he was really trying to stay focused and not become overcome with emotions. When he finally got to Zebulon it was the most gravely *[sic]* performance I've ever witness him give.[398]

These statements acknowledge Wainwright's pain, while also expressing how his suffering affected people in attendance in turn. This suffering was emitted vocally, and as discussed in chapter three, the subconscious emergence of emotional distress. An example of this recognition of suffering and introspection is seen in a Northampton fan's poetic contemplation:

> Aside from the chill coming from the stage during Rufus' set
> And the feeling of comfort that was spread like a blanket over us in spite of it
> Sitting there at the piano, especially in profile, Rufus looked exactly like Kate.[399]

This poignant comment suggests that fans that knew and loved McGarrigle's music were, on some level, grieving her loss alongside Wainwright. As a result, this fan witnesses the absence of Wainwright's mother as much as the presence of his grief. This recognition likely would have also affected other fans familiar with McGarrigle's work, contributing to the intensity of their emotional reaction and their positive orientation toward Wainwright's performance. This subset of Wainwright's fans, those who were also longtime fans of his mother's music, is another example of how (sub)cultural capital functions within the larger Wainwright fan base. For those who actively mourned McGarrigle's death, this fan's nod to her absence and the ferocity of the fan base's support for Wainwright as he grieved demarks fans that "knew" McGarrigle from fans

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[398] TellingStories, "Royal Albert Hall London 22 November 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* November 26, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.
[399] ShadowWing, "Northampton MA 15 December, Calvin Theatre," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* December 17, 2010, accessed November 7, 2015.

that "knew of" her. McGarrigle's fans bear witness to her son's grief in her absence, an act that intensifies the experience of re-membering, honoring the dead, and actively supporting the loved ones left behind.

When one bears witness, she need not remain staid and expressionless; feeling moved by a person's story or testimony is a positive experience because, as Cvetkovich discusses in relation to ACT UP, a direct action advocacy group focusing on fighting HIV/AIDS and supporting those affected by the disease, it can result in movement forward that can help many people who are unable to speak for themselves. The fan comments shared here do not result in political activism, but they do open up the door to conversation about what loss feels like, especially for those who might not have experienced a long term grieving process after a significant death. Being able to describe what sorrow feels like (feeling "choked up," "physical pain," or tension) is an important step in normalizing the grieving process and understanding that it is universal in one way or another. Becoming emotionally vulnerable in response to another person's grief or pain also assists in normalizing male expressions of grief in public in particular; rather than feeling embarrassed, outraged, or disgusted by Wainwright's grief, these fans embrace the affect surrounding them and try to sympathize, if not directly empathize, with his sorrowful and melancholic performance (which most fans understood as emblematic of his real-life experience with loss).

Sonic Landscape and the Musical Community

As many of Wainwright's fans' have indicated in their posts, music is a communal activity, for better or worse. Going to a live musical event does not always yield what one expects; this makes the liveness factor exciting as well as potentially frustrating. But no matter how a performance is perceived, people commune around music; they gather together to

experience a live performance, or a group of musicians perform as a small or large ensemble to write music, practice playing together, or record their efforts. Christopher Small writes about the concept of musicking, which means that one takes "part, in any capacity in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing."[400] These activities can be passive or active, so long as one is present in some capacity; one participates in the communal act of musicking by being conscious, not by necessarily enjoying the music. Importantly, Small proposes that musicking "establishes in the place where it is happening a set of relationships" that are "between person and person, between individual and society, between humanity and the natural world and even perhaps the supernatural world." The meaning of musicking is found in those relational spaces.[401] Richard Leppert echoes Small's argument, explaining that music is "never solely about its sound and the act of hearing," but involve physical, intellectual, and spiritual components that add to the creation of meaning.[402] Small and Leppert indicate that music is not merely a practice or art form that one experiences with a single sense. Music affects listeners and performers physically, emotionally, and mentally, allowing individuals to connect on several levels with the sounds and sensations of music. The communal nature of music is strongest when like-minded individuals, or fans of the performing artist, come together to experience the affect of live music.

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[400] Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover: University Press of New England,1998), 9.
[401] Ibid., 13.
[402] Richard Leppert, "Reading the Sonoric Landscape," in *The Sound Studies Reader,* ed. Jonathan Sterne, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 408-409.

As the previous section explored, Wainwright's audience did come together at his shows and experienced, positively or negatively, the affect of live performance. The posts cited above specifically focus on how audience members, some of whom are die-hard fans, individually felt within the queer performance space. However, thinking of the audience as a musical community is also important to understanding the relationship between queer space and the transmission of affect in live performance. Philip Auslander recognizes that audiences seek community in live performance, but argues "communality is not a function of liveness." He sees the "sense of community arising from being part of an audience."[403] Wainwright's performances created an environment for listeners to engage with the private aspects of the music, while also communally sharing in those spoken and unspoken similarities and differences among them. Rather than failing to commune with his audience, I argue that Wainwright successfully used live performance to connect with his audience in a more visceral way than his recorded performance could because of the affect he transmitted within the performance space. On top of that, as I argued in chapter four, Wainwright connected to his mother's memory through this act of public grieving and re-membering; in turn, audience members familiar with her musical legacy also engaged in that grief and re-membering. This connection contributes to the queering of the performance space, inciting the transmission of affect between himself and the audience without interacting with them directly.

Group Affect and Community

Audiences coming together for a musical performance usually have one important thing in common: their admiration for or interest in the performing artist. Despite the foundational idea in group theory that "people in crowds lose their individuality in favor of a common mind," not

[403] Auslander, *Liveness,* 56.

every audience member will perceive the performance in the same way.[404] While crowd studies tends to think about large group dynamics in relation to violence or aggression, I am more interested in discovering how Wainwright's audiences felt that their participation in the live show is a communal experience, and how their devotion to his art, as fans, impacts the affect that they felt in the performance space. However, the performance space is not in an isolated bubble, free from distractions, as one fan that attended the Stockholm show complains. He or she appears to be caught somewhere in the middle of feeling excited and moved by the performance; then, as the result of other audience members' disapproval of the song cycle, the fan orients himself or herself toward the disruptive audience members and away from the performance:

> First set is really demanding, and I was working up a really good buzz, Martha gave me goose bumps all over… Idiotic tardy people came in, sat close to me – and one of them started giggling! And he giggled through the rest of the set!... He was obviously trying not to, and I probably wouldn't have cared as much if it was a regular show, *but it really killed my buzz*.[405]

This comment suggests that the disruptive behavior of some audience members not in tune with the positive affect circulating directly affected this fan. Brennan explains, "emotions of two are not the same as emotions of one plus one. If I emit one emotion and you emit another, we may both of us take onboard the effects of this new composite."[406] This example sheds light on what the Stockholm fan experiences when her "buzz" is killed as a result of an audience member's laughter. He may not have found the performance funny, but rather extremely uncomfortable (an obvious effect of the queer space) and laughs in order to release confusing emotions. Even so, his

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[404] Brennan, *Transmission of Affect,* 53. See chapter three, "Transmission in Groups," for a thorough literature review of group psychology and theories of the group.
[405] Katzenjammer, "STOCKHOLM, SWE – May 27 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* May 28, 2010, accessed November 10, 2015.
[406] Brennan, *Transmission of Affect,* 51.

out of the ordinary reaction (by which I mean disruptive behavior at a live performance) changes the fan's orientation toward Wainwright's performance as affect surrounding him or her "stuck."

A similar example from the Ipswich show reveals a bright counterpoint to the negative comments made about Wainwright's performance there:

> Tonight is about understanding music, understanding the emotion which only music can seem to stir... This deeply personal connection is what Rufus Wainwright is sharing with us this evening. It's like living through the pages of his personal diary as he ponders his mother's mortality and the relationships with his family.[407]

This fan appeals to the forum to think about how the song cycle is a moment of solidarity within the fan community. In the performance space, he or she connects the practice of musicking to re-membering through the connection of a favorite or important song that evokes a strong emotion with Wainwright's performance that is deeply personal but publicly available.

Comments from a Birmingham audience member, another show at which some fans were displeased, states:

> I listened to the mixed comments of people around me at the concert and it's clear that most 'don't get it' and are just out for a night's entertainment… It is more than 'just a concert' it's a very beautiful, personal and moving experience. I guess I'd rather be part of the minority who 'get Rufus' than those who unfortunately for them, have failed to connect with the music and his performance.[408]

The comment "I'd rather be part of the minority…" offers a way of understanding the Wainwright fandom as a group of individuals who are not only appreciative of his musical talent, but care deeply about his personal experiences and how those life experiences directly affect his music. This brings to mind another kind of counter-performance that Mark Duffett explores in his work on fandom. He states: "As well as responding to music or spoken invitations, counter-

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[407] Benners, "Ipswich Regent Theatre 29 April, 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 29, 2010, accessed November 2015.
[408] dissolved_girl, "Rufus at Birmingham Symphony Hall…!", *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 21, 2010, accessed November 10, 2015.

performing can also mean supporting a performer as one might do a loved one."[409] The Birmingham fan's word choice – "failed to connect with the music and his performance" – strongly suggests that audience members who are not in tune with Wainwright's affect are not, in fact, fans, but closed off individuals who were not able to open themselves up to a new musical experience. This does not necessarily equate love of the performer with positive orientation toward the performance; even the most devoted fans critique Wainwright's performance some of the time. Fans, whether they aesthetically enjoy *Lulu* or not, are able to grasp the emotional depth and gravity of the thematic material and, at the very least, respect Wainwright's bold decision to grieve publicly and lay his vulnerability out for all to witness.

"Drowned in Rufusness"

The passion that many Wainwright fans feel for his performances and the concern they almost all share for his well-being is reflected in a post from a fan at the second Melbourne show on October 25, 2010. This post ponders the palpable affect in the performance space and the difficulty he or she has in explaining that feeling to people outside of the fandom:

> I have recently been trying to describe this feeling/phenomena to people but I'm sure its [*sic*] something that has to be experienced first hand to be understood. Do you think they pump something into the air at the Rufus concerts to cause such a change to our normal chemistry which so alters us when we hear the amazing sound of this beautiful soulful songbird. I was telling my sister… about… my painful grief over missing the National Theatre concert... She impatiently told me i *[sic]* was obsessing like an immature teenager and to stop it and other harsh words to that effect.[410]

His or her "painful grief" over missing a Wainwright show (though he or she saw Wainwright's October 24 performance at a different theatre the night before), underscores the intensity of her

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[409] Duffett, "Fan Words," in *Popular Music Fandom,* ed. Mark Duffett, (New York: Routledge, 2014), 58.

[410] vida, "Melbourne Australia, National Theatre, October 25," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* October 30, 2010, accessed November 10, 2015.

admiration of Wainwright's talent, but also hints at the exclusivity of the Wainwright fandom. Within the fandom, Wainwright's musical heritage is common knowledge, his personal struggles are known, and fans are typically up to date on important news concerning his personal and professional life. For many fans, myself included, Wainwright's music is a place of refuge during trying personal times, and because he is not a hugely popular artist, people not inclined toward his sound or musical style do not comprehend fans' intense interest. Thus, the fan forum itself is a space of collusion, or what Duffett defines as "the process by which fans take action in order to maximize their pleasures by fulfilling roles or interacting with other agents."[411] Other agents in this example are active fans on the RWMB, a space that this fan's sister does not see as a valid or perhaps necessary space for her sibling to visit. This example brings attention to the idea of community as sacred in a fandom because it is comprised of like-minded individuals who may not agree on everything the object of their devotion or admiration may do, but can all agree that the artist has influenced each fan in a significant and unique way. As a result, I position fans as different from audience members at *Lulu* shows because fans are more invested in understanding the performance as opposed to merely enjoying it for entertainment's sake. This relates closely to Duffett's work on analyzing the fan word "love" in relation to the stars and celebrities they adore: "Love is therefore a boundary word. It defines the edge of the knowing field through which fans self-identity: *if you* quite like *a recording artist then you are not a fan, but if you love them you are one* (italics original)."[412] This kind of self-identity thus infuses fans with inherent understanding, knowing, or empathy directed at the artist in question. In

[411] Mark Duffett, "Fan Words," 156.
[412] Ibid., 160.

Wainwright's fandom, this is best exemplified in posts that do not only comment on individuals' feelings, but reflect upon the emotional state of Wainwright during the *Lulu* tour.

Wainwright's first show of the tour, Southampton, England, was a notoriously sloppy performance, and fans were both critical and understanding of the emotional toll the performance took on Wainwright. One fan speaks to the discomfort that the audience felt as a group and how the performance, as a whole, is an overwhelming experience:

> It was a strange situation for *us,* but he knew what he was doing…he had some practise and it all come[s] from his mind, so everything we felt was supposed to be there. The awkwardness of not being able to express emotions, praise and excitement during the show, the feelings that are then bottled up, and don't get a chance to recuperate…it was all part of it. The overwhelming staging and lighting, brooding, dark, indeed macabre as someone said before only adds to it. You are basically drowned in Rufusness….[413]

This is an especially important comment to put in conversation with the idea of composite affect Brennan writes about in regard to group affect. This fan shares his or her perspective on the stressful performative aspects of the song cycle while understanding simultaneously that the circumstances in which affect circulates the performance are premeditated. Wainwright's performance decisions clearly were not made to make the audience comfortable, and perhaps this is reflective of his emotional state; in his state of grief, he does not seek solace at the piano, but intentionally queers the space by blatantly dragging his grief on stage with him and offering it to his audience to share, reject, embrace, or perhaps even fear. No matter how audience members orient themselves toward Wainwright and the circulation of his and other audience members' affect, people physically in the performance space, at every stop on the tour, contribute to the overall group affect. Comfortable, upset, astonished, or devastated, every audience member witnessed Wainwright's grief as a community; not everyone was a fan, nor was everyone able or

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[413] Lys, "Southampton Guidhall 11th April 2010," *Rufus Wainwright Message Board,* April 12, 2010, accessed November 10, 2015.

willing to travel alongside Wainwright on his emotional journey. Everyone, however, participated in musicking within the performance space.

Conclusion

Musicking has been discussed in this chapter as a way of communing with an artist and fellow audience members. It is an experience that allows one to empathize with an artist's message or performance, bear witness to aspects of his or her life, or reject the feelings the artist attempts to evoke. Musicking is also a method of healing. For Wainwright, performing was a method of healing from the eternally gaping wound the death of a loved one leaves. For myself, musicking has been a crutch at difficult times, a way of understanding myself, and a method of bonding with the closest people in my life. When things are bad, music is quite often not the comfort it could be, whether the catalyst is a break-up, an argument, a personal failure, or the illness or death or a beloved pet or family member. However, in time, music has always been the salve that soothes my emotional pain.

When my dad was diagnosed with brain cancer in 1995, playing music became one of the main things that kept my high school years on track. Music had always been a great joy and escape for my mom and grandpa, who played together in a band for over 20 years. My grandpa's death from lung cancer in 1996 and my dad's illness effectively ended her part-time music career. Even though her musical escape was gone, the one thing she insisted upon was that I keep studying music because music was a way out of the chaos at home mentally and emotionally. As a result of the stress, pain, and drama of those years spent watching loved ones suffer, music, any music, made my mom cry within a few notes. This was especially true of songs that she used to play with her dad. I did not have the same kind of broad aversion to music after my dad's death as my mom had when her father died, but I am left with the instinct to cover my ears if I hear any

interpretation of Queen's "Who Wants to Live Forever," the last song I heard the evening my dad died in 1998. I can't remember now what I may have listened to in the first few months after he was gone; I had been preparing for auditions for college and was thus entrenched in Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin piano repertoire. Safe music. Songs without words. I do remember that my mom, once again, stopped listening to anything with words around that time, as if the articulation of love or despair, happiness or sadness made her pain unbearable. A marked moment in our grieving processes, in our healing, was when we began to share musical performances again beyond my piano recitals; as I finished high school and entered music conservatory, we frequently attended faculty recitals, conservatory performances, and Chicago Symphony Orchestra concerts. Stepping out in this way was a way of reclaiming our joy after so much illness and sorrow in our small family.

When I became a Rufus Wainwright fan, my mom was the first person I shared his music with, and we have attended various performance together since 2011. Thus, I speak from a point of personal understanding when I discuss Wainwright's fans' enthusiasm, genuine empathy, and emotional identification as part of a community of concertgoers during live shows. Though I did not see the *Lulu* tour live in 2010, the majority of shows I have been to were solo shows very similar to the second half of the *Lulu* tour where he was his usual joking, slightly flamboyant self. As I became more familiar with Wainwright's musical family and learned of the extent of his public mourning, I realized that his re-membering his mother through music deeply affected me. While I find it easier to go about my life not overtly re-membering my dad, I was taken by Wainwright's continual recollection of his mother's music, life, and their relationship.[414] I

[414] I owe this to the stigmatizing experience of losing a parent while in high school. I cringe to recall the class sympathy cards, the silence from my then-closest friend when I called to tell her

understood the power, the necessity for some, of using music to heal, even if it is an emotionally exhausting and painful experience at first.

For fans in attendance at various stops on the *Lulu* tour, Wainwright's affect stuck differently to each individual, but every person had some reaction that affected how he or she digested the performed song cycle. Fan commentary and discussion on RWMB offer glimpses into how Wainwright's fans processed his entertaining, yet intensely serious performances. Fans' recorded thoughts and feelings are integral to understanding *Lulu* in the context of this dissertation. A fan message forum is not only a space in which people can explore their obsessions, interests, or connections with a particular artist; it is a space, like the theatre, the concert hall, or the small club, in which people who share an intense bond with an artist's creative output can share the experience of being a musicking community.

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that my dad had died while most of the school was participating in Homecoming, and even the awkward moments in college and my early twenties (when I was young enough that parental death was rare) when people assumed my parents were divorced and he was out of the picture because death was less common. Not unlike my best friend (who lost both of his parents while he was still in high school) I have taken the "it is what it is" approach as a measure of self-preservation. My dad's death obviously shaped me in profound ways, and that he never got to know me as an adult is something I try not to dwell on.

CONCLUSION: HEALING THROUGH MUSIC

Though mourning a death is an extremely common human experience, there is no one way to deal with the mixed feelings that grief conjures. Some people surround themselves with friends and family, while others isolate themselves, finding social interaction painful. Music is a language that has the power to transgress the walls that some people put up in times of emotional pain. For Rufus Wainwright, grieving through music was the way he dealt with his mother's death, and mourning publicly ensured that he both surrounded himself with people and sought solitary comfort lost in his own unique style of musical performance.

In this dissertation I have argued that Wainwright is neither a predictable nor private musician, and his performances mark him as both a charismatic entertainer and emotionally vulnerable. His performance styles and musical influences stem from many established genres of classical and popular music. His engagement and appropriation of these styles turn familiar influences into something new, or something previously unseen or unheard. In *Lulu,* Wainwright used the classical song cycle form to re-imagine the popular music album, borrowing from art song traditions and rock, pop, and indie music genres. His piano accompaniment and vocal music are married in a way that makes them equally important, yet complementary. The *Lulu* song cycle would not be what it is without both parts working together in collaboration. While this idea is not new, one artist performing both roles of pianist and vocalist shakes up the traditional performance practice expectations of a classical song cycle as I discussed in chapters one and two. Similarly, Wainwright's vocal performances on the album and in the live YouTube videos I analyzed in chapters three and four were not the same from song to song within the cycle; the "grain" heard in Wainwright's voice signaled that grief was being expressed through

song, specifically through various singing styles. The connection that exists on the RWMB I discussed in chapter five is symbolic of how Wainwright's live presence deeply affects many people, stretching across international boundaries, physical space and time, and life experiences. Within an emotional space laced with grief and the after-effects of trauma, Wainwright's affect sticks to audience members so that those who are inclined to turn toward him vicariously experience the pain, loss, and love he exposes in performance. For those who turn away from Wainwright, the performance space becomes awkward, unwelcoming, or perceived as hostile. However, Wainwright's insistence on performing deeply personal songs in front of complete strangers is a model that American society in particular could practice more often in an attempt to destigmatize public displays of pain and grief that surpass the "allowable" instances of a funeral, a memorial, or a national day of mourning.

More than merely performing sad music at a difficult time in his life, Wainwright's performances of *Lulu* created a model of difference that stemmed from an "in-between," hybrid genre of music and vocal performance style and extended all the way to his performativity and the discussions surrounding his global tour. He is, as I argued, an artist who represents the rhizome and continuously deterritorializes performance norms, only to reterritorialize them and create something totally unique. Wainwright is a queer artist because he transgresses norms and pushes the boundaries of what can and should be performed publicly. His intense, emotional, and heart-wrenching live performance touched, irritated, and consoled audiences, revealing the power Wainwright has as an artist to get under audience members' skin. Without this kind of sway over his fans and admirers, I do not believe his public grieving would have been as effective (or affective) as it was for members of the fan forum.

Wainwright's public performances of grief and mourning analyzed in this study were not power plays for attention, but acts of healing. Sara Ahmed writes in *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* "the scar is a sign of the injury: a good scar allows healing, it even covers over, but the covering always exposes the injury, reminding us of how it shapes the body."[415] In this conclusion, I offer three specific examples of Wainwright's performances that suggest that Wainwright's grieving through music in 2010 symbolizes the healing scar that mended itself and faded in the six years since his mother's death. The first example is a cover of Kate McGarrigle's "Walking Song," which Wainwright arranged for solo piano and typically performed as the finale of his encore.[416] The second example is the song "Candles" that Wainwright wrote after McGarrigle's death and appeared on *Out of the Game* (2012), the first post-*Lulu* album. The third example is an old song, "Beauty Mark," the first song Wainwright wrote about his mother, that, after her death, functions as a nod to McGarrigle's memory.

Wainwright's decision to learn and perform "Walking Song" suggests that his grieving through music did not end once he doffed the mourning gown and began talking to his audience after the intermission post-song cycle. Adding this song to the very end of the *Lulu* show could have been a way of communing with McGarrigle, recalling once more her presence despite her absence. Despite its melancholy solo piano arrangement, "Walking Song" is an example of turning to nostalgia and memory for emotional support and comfort.

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[415] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 202.
[416] "Rufus Wainwright – The Walking Song (Royal Albert Hall 22 Nov 2010), YouTube video, 5:19, posted by "Lucie Clabrough," November 25, 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IEJ_WpPoD40.

At Royal Albert Hall, November 22, 2010, Wainwright had a particularly difficult and vulnerable moment singing this last verse.[417] His voice had a tired, dark quality resembling passivity and fear singing the first line; he had to cut 'friend' short because of tears and the need to swallow before continuing on; and he paused for a moment to sigh heavily and murmur "Isn't life grand?" between the two words, "walking" and "blues." Some audience members chuckled at this break, but the vast majority's silence underscored that they understood Wainwright was taking a moment to collect himself before finishing the song on a melancholy, but touching note.

This trying verse illustrated the grief that came alive at that particular moment, despite 11 months passing since McGarrigle's death; other performances from this show are completely opposite in mood.[418] Wainwright's "Walking Song" performance erased those light moments, replacing them with the memory of mourning that had not yet dissipated completely, but was not as all-encompassing as at the beginning of that tumultuous year. Holding on to his mother's work, something Wainwright and his sister Martha both have done frequently since McGarrigle's passing, could be a way of reframing her death as something less finite because her voice comes alive in the music she left behind.

This was a direct and immediate form of re-membering his mother; his live performance alone on stage exposed his vulnerability through vocal breaks or singing while crying and his physical exhaustion after performing a technically demanding song cycle without costume,

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[417] "This song like this walk I find hard to end
Be my lover or be my friend
In sneakers or boots or regulation shoes
Walking beside you I'll never get the walking blues,"
Kate McGarrigle, "Walking Song," on *Dancer With Bruised Knees* (Hannibal, 1977), compact disc.

[418] This was the show he announced his engagement to Weisbrodt and had campy, light-hearted fun with singing Judy Garland songs like "Zing! Went the Strings of My Heart" and "The Trolley Song" with accompanist Stephen Oremus.

multimedia effects, or a character to hide behind. While this song was performed near the end of the *Lulu* tour, Wainwright's mother's death was still quite fresh. The performance of "Walking Song" throughout that tour is one of the first illustrations of how Wainwright was healing, slowly but surely, using art and creativity as a purpose to keep moving forward.

Shortly after McGarrigle died in 2010, Wainwright wrote the song "Candles." The song is reminiscent of McGarrigle's style of songwriting, simple but poignant, and the collection of family members who participated in its recording simulates a final solemn sendoff. The closing track on *Out of the Game,* "Candles"' instrumentation features guitar, accordion, strings, and choral accompaniment performed by friends and family members; the final sung verse includes snare drum, and the song concludes with melancholy bagpipes. Wainwright explained that "Candles" was his production entirely, despite collaborating with Mark Ronson on this record: "It has my family, it has bagpipes, it has funeral drums… I knew where to go with it. Mark was there the whole time listening, appreciating and supporting me – mostly emotionally. It wasn't an easy song to do."[419]

"Candles" is a narrative about his attempts to light candles in memory of his mother near his home in New York City. As he explains in promotional material for *Out of the Game*, while his mother was ill he lit candles wherever he was touring and believed that this Catholic gesture helped her outlast her terminal diagnosis and survive for three years.[420] This song describes the

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[419] Joe Bosso, "Interview: Rufus Wainwright on his new album, Out Of The Game," *musicradar,* April 24, 2012, http://www.musicradar.com/news/guitars/interview-rufus-wainwright-on-his-new-album-out-of-the-game-540907.

[420] Wainwright also describes in this video how lighting candles at Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris was how McGarrigle initially came to peace with his sexuality; she did not react positively when he came out to her on their trip to Paris as a teenager. Gary Nadeau, "Rufus Wainwright Webisode Out of the Game," Vimeo video, 4:28*,* posted by Gary Nadeau, last modified 4 years ago, https://vimeo.com/40846996.

difficulty he had when he went to three separate Manhattan churches and all were out of candles. Finally, while in Paris, he tried to light a candle in Notre Dame, and was successful. Wainwright describes this experience as a moment of communion with his deceased mother in which he took comfort despite her passing. Though this song was written while his grief over McGarrigle's loss was fresh, he performed it after living through the *Lulu* tour and working through his grief. Singing it at the beginning of his shows a cappella in 2012 was a way of invoking her presence and re-membering her, much like embodying the Lulu character was a way of negotiating her presence and absence. Perhaps even more importantly, Wainwright's vocal performance at this point in his life no longer contains the gruffness and rawness of emotional pain and trauma. He invokes and re-members his mother, but does not embody the Lulu character in which to do so. With the passage of time Wainwright has worked through his grief, ending up at a different point from where he started, and a different man as a result of learning to navigate the world with his mother in it.

In the 2014 and 2015 solo performances that I attended, Wainwright included his mother's memory when he chose to open his set without comment with "Beauty Mark" (*Rufus Wainwright,* 1998), the first song he wrote about his mother. The inclusion of "Beauty Mark," a sweet and honest comparison of the ways that mother and son are similar and different, is touching for fans that know what the song is about and why Wainwright performs it (once more to re-member Kate). This is, however, a very old song, and Wainwright's repertoire is filled with songs about his family, some cheerful, some tongue-in-cheek, and some fraught with painful images. What this gesture reveals is that Wainwright has not stopped re-membering his mother through music despite the fact that he has moved past the initial difficulties of mourning; he has, however, reached a point of healing, the covering over of the scar, to recall Ahmed.

Wainwright shared with me that watching others perform *Lulu* songs has been a way of bringing the *Lulu* concept back into his life even after he let that experience go:

> Occasionally I've had [the songs] performed by an opera singer and a pianist and that's been really, really fascinating to watch because it kind of brings back the whole concept, but in a much more classical tradition. Most song cycles are performed where one doesn't applaud in between numbers and waits until the very end, but in terms of the whole Lulu tour when I dressed up in the whole outfit, we had that lighting, the Douglas Gordon movie, I was in full throttle in terms of mourning for my mother's death. … [T]hat was a very special and sacred period that I had to really let go of once the tour was over, which was good to do.[421]

In 2010 he grieved through music, but by 2016 he had somewhat recovered and the pain was not as immediate. I do not suggest that Wainwright is "over" his mother's death, but that he has worked through the loss, re-membering her through music. Perhaps Wainwright would be less inclined to have grieved through music for his mother in 2010 had he not been an extremely personal songwriter from the beginning of his career. The fact remains that his familial relationships remain songwriting fodder, a common thread for all of the Wainwrights. Rarely predictable, Wainwright's deeply personal narratives, varied songwriting style, and bold performativity have resulted in the circulation of some of the most honest, heartfelt, and emotionally complex music performed today.

Lulu can be understood as an elegy in twelve parts through which Wainwright sought to communicate on a private level with McGarrigle, on a subconscious level with himself, and publicly with fans and casual listeners. The *Lulu* song cycle embodies musical sophistication and is a tribute to Wainwright's love of his mother inasmuch as he uses his piano skills and distinctive voice to remember snippets from the past, reconcile the present, and dream of the future. Significantly, *Lulu* is a piece of art that normalizes male public mourning, forcing

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[421] Wainwright, Salerno, 2016.

audiences to make a choice: will they come to grips with the realities of death expressed in the music or reject the performance utterly? Further, the song cycle offers a version of masculinity that embraces emotional openness and lived experience, rejecting toxic masculinity that devalues sensitivity and displays of so-called weakness. Though this dissertation cannot encompass all that *Lulu* means, has meant to Wainwright and his fans, or will mean over the course of Wainwright's career (which is far from over), it does offer a framework for making sense of the complexity, sophistication, and non-hegemonic trajectory of art that was created and performed against the background of grief.

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APPENDIX A. HSRB APPROVAL LETTER

BGSU
BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY
Office of Research Compliance

DATE:	February 25, 2015
TO:	Stephanie Salerno
FROM:	Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE:	[672950-3] “It’s the True Loves That Make Me Want to Cry”: Rufus Wainwright, Queer Performativity, and Public Grief
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Revision
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	February 24, 2015
EXPIRATION DATE:	December 17, 2015
REVIEW TYPE:	Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY:	Expedited review category # 7

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll *1* participant. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on December 17, 2015. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.

APPENDIX B. HSRB CONSENT LETTER

Informed Consent for Rufus Wainwright

I, Stephanie Salerno, am a doctoral student at Bowling Green State University in the American Culture Studies program. Under the advisement of Dr. Jeremy Wallach, I am writing my dissertation on *All Days Are Nights: Songs for Lulu* by Rufus Wainwright and the live tour that accompanied this album's release. My research is focusing on how this album and tour are examples of queer vocality, queer performativity, and queer space, and how these performances of public grief created a reciprocal emotional experience between artist and audience.

You, Rufus Wainwright, as composer and performer of the album and tour, are being asked to participate in an interview over e-mail or phone to discuss the experience of the *Lulu* tour and performing public grief. Your consent will be a verbal agreement to participate and does not require a signature.

The purpose of this research is to better understand why we turn to art in times of loss to heal. This is an area of study that has been well developed generally, but I am specifically interested in performances in popular music. The benefits to you as a participant will not result in any monetary compensation. Rather, this is an opportunity to participate in an academic project that will shed light on your work in a way that is different from journalistic interviews.

In order to study grief, I will study the *Lulu* album and analyze it musically and lyrically. I will study live performances that are posted on YouTube of the *Lulu* tour, including performances of the cover of Kate McGarrigle's "The Walking Song." I will survey the Rufus Wainwright Message Board threads that deal with the *Lulu* tour. I will view and analyze the documentary *Sing Me the Songs That Say I Love You: A Celebration of Kate McGarrigle.* I will also employ personal narrative that reflects upon my own experiences listening to the album, viewing performance videos, and working through my own loss of a parent. Finally, this interview you agree to will shed light upon your experiences performing the *Lulu* tour while in mourning. This interview, if by phone, will take no more than one hour. If it is done by returning an e-mail, the time commitment should roughly be the same.

The interview I am seeking is completely voluntary. You may refuse the interview or stop the interview at any time. You may refuse to answer certain questions. By agreeing to participate, you consent to be quoted directly in my dissertation. As you are the subject of this dissertation, anonymity is not a viable option.

The information shared, if by phone, will be recorded on a hand held voice recording device for reference (likely my smartphone which will be password protected). Only I will have access to this data. If the information is shared via e-mail, it will be for my eyes only and accessible on a password protected computer and iPad. A print out of the e-mail response will be kept in my files at home and a pdf version will be saved on my computer.

228 Shatzel Hall
Bowling Green, OH 43403-0214
Fax: 419-372-0330

Telephone: 419-372-2796
Email: ccs@bgsu.edu

There are no major risks associated with this project. Some of the things discussed might be emotionally upsetting. You may pause or end the interview at any time (see above). Your refusal to participate or the cessation of participation before completion of the interview will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University.

I may be contacted via e-mail at sasteph@bgsu.edu or by phone at 708-212-7575. My advisor, Dr. Jeremy Wallach, may be contacted at jeremyw@bgsu.edu or by phone at 419-372-8204. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have any questions about my research. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research. Thank you for your time.

Acknowledgement of Consent:

You have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. You have had the opportunity to have all your questions answered and you have been informed that your participation is completely voluntary. You agree to participate in this research.