Imperial Butterfly

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IMPERIAL BUTTERFLY

by

DAG ROTHSCHILD

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

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Imperial Butterfly:  
A Case Study  

by  

Dag Rothschild  

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Liberal Studies in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

Imperial Butterfly: A Case Study

by

Dag Rothschild

Advisor: Jeffrey Taylor

This thesis will examine a conceptual album that I composed, an exploration of the interaction between music and language and its effects on human emotions. I will attempt to demonstrate—in this thesis and in my composition—that when music and language come together in specific combinations, a possibility opens up, not simply for the creation of emotion but for something much more profound: personal transformation. This transformation takes place mentally (through language), and physically/molecularly/bodily (through music). It is, in essence, a kind of healing, what I have come to call “sonic nourishment.”

Imperial Butterfly follows one character, a woman (whom I call the “narrator”), through this process of transformation; a musical and emotional odyssey. This odyssey is my main character’s journey toward wholeness, which develops in the course of nine songs and nine corresponding emotions. The focus of this analysis is printed scores and sound recordings (rather than the aural experience of the listener, which is largely subjective). The dissection of the
written score has helped me to unlock hidden pathways through which the narrator had to travel, and has also helped me pinpoint how the interaction between the musical components and the narrative shaped the journey of the narrator. In developing this study, I have intimately explored the areas of narrative, theme, harmony, and melody—how they influence emotional states, and the way in which they bring forth self-transformation. As a result, I have laid a foundation for a much deeper entry into the still-unmapped body of research in music cognition. Yet, because of the magnitude of this study, I will only concentrate on the structural framework of the music and the narrative in my composition, Imperial Butterfly, without addressing the acoustic or neurological connections between music and language.

Please note that my first hypothesis was to investigate whether music does indeed support narrative, and in the process, create the experience of an emotional state. My findings were that music can open doorways to understanding, and that there is an inner mechanism connecting these two domains through their acoustic properties that is reinforced inside the body with the help of the nervous system. These conclusions became further evident as the musical sequence was composed before I set out to investigate the relationship between music, language, and healing, having been inspired by my own personal experience.

Because of this last fact, many questions will arise regarding the science behind my thesis. What I would like to emphasize, however, is that the experience came first. The explanation, the attempt to understand, now follows.
I would like to thank:

Professor Jeffrey Taylor, for being a beacon in the dark waters of the Graduate Center.

Xieyi Zhang, for your insight. Without you, I would not have been able to prove my theory, and would never have known that my narrator found home.

Jacob Sachs-Mishalanie, for your intuition, and for leading my narrator toward home in “Pandora’s Viola.”

George, for standing behind this project from the beginning until the end.
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LIST OF MUSIC SCORES

Introduction

This thesis will examine a conceptual album that I composed, an exploration of the interaction between music and language and its effects on human emotions. I will attempt to demonstrate—in this thesis and in my composition—that when music and language come together in specific combinations, a possibility opens up, not simply for the creation of emotion but for something much more profound: personal transformation. This transformation takes place mentally (through language), and physically/molecularly/bodily (through music). It is, in essence, a kind of healing, what I have come to call “sonic nourishment.”

The interaction between music and language has been under investigation by scholars, musicians, and philosophers for hundreds of years. All were preoccupied by the same question I ask in this work: What makes the relationship between these two domains so special and what effect do they have on a listener when combined? Apart from their ability to evoke aesthetic experience, both music and language convey meaning. Language enables people to reference specific entities and concepts, and helps to formulate thoughts about them (Patel, p. 301). Musical meaning is quite different; it reaches beyond linguistic meaning in that music not only signifies but also articulates subtle varieties of feelings that language cannot name.¹ Language on its own has the power to describe various emotional states, but when music and language join

forces, they bring to life an experience of those emotions.²

Imperial Butterfly follows one character, a woman (whom I call the “narrator”), through this process of transformation; a musical and emotional odyssey. This odyssey is my main character’s journey toward wholeness, which develops in the course of nine songs and nine corresponding emotions. It is the tale of a woman who loses her false self through spiritual surrender and death, and ultimately regains a new self through resurrection.

Each stage in the nine-stage process of Imperial Butterfly is written as a song, titled as follows: “My Polish Heart,” “Hush Velvet Kitty,” “Wonder Tales,” “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” “Black & White Smiles,” “Needles of Mother,” “Sassafras & Rain,” “Pandora’s Viola,” and “Violet Fusion.” The songs in Imperial Butterfly are chapters in a metaphorical tale of two selves battling each other within a single person. The songs build upon each other—lyrically and musically—creating a sonic texture that evolves as the story unfolds. The amalgam of music, language, and emotion support the lyrical content through the harmonic progressions, as well as the melodic and rhythmic structure, which lead and enhance the narrative, bolster its development, and ultimately lead the narrator “home.” The narrator’s transformation is only possible through this interplay between the harmonic progression, the melody (what I will refer to throughout as the “voice persona”), and the narrator (“lyrical persona”). These three elements, as it were, are treated almost like three separate characters.

From the beginning of the work, the narrator is engaged in an internal dialogue where the fracturing of her self takes place. This existential battle continues until the end, when all of her separate “selves” fuse (harmony, melody, language) and the narrator becomes whole at last. In the nine-stage sonic journey of Imperial Butterfly, the human body is identified as a vast acoustic vessel that produces sound, absorbs it and in the process tunes itself to new frequencies that drive the healing process. I believe that the human body possesses the power to bring about change by moving through emotional states, and that this change can lead, eventually, to a transformation that occurs even on the molecular level. In this thesis, I will show that the interaction between music and language is inseparable, codependent, and intrinsic, happening organically of its own accord. This study will also show that, where language fails to provide emotional information, music steps in to fill the gap, making meaning complete. Finally, this thesis proposes that with the interaction of music and language comes the possibility of personal healing and self-transformation.

The focus of this analysis is printed scores and sound recordings (rather than the aural experience of the listener, which is largely subjective). The dissection of the written score has helped me to unlock hidden pathways through which the narrator had to travel, and has also helped me pinpoint how the interaction between the musical components and the narrative shaped the journey of the narrator. In developing this study, I have intimately explored the areas of narrative, theme, harmony, and melody—how they influence emotional states, and the way in which they bring forth self-transformation. As a result, I have laid a foundation for a much deeper entry into the still-unmapped body of research in music cognition. Yet, because of the magnitude of this study, I will only concentrate on the structural framework of the music and the
narrative without addressing the acoustic or neurological connections between music and language.

Please note that my first hypothesis was to investigate whether music does indeed support narrative, and in the process, create the experience of an emotional state. My findings were that music can open doorways to understanding, and that there is an inner mechanism connecting these two domains through their acoustic properties that is reinforced inside the body with the help of the nervous system. These conclusions became further evident as the musical sequence was composed before I set out to investigate the relationship between music, language, and healing, having been inspired by my own personal experience.

Because of this last fact, many questions will arise regarding the science behind my thesis. What I would like to emphasize, however, is that the experience came first. The explanation, the attempt to understand, now follows.
"My Polish Heart"

\[ \text{\textbackslash -} = 55 \]

Dag Rothschild

"Heartbeat" - gentle percussive bass sound

\[ \text{mp} \]

approx. 30 seconds

Begin "Departure Sounds" - trains, crowds, etc.

\[ \text{f} \]

remain softly in the background until the end

approx. 1 minute

Begin Chopin, Prelude, Op. 28, No. 4

\[ \text{mp} \]

\[ \text{pp} \]

\[ \text{mp} \]

Begin Voice

\[ \text{mp} \]

You don't have to go...

I am not alone...

alone...

alone...

approx. 15 seconds

Heartbeat & Departure Sounds Fade
The narrator begins her journey in the key of E minor. She is leaving but does not know where she is going. At this first stage, we can hear her heart beating the deep, dark, somber note of E. This presence of a heartbeat in the sound score—set in a quarter-eighth, rhythm-melodic pattern—indicates a life force, a vitality, and a home within which this story will be enacted. The heartbeat is the composition’s sonic backbone; its relentless pounding propels the narrator into an irreversible forward motion. And it is this force, too, that will keep the narrator confined and bounded to this world. As the heartbeat continues, we can hear the loud sound of trains departing from a station—a sonic metaphor for the narrator’s own internal state of departure. The narrator’s “heart” is about to leave in search of “home.” In the distance, the strains of Chopin’s Prelude in E Minor waft in, indicating the narrator’s connection to her past, and her determination to find her true home. Just as the sound of the departing train indicates that the narrator is leaving her former self, the Prelude magnifies the feeling of lost-ness, of homelessness. This feeling is bolstered by the bass in the first chord, which is not in the root position but rather its first inversion. The variation is a “proof” that the opening chord is not home (Xieyi Zhang, 2016). The underlying feature in the Prelude also consists of a descending tetrachord, introducing a thematic melancholy right from the beginning. In other words, the place where the narrator’s heart dwelled was never her true home.
The sonic landscape in “My Polish Heart” also signifies the narrator’s state of departure from her emotional bondage. Out of this “inner fragmentation” of the self a void is created, within which her “voice” violently echoes back and forth. This “fragmentation” becomes evident in two ways: through the steady, unvarying heartbeat (E minor) that signifies the narrator’s vitality, what we can call her “first self”; and through these words, spoken by the narrator, signifying the “second self”: “You don’t have to go / I am not alone.” The first voice (self) represents the steadfast life force within the narrator and the gifts that she was given: the ability to hear sound, to make sound, and (ultimately) to become transformed through sound. The second voice (self) expresses yearning and sadness; it knows that the two selves will be, from this moment on, separated. This theme of separation will now become a foundation upon which the two lost selves travel through the nine stages of emotional identification. Henceforth, the narrator now refers to herself both in the first and second person.

The themes of death and departure that make themselves evident in “My Polish Heart” are, likewise, central themes in *Imperial Butterfly*. With this in mind, Zhang (2016) explained the understanding of the bass position in this way. The first tonic chord, a typical starting point, is home. In the course of the narrative, however, the song reaches the farthest point: the dominant fifth chord. Eventually, this chord gives way to the final tonic at the end. The narrative starts at home, leaves, and comes back again. Concurrently, the upper voice begins on a similar note, E minor (which is not E itself). What follows is the attempt to find this note again (see ex. 1).

---

3. X. Zhang has laid out a typical tonal narrative of E minor to illustrate the location of the narrative note—that this example is not the narrative Chopin's Prelude conforms to: The first tonic (I) chord is home, and also a typical starting point. Chopin's Prelude conforms to a different design (shown in Chart #2) where the upper voice still conforms to the narrative. The main difference here is that the bass in the
Ex. 1. Typical Tonal Analysis of E minor. The first tonic (1) chord is home, and also a typical starting point

The interpolation of Chopin’s Prelude sheds further light as to the whereabouts of the narrator (see ex. 2).

Ex. 2. Chopin’s Prelude tonal analysis complies with a different design.

first chord is not in the root position, its first inversion. This indicates that the opening chord is, in fact, not home. This narrative changes the interpretation of this song thusly: While we have been led to believe that the protagonist is leaving home, the Prelude makes us realize she was never home to begin with.
As Zhang pointed out, the bass in the first chord is not in root position but in first inversion, which shows that the opening chord is, in fact, not home (see ex. 3).\footnote{The half notes, noteheads, are used to indicate the stepwise, downward direction of the upper voice looking for the tonic. In the bass, the same noteheads are used to indicate the key points of departure (G), the point of farthest removal (B), and the final home (E) \cite{x_z_2016}.
}

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\begin{scope}[xslant=0.5, yscale=1]
\draw[thick] (-3,0) -- (-3,1); \draw[thick] (-2,0) -- (-2,1); \draw[thick] (-1,0) -- (-1,1); \draw[thick] (0,0) -- (0,1); \draw[thick] (1,0) -- (1,1); \draw[thick] (2,0) -- (2,1); \draw[thick] (3,0) -- (3,1);
\end{scope}
\begin{scope}[xslant=0.5, yscale=1, shift={(0,-1)}]
\draw[thick] (-3,0) -- (-3,1); \draw[thick] (-2,0) -- (-2,1); \draw[thick] (-1,0) -- (-1,1); \draw[thick] (0,0) -- (0,1); \draw[thick] (1,0) -- (1,1); \draw[thick] (2,0) -- (2,1); \draw[thick] (3,0) -- (3,1);
\end{scope}
\node at (-3,0.5) {$I^6$}; \node at (-2,0.5) {$V\slash I^6$}; \node at (-1,0.5) {$I^6$}; \node at (0,0.5) {$\Pi^6$}; \node at (1,0.5) {$V$}; \node at (2,0.5) {$I$};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

Ex. 3. Reduced analysis of the entire Prelude. The slurs group the rest of the embellishing notes together.

Additionally, since we have the opening non-root position tonic, we can easily deduce that the place where the narrator started was \textit{never} a home. Although the Prelude has a satisfying finish, “My Polish Heart” does not go that far. Perhaps the Prelude is simply a harbinger of things to come. Or, maybe not. At this stage, we do not know.

On a final note, the prominent presence of the descending tetrachord in the Prelude further foreshadows the two important themes of lamentation and death in these songs. As stated above, the themes will increase as the story goes on. In other words, the themes of death,
departure, and the search for a home established in “My Polish Heart” become central to the story as it proceeds.

As “My Polish Heart” finishes, the eventual fading-out of Chopin leaves the narrator in suspended animation. She is thus left with no choice but to move forward or be eternally stuck in this stage of the journey: a parallel-time dimension where everything occurs as if already was, must be now, and will be in the future.
Vocal melody score
Rock Ballad

"Hush Velvet Kitty"

N.C. (guitar fades in)  
Fmaj9  
Dm11

1

ppp

mp (bass fades in)

Fmaj9  
Dm11

9

Fmaj9  
Dm11

13

Fmaj9  
Dm11

19

Fmaj9  
Dm11

24

Fmaj9  
Dm11

29

V.S.
“Hush Velvet Kitty” is introduced as tonal ambiguity, vacillating between F major tonality and D minor tonality. The word “hush” placates the kitty not to utter the pain she is feeling. Yet with this comfort comes the implication that life must simply be painful. In “Hush Velvet Kitty,” the narrator plunges deep into a fantasy world, where the details of setting and character are dreamily indeterminate, the identities of the voice and the meaning imprecisely drawn. The narrator, in this stage, is still emotionally inchoate. She can only melodically paint her internal emotional state. In other words, the vocal sounds she utters mirror the emotional state itself. Only vocalese vowel sounds are used, primal vocal utterances that signify an un-self-conscious, pre-language existence. As language is missing, “Hush Velvet Kitty” becomes image-emotion-centered via sounds that are infused with sensory meaning.

“Hush Velvet Kitty” is enacted using a dissonant combination of notes played by the guitar (E, G), and the bass, which enters on F and D. These two latter notes disrupt the consonant sound created by the E and, initially, these bass notes have a slight presence in the persistent chain of E and G. However, as the song progresses, by m. 23 of the score, the bass changes into running eight notes. Because of this, F and D—at first strange phenomena in the score—now

---

5 In the transcription, the interpretation of these notes—F, E, G and D, E, G—implies Fmaj9 and Dm11. However, Zhang’s analysis suggests a more bi-tonal reading. In the beginning, with the entrance of E, G, we hear either E minor or C major. Importantly, C major makes a connection with “Needles of Mother” (a subsequent song about forgiveness).
become the driving force that uproots the C major’s grounding quality. Thus, two stable tones become dissonant factors in this song—the two spectrums E, G and D, F work to disrupt each other (Zhang, 2016). Importantly, the bass completely takes over at m. 67 of the score when the guitar withdraws. As a result, all that is left is the overpowering F and D of the bass. When the guitar comes back in the end, it is never able to replace the overarching influence of the F and D. Thus, in the end, the two starting stones cease and the new tones prevail. The evocation of pain results from the interaction of these two tonal streams—the first asserting its premise on E and G; the other working to diminish it on D and F.

The musical atmosphere created in “Hush Velvet Kitty” is one of suffering brought on by the pain of departure. Since the narrator does not yet know how to escape her pain, she is forced to comply with the acoustic forces that are reshaping and molding her, inside and out. At this stage of the journey, since the emotional conflict is unresolved, the music stays unresolved (dissonant) as well.6

---

6 Similar musical elements will return in “Needles of Mother.” As Zhang asserted, E and G represent C major, while D and F represent F major. C major and F major are two active forces that ultimately find forgiveness in each other.
"Wonder Tales"

Intro
8
N.C.

(drums) (add vocal) baby, baby doll

4

where you going

baby, baby doll

4

look at me

leaving me a-lons

6

no one to play with

mama

look at me

am I pretty

Chorus

my face is just like yours

why won't you love me

won't you love me

Interlude

Amaj7(11)

B♭m7(5)

(add tremolo guitar)

V.S.
"Wonder Tales"

**Verse**

Amaj⁷(#11)  B♭m⁷(#5)

38  

daddy's little girl can't stop from crying

Amaj⁷(#11)  B♭m⁷(#5)

42  

I promise I'll be good no more hiding

Amaj⁷(#11)  B♭m⁷(#5)

why am I left out let's play make believe

Amaj⁷(#11)  B♭m⁷(#5)

Ch.

C#m  C#m/B

62  

why won't you love me won't you love me

C#m  C#m/B

66  

don't you love me

(drums break)
"Wonder Tales"

Interlude  Amaj7(#11)  B♭m7(♭5)

Verse  N.C. (guitar out)

lying to my soul  will you be my play thing

trying not to hurt you

don't you know I love you

laughing I'm not scared

spinning 'round and 'round  dancing with your sha-

dows  (silence)  (drums back in)

Interlude  C♯m  C♯m/B

(guitar back in)  V.S.
“Wonder Tales” is the third stage in the journey. In it, the narrator utters full sentences and creates concepts about her own being for the first time. In other words, she starts to become self-aware. This self-awareness is induced by the desire to alleviate her pain. In “Wonder Tales,” the narrator starts to wonder: “Perhaps there is another reality out there through which I will be able to escape and leave the pain behind.” As she begins this process of self-inquiry, however, she comes to find that the reality of this stage is even more burdensome than the emotional pain she experienced in “Hush Velvet Kitty.” Reality is a claw that strips, pulls, peels! As she begins a dialogue with herself, the narrator is confronted—for the first time—with her distorted image of that self. Thus, the fracturing of the self becomes all the more apparent in this phase of the journey.

The voice persona enters this song in the key of B major and is accompanied only by the drums in the first verse, which play a very fast rhythm, adding a frenetic quality to the underlying emotional events, a sense of both urgency and anxiety. In this section, the narrator uses childlike lyrics: naïve, ambiguous vocal tones and simple diction. Through this we can deduce that the voice persona (melody) and the narrator are still in the process of finding common ground. Furthermore, the childlike lyrics, with their repetitive enunciation, intensify the feeling of urgency already expressed by the drums.
As the song progresses, the narrator calls out as if to a loved one, referring to this “other” as “baby doll.” On the surface, the words seem like those of a parent calling to its child. Then the self being addressed is told that she has been “left with no one to play with.” As the narrator continues to the next lines, it becomes evident that the “parent” voice is yet another expression of the narrator. Thus there are two voices here: parent and child. This dialogue addresses the narrator’s longing for love, as if love alone will give her permission to feel at home in the world. This longing (“Why won’t you love me? / Won’t you love me? / Don’t you love me?”) intensifies as the narrator moves through the narrative.

In the second verse, the narrator switches again to the child voice and utters, “Mama,” as if addressing her mother. “My face is just like yours,” she says, openly voicing her astonishment, asking why Mama would not love her when they are just like each other. The sense of utter disbelief grows rapidly, accelerating her longing. At this point, the narrator’s vocalizations are joined by an additional instrument, a guitar playing an A major chord, followed by a B-flat. However, the melody here, instead of being just a B major tonality, is a B major scale superimposed over an A major chord, making copious use of the harmonically rich sharp eleventh scale degrees. Desperate and confused, the “child” starts looking to the outside world for clues, comparing herself to imaginary “others” (“Why am I left out?”). In doing so, she tries to make sense of her need to belong. In the next lines, she convinces herself that she must the right to be loved, saying, “I promise I’ll be good.” This is the point where the narrator turns away from herself. Sycophancy becomes yet a new form of self-denial and self-betrayal.
As the narrator begins the second chorus, this fracturing of her self begins to lead her toward a state of wonder. It is at this point in the journey—the wonder stage—that the narrator begins to ask questions. This state of questioning is reinstated by the guitar accompaniment, which changes to the C-sharp minor tonality, enhancing the emotional ambiguity expressed in the vocal melody, in which the narrator struggles to identify herself and doubts her ability to belong. Once again, the musical components amplify the sense of disorientation and amazement. When the narrator arrives at the last verse, the narrative shifts dramatically. It is as if the narrator has suddenly habituated to the uncertainty, and has accepted her lack of love as the true order of things. Now, the self-personified child takes on the role of the parent again, only this time, the parent is no longer gentle. Rather, the “parent” takes on a scolding, beguiling tone: “Lying to my soul / Will you be my plaything?” All the child wanted was a playmate—now she will become a plaything. Changing course, the parental voice backtracks, saying, “Trying not to hurt you,” followed by, “Don’t you know I love you?” Throughout this stage of the song, the two narrative voices interact while the voice persona makes itself known through an ambiguous melodic structure and a sense of looming darkness. This foreboding increases in the last verse when the narrator begins to physically spin around and around. Musically, this act of spinning is underlined by an acceleration in the tempo of the drums, creating a sense of annihilation, as if the narrator were trying to spin herself away. It is with the act of spinning that she enters the darkness and starts to embrace the shadows.

7 C-sharp minor can be diatonic to the key of A major as well as to the key of B major. C-sharp minor is the diatonic to the key of A major as well as to the key of B major. C-sharp minor is the diatonic chord built on the third scale degree of A major. C-sharp minor is also the diatonic chord built on the second scale degree of B major. In this way, the ambiguity of the key center of the vocal melody is enhanced.
According to Zhang (2016), the lyrical content, melodic structure, and the chords come together to bring about an overwhelming sense of confusion in this song. The lyrical content is built around a set of questions, which at first glance suggest a childlike curiosity. But as the story unfolds, and the narrator enters the chorus, the nature of these questions becomes clearer. It is when the speaker utters, “Why don’t you love me?” and “Am I pretty?” that we see the narrator’s questions are not so innocent and are, rather, desperate cries for affirmation. The almost gullible sense of curiosity quickly devolves into a desperate need to understand atrocity of her situation. The narrator’s disorientation is further compounded by the fact that this is the first song in the album with more extensive lyrical content. However, there are no substantial road signs or explanations as to the true cause of her confusion.

Amplifying the relentless confusion are the musical components. The voice persona steps into the first verse in a tone partially resembling B major. As it moves on to the chorus, the music abruptly changes; the B major turns into what appears to be a G minor. However, this does not last for long, as soon enough the music comes right back to B major (Zhang, 2016). The lack of consistency encompassing the melodic contours and structural framework of “Wonder Tales” signify a deep sense of disassociation. The harmonic structure is not much better off. At this phase of the story, the harmonic content is divided into three varying sets. At first, there are no chords apart from drum ostinato; the second section becomes an A major shuttle, and the third finds its center on C-sharp. As stated before, the A major shuttle consists of two chords: one on A and the second on B-flat. However, since not all notes are present, it could be quite unsatisfying to simply identify the above as the B-flat harmony. Hence, I agree with Xieyi Zhang (2016): Since not all notes are present, what we have instead is B-flat, C-sharp, D-sharp, and E
which conform to the chord listed in the transcription. In Zhang’s view, the labeling of these notes asks a reasonable question: “What is this [chord]?” Ironically, this question becomes an answer in a song where questions are a major theme. Moreover, in Zhang’s view (2016), these chords should remain unmarked, and should remain a disorienting outgrowth of the A major harmony. In doing so, the musical narrative aligns with the lyrical narrative. Both ask: “Why is this?” and “What is this?” As stated above, the overall tonal ambiguity in the vocal melody and the chords resemble a state of disorientation, which emerge from the inner fragmentation of the self. Yet, it is ultimately with and through these questions that confusion transforms into wonder.
Rock Ballad

Intro  
Drums and Em drone fade in  
keep my sorrows away  
I'm down on my knees

Verse  
Em  
D  
C  
D

Em  
D  
C  
Bb

It's always what you want  
But never what I need

Chorus  

Cm  
B  
Eb

I am naked before you  
And you still ignore me

Verse  

Em  
D  
C  
D

Em  
D  
C  
Bb

sing me beauty  
make me strong  
sing me beauty, I waited so long

and those tears keep falling  
from those chords that you play

this face, those eyes  
stole my voice, here I he

a slave in these chains  
but I'm standing here on stage

Chorus  

Em  
D  
C  
Bb

sing me beauty  
make me strong  
sing me beauty, I waited so long

sing me beauty  
make me strong  
sing me beauty, I waited so long  
V.S.
"Black & White Smiles"

**Bridge**

Bridge

```
38
Cm          B♭7sus4       D♭       B
it's never enough  it's never enough  go away
```

```
42
Cm          B♭7sus4       D♭       G♭
it's never enough  it's never enough  lead me away
```

**Verse**

Verse

```
48
Em          D           C         D
I stand blaming you  for this mirror in my eyes
```

```
52
Em          D           C         D
won't give me all you are  just feed me with more lies
```

```
56
Em          D           C         B♭
in the eyes of my soul  let it be more light
```

**Chorus**

Chorus

```
58
Eb          Cm       B          B♭7sus4
sing me beauty  make me strong  sing me beauty, I waited so long
```

```
62
Eb          Cm       B          B♭7sus4
sing me beauty  make me strong  sing me beauty, I've never been wrong
```

```
66
Eb          Cm       B          Eb
sing me beauty  make me strong  ritard
```

```
68
Eb          Cm       B          Eb
sing me beauty  make me strong  sing me beauty, I've waited so long
```
In the fourth stage, “Black & White Smiles,” the narrator’s tone shifts from wonder to anger. She enters this soundscape in 4/4 time, with a tempo of 58 beats per minute. The voice persona in this section starts off at a pace that is lagging yet assured. However, it becomes rushed by the double-time of the drums. This rhythmic conflict creates, from the start, the sense of emotional conflict and separation that are central to this stage.

The voice persona and narrator enter the verse in the key of E minor. From the beginning of the first verse, when the narrator says, “Keep my sorrows away / I’m down on my knees,” an element of frustration and desperation creep in that is supported by the rhythms. By now, everything must be tried to gain the love that the narrator believes she has lost. In the next lines (“It’s always what you want / but never what I need”) frustration turns to rage; the narrator is sick of constantly conforming to the orders and needs of her other “self.” When she arrives at the last lines of the verse, she now realizes that even when she completely exposes herself she still will be ignored (“I am naked before you / but you still ignore me”). The narrator seems to have done everything she could—yet everything is still wrong. All she feels inside is emptiness and rejection.

The inner dialogue in the verses is carried by the E minor chord progression, which is built from one measure of E minor, D, C, and D again, resulting in a four-base phrase that repeats three times per verse. This pattern is maintained until the 16th measure, where a B-flat
major chord arrives instead. The narrator’s tone shifts as she approaches the chorus, begging for someone called “Beauty” to show her the “true inner self” (“Sing me, Beauty, make me strong / Sing me, Beauty, I have waited so long”). In this part of the story, the sonic structure shifts from E minor and enters the structure of E-flat major. The chord progression—signifying pleading here—is one measure each of E-flat major, C minor, B, and an additional chord on the fourth measure B-flat7sus4 leading to the next verse. As the narrator moves to the next verse, she again enters the E minor key. The pleading narrator is brought to tears by the beauty of sounds the “other self” can make (“And the tears keep falling / from those chords that you play”). Here, she comes to understand that it is her own soul which stole her voice, and which, paradoxically, was her only way out (“This face, those eyes / Stole my voice / here I lay”). The music leads on its own now, and when the measure of an emerging tonic of G-flat major enters, it grabs the reins of the melody. The narrator gushes out in desperation, repeating, “It’s never enough / It’s never enough.” At last the battle is over. The narrator submits to her enemy and asks the one who kept her captive to “take her away.”

This emotional shift is supported by the harmonic changes as well. The dominant of G-flat major does not resolve to its tonic until the end of the bridge. Accordingly, for Zhang, the first time around it goes astray and finds B-flat major instead; the second time D-flat comes, thus resolving to G-flat major and fulfilling its role as dominant, completing the goal toward the tonic (2016). In the last verse, the narrator returns to E minor. The E minor chord validates the new understanding that she will be unable to escape herself through anger (“I stand blaming you for this mirror in my eyes”). There is no one to blame because “you” is “I.” They are part of the same person. Salvation will not come from one “self” because the other “self” is still corrupted,
damaged. In this pursuit, there is nothing to be found but lies (“Won’t give me all / you just feed me with more lies”). In the last two lines of the verse, the narrator finally acknowledges that everything she sees in herself has become tainted by the mirror image of the other. The truth of who she is will only come if the eyes of her soul are filled with light. Thus, the narrator pleads for intervention, which is her only way out (“In the eyes of my soul / Let there be more light”).

The state of anger in this stage is not clearly articulated in the narrative; rather, it is expressed through the musical structure of the song. It is within the musical sequence that the full force of anger comes to life. These musical components are imbedded in the rhythm, harmony, and tonal centers of the verse, chorus, and bridge. The verses indicate that the narrator is merely hurt, and has been wronged by the subject of the conversation. The rest of the underlying semantic information must be filled in by the readers’ imagination. As I mentioned before, the voice persona comes into the story with a reserved and lagging feel, though sounds quite confident. The accompanying rhythm is set in a fast double-time, representing the disagreement between the narrators in the story. The second component indicating separation is the inner conflict of the tonal centers of the verse, chorus, and bridge. The song verse is in E minor while the chorus moves to E-flat major. Interestingly, these two keys are far from each other tonally, and are seldom used adjacently. Hence, the interpolation of these two tonal centers indicates an unfolding conflict from the start (Zhang, 2016).

Theorists have investigated such movements and labeled it S (for slide). These movements are usually characterized by the preservation of the common third, and move the
outer fifth by a semitone. In this case, G remains as the common tone between the two chords, while E and B of E minor are shifted down a semitone to E-flat and B-flat, E, G, and B becomes E-flat, G, B-flat. This is how the move downward of the outer fifth becomes S (Zhang, 2016).

Interestingly, according to Zhang (2016), the G chord in the musical structure also indicates that there is still hope for reconciliation. Moreover, the move to E-flat major in the chorus after previous disturbances in the verse further supports the possibility of resolution. Of its own accord, the music suggests this hope in the second chorus and offers a helping hand, thus becoming an acoustic oracle of sorts. Yes, the music says, there is hope, and you will come out of this situation—but not yet. Thus, the emergence of the G note. Importantly, the E-flat major tonal center comes after the turbulences in the verses, where the speaker is pleading for reconciliation. In Zhang’s view, the music says, “Yes, things are bad, but we still have something in common: the G note. We will work this out.” When the narrator enters the bridge, G-flat major becomes the goal that the narrative would usually seek to complete. Here, however, the narrator realizes that searching for reconciliation with “you” is wrong. She no longer cries out for “you” but for “Beauty,” thus acknowledging that amends must be made. As previously mentioned, hope lay in the ever-present and supportive G, as E and B moved down to E-flat and B-flat. Until that point, G stayed stalwart. That said, just as the narrator comes to the understanding that searching for reconciliation in “you” is futile, the G-flat starts to emerge and ends the bridge (see ex. 4).

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In the end, though the possibility of reunion between the two selves is glimpsed in “Black & White Smiles,” it ultimately falls apart. The narrator acknowledges this lyrically; the musical narrative does so by removing the common tone between the verses and choruses, and instead introduces a “phantom note,” signifying that, while the narrator of the story has left the stage of anger, realizing that the broken image of herself cannot become the grounds for her redemption, she has still further to go in her journey. As the G note closes the chapter, it becomes a harbinger of new forces that will become present along the path.⁹

⁹ There is an analogy between the bass lines in “Wonder Tales” and the tonal centers in “Black & White Smiles.” There is a section in “Wonder Tales” where the bass line alternates A–B-flat–A–B-flat; this is a semitone shift. In “Black & White Smiles,” the entire chorus and the entire verse are a semitone apart from each other (E vs. E-flat). This is also a semitone shift. One is chord to chord while the other is section to section. Thus both stages are musically connected (Zhang, 2016).
Rock Ballad

Intro

"Little Girly Ain't Dead"

-Dag Rothschild

Intro

E♭7sus4  A♭maj7/C  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7

Verse

E♭7sus4  A♭maj7/C  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7

I'm nobody's girl  stuck between the worlds  look here at me  is that what you want

Verse

E♭7sus4  A♭maj7/C  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7

I dare you to kill me  but you refuse to die

Pre-Ch.

G♭maj7  Amaj7(add)

I'm always in need  for more than you are

Chorus

B♭m11  B♭m11/A♭  G♭maj7

Come down  come down  come down

Verse

E♭7sus4  A♭maj7/C  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7

I hear you clearly  those eyes are mine too  don't you believe that I see it all

Verse

E♭7sus4  A♭maj7/C  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7

Such a little girl  with so much soul  kept in the darkness  alive by the shame

Pre-Ch.

G♭maj7  Amaj7(add)

You live in fears  I can't even name
"Little Girly Ain't Dead"

Chorus  \[B^b m 11\]  \[B^b m 11/A^b\]  \[G^b maj7\]  come down  come down  come down

Bridge 1  \[A^b\]  \[B^b m 7\]  \[A^b\]  \[B^b m 7\]  all you have to do is love me, can't you  all you have to do is love me, won't you

Breakdown  \[E^b 7 sus 4\]  \[A^b maj/C\]  \[E^b 7 sus/B^b\]  \[A^b maj7\]  (piano & organ only, organ solo)

Verse  \[E^b 7 sus 4\]  \[A^b maj/C\]  \[E^b 7 sus/B^b\]  \[A^b maj7\]  (band back in)  scared velvet  kitty  I feel you  inside  the pain is yours too  there  there is no place to hide

Pre-Ch.  \[G^b maj7\]  \[A^b sus 4\]  \[Amaj7(#11)\]  never hated you for running  for leaving me there
Chorus

B♭m11  B♭m11/A♭  G♭maj7
come down  come down  come down

Bridge 2

E♭7sus4  D♭maj7  E♭7sus4/B♭  A♭maj7
all you have to do is love me, can’t you
all you have to do is love me, won’t you

Chorus

B♭m11  B♭m11/A♭  G♭maj7
come down  come down  come down
From the world of anger, our narrator enters the world of beauty, which she evoked briefly in “Black & White Smiles,” in the key of A-flat major. Here, the narrator openly identifies herself as a girl-woman who is, at this point, fully aware that light can only come from down “below” (“I’m nobody’s girl / stuck between the worlds”). From the beginning of the text, there is a dialogue between the narrator and some unidentified second figure. This second figure summons the girl to “Come down,” stating, “Such a little girl with so much soul / Kept in the darkness, alive by the shame.” Referencing the title “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” we discern that the voice calling is a personification of death. Thus the words “come down” are an attempt to lure our narrator to the grave. It is here, in the first verse, that the narrator no longer identifies herself with the past but rather with the voice that resides “down below.” The broken image cannot be fixed; the battle must be yielded. Hence, when the narrator utters “And you just stare / And whisper,” another voice starts to become audible. All of a sudden, everything starts making sense. This presence has already made an appearance in the guise of the phantom note in “Black & White Smiles,” and in the tonal ambiguity in “Wonder Tales.” Now, the voice calls up to her directly (“Come down / Come down / Come down”). This calling rises melodically each time the words “Come down” are said, enticing the narrator to descend.

In the second verse, the narrator responds—“I hear you clearly / Those eyes are mine too”—meaning “I have been here all along.” This suggests that the narrator intuitively sensed
this presence long ago. It is the narrator’s own soul that calls to her from the darkness, where she had been kept barely alive by the shame of the “other” (“Such a little girl with so much soul / Kept in the darkness / alive by the shame”).

The voice calling from “down there” intensifies with each line and is determined to show her the way. The voice explains: “All you have to do is love me, can’t you / All you have to do is love me, won’t you / All you have to do is love me, I’m beginning you.” In the last verse, the voice from below takes center stage and addresses the narrator in this way: “Scared velvet kitty, I feel you inside / This pain is yours, too / This pain is yours, too / There is no place to hide.” These lyrics lead the narrator to a new realization: In order for her to become her own beauty, and gain a new self, she must first walk through the gates of death.

In “Little Girly Ain’t Dead” there is, for the first time, a strong connection between the narrator and voice persona. The dialogue in the first verse is conducted in a very low register (“I’m nobody’s girl / stuck between the worlds”). The highest note in this section is only E-flat 4 and moves as low as F3 (Zhang, 2016).\(^\text{10}\) The most prominent factor from the beginning of the first verse is that the chords of the bass in the verses are the same as the notes in the melody: E-flat, C, B-flat, A-flat. This, in itself, is quite striking, as it adds an otherworldly quality to this part of the story. Additionally, the voice persona mimics the bass notes. Even though they reside on opposite spectrums of this sonic structure, we can now hear that the voice persona and the lyrical persona (narrator) have much in common. The chords played by the bass in the verse match the notes in the first measure of the melody (which now becomes the voice persona).

\(^{10}\) The notation here suggests note names that refer to the number of octaves up from the lowest C on the piano. C4=middle C; the C an octave higher is C5 (Zhang, 2016).
Throughout, the voice persona attaches itself to the ground (bass). The two voices work together, metaphorically, as if they have become one. What is “above” becomes what is “down below,” and vice versa. In this way, the voice persona lets the narrator know that her fate is bound to the ground, to the “below.” Still, the narrator is not yet fully aware; she only identifies herself in these words: “I’m nobody’s girl / stuck between the worlds.” As the narrator clearly asserts “I’m nobody’s girl / stuck between the worlds,” the voice persona (melody) and the bass direct the narrator forward. Here, the narrator begins to admit that she is owned by death.

In the second verse, the narrator gathers herself and responds to the “voice” from below: “I hear you clearly/ those eyes are mine too / Don’t you believe that I see it all.” This act of awareness is also emphasized in the musical content as the narrator separates herself completely from the bass that she previously mimicked, and begins to sing in a higher range. At m. 25 of the transcription, the voice of the narrator goes up to C5, arriving almost at the top of female range. When it goes down, it only slides to A-flat 3 (Zhang, 2016). When the chorus arrives, the voice persona utters relentlessly, “Come down, come down.” Paradoxically, the melody rises from F4 to A-flat 4. Importantly, since the voice climbs from way down, it is only natural that it will move up and up, climbing higher (what goes up, must come down). The melodic content accelerates this as well with the movement of the chords, which also ascend higher. All the while, the narrator is being enticed to descend.

A similar scenario takes place in the chorus; the melody rises from F4 to A-flat 4 and by the end of the song, the chorus ascends as high as a D-flat 5. Analogously, the chorus refuses to “come down”; instead, it moves in the opposite direction and rises.
To understand what is happening here, we must look at the harmonic content in this stage of the tale. First of all, in the chorus, the bass plays an incomplete descending tetrachord: B-flat–A-flat–G-flat–F (Zhang, 2016). Incredibly, this progression has also been known to signify death and lamentation, and is often called the “lament bass.”¹¹ Common examples of this are found in “Dido’s Lament,” “Flow My Tears,” and “Strange Fruit.”

In “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” the chord progression is incomplete because the bass never reaches F (see ex. 5). Hence, the incompletion of the tetrachord with F represents the major theme of the section: That the narrator is so close to death and yet refuses to die.

Ex. 5. Illustrating the incomplete lament tetrachord. The bass never reaches F.

With this in mind, the narrator’s words in the chorus “Come down / Come down” can now be heard as a summons, as in “Come on down to the grave.” The refusal to complete the lament tetrachord is synonymous with the denial of death.

Another important factor that points to the “overcoming of death” can be found in the interaction between the incomplete tetrachord and the harmonic progression in the verses. According to Zhang (2016), the narrative openly refers to death at m. 12, where the voice persona suspends itself over an A-flat harmony. This position, in conjunction with the move to A-flat, engenders the movement of the lament bass (where A-flat is the key component of the death motive). Additionally, in the lament progression, a move from A-flat to G-flat would be expected. However, at m. 15 the harmony changes its mind; instead of moving down to F, it goes in the opposite direction, to A. As a result, what we have left is A-flat–A–B-flat instead of A-flat–G-flat–F. Ironically, this in itself brings a resolution to the theme, because instead of a descending lament we have an ascending lift. However, as the story continues, the harmonic movement does not allow our narrator to plunge down completely. Little Girly is not only alive; she manages to lift herself up and see her beauty, and because of it she escapes death. The interaction of the bass and voice persona (melody) literally show the narrator the path to redemption.

At the end of the song, the voice persona takes the reins again and finishes its lines in a low register again: “Come down, come down.” Hence, just as one thinks that the narrator has managed to escape death, rising above it to find her beauty, the melody sinks, a foreshadowing of the spiritual death that still awaits her.
"Needles of Mother"

Dag Rothschild

**Intro**

*drums only*

1. (drums only)
2. (band in)

**Verse C**

3. starving for something ain’t feeling right
4. starving for something ain’t feeling right
5. sweet angels, I beg you, cradle me tonight
6. sweet angels, lead me to the light, and
7. God, forgive me, please for trying to hide this fear
8. lying ’cause it really hurts so ashamed to say I need

**Ch. Am F C G7**

9. God, forgive me, please for trying to hide this fear
10. lying ’cause it really hurts so ashamed to say I need

**Verse C**

11. knowing nothing but mama leaving her dream for so long
12. knowing nothing but mama leaving her dream for so long
13. forgive me my past and love trust yourself ’cause it’s me who was
14. wrong, wrong ’cause it’s me who was wrong

**Re-Intro C**

15. knowing nothing but mama leaving her dream for so long
16. forgive me my past and love trust yourself ’cause it’s me who was
17. wrong, wrong ’cause it’s me who was wrong

**V.S.**
"Needles of Mother"

Ch.  
Am    F    C    G7
35    hold me, touch my dreams  come inside my secret place  (band holds)
40    'cause this love is yours  a heart can only know one face

Bridge  
F    G    Am    F
45    don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby

Re-
Intro  
C
52    (4)  ooo

Verse  
C
57    (spoken): little child inside  I stole your grace

C/F
66    baby colored by fear  I left without a trace

C
62    forgive me all you can't foresee trust yourself  I am you who can't

C/F
68    believe I am you who can't believe and
"Needles of Mother"

Ch.
Am  F  C  G7
72  I will promise you  I'll be there when it rains

Am  F  C
76  let me kiss away those tears  you ain't alone, I feel your pain

Bridge
F  G  Am  F
80  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby

F  G  Am  F
84  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby

F  G  Am  G/B (band holds)
88  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  don't you worry, baby  ooo

C
92  ooo  ooo  ooo
Needles of Mother: Forgiveness

(Colour: Indigo)

After our narrator finds her beauty in “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” she moves on. Now, in “Needles of Mother,” she arrives in the key of C major. Here our narrator is overcome by immense emptiness and hunger. As she has just encountered the “beauty of herself” in the previous stage, the narrator becomes overwhelmed by guilt and expresses this feeling in the following words: “Starving for something, ain’t feeling right / Sweet angels, I beg you, cradle me tonight / Sweet angels, lead me to the light.” Her self-reflections continue into the second verse. She calls upon God, asking to be forgiven—not for living in fear, but for hiding from her fear. The light she had been asking for pierced through her soul at last when Beauty revealed itself; now there is no going back. She must honestly reach out to the Giver of that light and ask to be forgiven for what she has done.

Thus, in the third verse of “Needles of Mother,” the narrator starts to explain her past. She revisits the past personification of “Mama” (the maternal side of herself) to make the “other” aware that she alone caused her own ill-thinking (“Knowing nothing but mama / living her dream for so long”). Thereafter, having already asked for forgiveness from the Almighty, she now must forgive herself: “Forgive me my past and love / Trust yourself, I am you who can’t believe.” In the next verse, she is finally ready to accept the love she has started to feel, finally able to find her way into the “secret place”: “And hold me, touch my dreams / Come inside my secret place / ‘Cause this love is yours / A heart can only know one face.” In the chorus, the
narrator is reassured repeatedly not to worry—“Don’t you worry, baby / don’t you worry,” as if worrying were her natural state. In the last verse, the two voices meet and a parental figure emerges with these words: “Little child inside / I stole your grace / baby colored by fears.” In the last line, the one from “below” (death) assures her again (“Trust yourself / I am you who can’t believe”). The last verse sets a mood of belonging, as the one from below assures the narrator that she will never be left alone again (“And I will promise you / I’ll be there when it rains / Let me kiss away those tears / You ain’t alone / I feel your pain”). The two finally reconcile and meet, the one from below and the narrator. The narrator now knows that the love she searched for is on the other side of forgiveness.

In “Needles of Mother” there are three musical features that facilitate the process of “forgiveness.” From the start of the first verse, when the narrator expresses how she “ain’t feel right,” we can sense that, instead of experiencing joy in the Beauty she has finally found, the narrator feels empty and lost. These secret feelings are mimicked by the musical elements that produce a pseudo-bitonal effect between the C and F, where F represents conflict and C will lead to resolution and forgiveness (Zhang, 2016). As she continues, the narrator realizes she must find something to fill the void. In the next lines, she calls upon angels to cradle her tonight. These intense feelings of unease are made audible in the melody, where the pitches D and B prevail, intruding into C major. Thus, the voice persona in “Needles of Mother” is tightly linked to the narrator. The idea here is to create an aural experience of how “not feeling right” sounds. Parallel to this, when the narrator moves on to the fourth verse, saying, “Forgive me my past and love / Trust yourself / Cause it’s me who was [wrong],” the musical sequence mimics the experience of being “wrong” by manifesting “wrongness” underneath in chord tones, bringing closer the
requested forgiveness through their immediate resolution—D moves down to C as a transitional tone, as B resolves itself and moves upward (Zhang, 2016). Thus, throughout the verses, the voice persona complements the narrative.

In the first and second verses, it is clear that the narrator is speaking to the “other.” Overwhelmed by intense feelings of guilt, she wants only for the truth of her transgressions to be known. This need for truth was sparked from the act of begging the light to enter her being. Now her prayers have been answered; light has pierced the narrator’s soul. With these words, she asks forgiveness for her “offenses”: “God forgive me please / For trying to hide this fear / Lying ‘cause it really hurts / So ashamed to say I need.” As stated above, the narrator does not want to be forgiven for her fears but for attempting to disguise those fears.

When the narrator asks for forgiveness, however, it is not clearly stated whether she will be forgiven or not. She does not yet understand that she must forgive herself. This lack of clarity results in an internal resistance that is not explicitly articulated by the narrator. It only becomes evident when, without warning, the voice persona no longer agrees with the narrator and starts to go its own way. You can hear this in the extensive tensions used in the melody—for instance, the intrusions of D and B into C major. These dissonant notes underlie “Ain’t feeling right,” making it obvious that the two share common ground. Additionally, when the narrator states, “Forgive me my past and love … ‘Cause it’s me who was wrong,” the voice persona (melody) amplifies the tension through the use of the offense chord tones. Accordingly, D moves down to the C (being the passing tone), while B resolves upward (Zhang, 2016). Yet, suddenly, the voice persona delivers “forgiveness” through the immediate resolution of these two notes underlying
“Ain’t feeling right.” The voice persona thus becomes both the narrator’s guide and the illustration of the narrator’s main emotional struggle—resistance.

In order for the narrator to move on to the next phase of “transformation,” her emotional barrier must be broken. Only then will she be able to move toward the light. The narrator simply can’t progress otherwise. As the narrator moves on to the chorus, she is instructed by the voice persona with these words: “Don’t you worry, baby / don’t you worry.” From this we conclude that the act of worrying could potentially become a threat to the process of transformation. Hence, the voice persona steps in and literally instructs the narrator not to do so.

Musically, this part of the story is the site of the Axis of Awesome progression. Here, the harmonic movement amplifies the emotional resistance of the narrator as the chords begin to move not on C but A. Additionally, while the F harmony enters, the voice persona starts to sing another note that doesn’t belong, G, and by the time C finally enters the harmony, the voice has gone elsewhere. F simply does not belong in C (Zhang, 2016). What we are left with is the musically amplified emotional conflict of the narrator. Moreover, the sonic movement of the chorus finds its resolution in the end of the chorus where, instead of the repeated movement of the harmony with C stuck in the middle, the chords simply stop on C. (This takes place literally; the musical structure and the narrative literally stop). Now the harmony waits for the voice persona to show the way, so that it can align with the intention of the narrator.

According to Zhang (2016), the most interesting musical component in this song is the way the non-chord tones find resolution by themselves. It is well known that the generator of dissonance is usually responsible for resolving its own dissonant note. However, in this tale,
harmony becomes responsible for moving itself toward a more appropriate harmony. In the process, harmony doesn’t fix the voice’s mistake; rather, the voice helps to break the resistance in the narrator. In other words, in this stage of the emotional odyssey, the narrator is being stripped of resistance with the help of the voice persona and harmony. Without the presence of the voice persona in the form of melody, the harmony would not be able to find (and then break) the underlying resistance that lead to forgiveness and change. Thus, while the voice persona points to the place of resistance, in the end, only the harmony can remove these emotional obstacles and alter the narrator’s fate.

All of the elements present in this stage originated in “Hush Velvet Kitty,” where E and G represented C major while D and F represented F major. In Zhang’s view, C major and F major were the two active forces that found forgiveness in each other. We now know that forgiveness was the conflict started in “Hush Velvet Kitty.” Ultimately, however, all of the components work in accordance with each other, coming back over and over again to retune and realign the acoustic equilibrium (umwelt) of the narrator.

In the last verse, the voice persona completely disappears, as if pushed aside by a fully confident narrator who knows that she must regain her voice. For the first time in this song, the narrator takes the spotlight and addresses the “other” in words spoken without melody: “Little child inside, / I stole your grace. / Baby colored by fear, / I left without a trace. / Forgive me all you can’t foresee … I am you who can’t believe …” At this point, the harmony, too, accompanies this transformative process and stays on the C, waiting for the narrator to find common ground with the voice.
R&B Ballad

"Sassafras & Rain"

(Page 1 of 3)

-Dag

Intro

\[ \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \]

(bass only)

\[ \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \]

(Add guitar, drums & muted trumpet, bass simile)

Verse

\[ \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \]

(Add vocal) Maybe I'm not tired, Maybe I'm just quiet, Maybe I'm all the things, you

\[ \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \]

won't see in me 'Cause you're slowly dying mmm, mmm

\[ \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \]

Give me body & blood I'm dying of my pride Please give me your hand, I'll help you under

\[ \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \]

stand, Oh, don't ask me why, Oh, just let me try, 'Cause the love inside is strong, But the time is gone, But the time is gone, gone, gone.

Chorus

\[ \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \quad \text{bbm7} \quad \text{gb(add9)} \]

You won't let go 'til I tell you so, You won't let go 'til I tell you so, V.S.
"Sassafras & Rain"

Intro
B₇⁷/₉ G₉(add⁹) B₇⁷/₉ G₉(add⁹)

You won't let go 'til I tell you so 'Til I tell you, you, you

Verse
B₇⁷/₉ G₉maj⁷(#11) B₇⁷/₉ G₉(add⁹)

You are not my mirror Nor my savior,

starving and naked, I give in, I let go, I set you free,

Chorus
B₇⁷/₉ G₉(add⁹) B₇⁷/₉ G₉(add⁹)

You won't let go 'til I tell you so, You won't let go 'til I tell you so,

You won't let go 'til I tell you 'til I

Solo
Em⁷ A¹ B₇⁷ (band hold)

(trumpet solo) (band hold) V.S.
"Sassafras & Rain"

Intro
B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7           G♭(add9)

Verse
B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7           G♭(add9)
Something is tearing wide open
B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7           G♭(add9)
And it's tearing for you

B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7
Yes, wide open. It feels warm. It feels warm. It's wrapping me,

B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7
Cause it's bending me, 'Cause it's raining inside,

B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7           G♭(add9)
Washing it all away, Making me whole again,
Chorus
Making me whole again, again, again, again.

B♭m7           G♭(add9)           B♭m7           G♭(add9)
You won't let go 'til I tell you so. You won't let go 'til I tell you so.

B♭m7           G♭(add9)           E♭m7           Emaj7
You won't let go 'til I tell you so. 'Til I tell you,

E♭m7           Emaj7              E♭m7           Emaj7
tell you tell you tell you tell you
After our narrator breaks the bondage of emotional resistance with the help of the harmony and voice persona, she now enters the next stage of her journey: “Sassafras & Rain” (C major). The sassafras herb has been used for centuries by Native Americans to cleanse and heal. Early American settlers believed that it was a magic root, and used it to ward off evil spirits. Thus, the name “Sassafras & Rain” indicates that this is a stage of cleansing (sassafras) and renewal (rain). Along the course of her journey, the narrator has discovered her beauty and has forgiven herself. Now she must face the biggest challenge yet. She must be cleansed of her greatest fault: pride. The self-assurance gained through beauty and forgiveness must now be transformed and purified, so that she may recognize the true needs of her soul. Pride has deceived her into believing that beauty was an end in itself.

The overarching theme in this stage is the approach of death, but in “Sassafras & Rain,” we understand “death” as the process of transformation. Thus, the narrator no longer shows the slightest sign of desperation or hesitance. She fully embraces death, as if the purging of her pride has already become a reality. In the first verse, the narrator asserts that the end is near: “Maybe I’m not tired / Maybe I’m just quiet / Maybe I’m all the things / You won’t see in me / ‘Cause you’re slowly dying.” In the second verse, she asks the “other” (with the last of her strength), “Give me body and blood / I’m dying of my pride.” With these lines, the narrator acknowledges

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her salvation. She knows that the act of communion is the only way for her to share the immortal nature of Christ. Without this bread of life, she cannot continue living spiritually. It is the only way to nourish her soul. If she refuses, she will be doomed with absolute death. Thus, in receiving God in the form of body and blood, she accepts the ultimate gift: an authentic life.

In the next lines, the “other” pleads with the narrator in a reassuring tone: “Please give me your hand / I’ll help you understand / ‘Cause the love inside is strong / But the time is gone…” When the two “selves” enter the chorus, the “other” assures the narrator “You won’t let go / Till I tell you so.” These lines are repeated several times, as if the “other” is instructing the narrator to let go at the right moment. In the next verse, the narrator gathers her strength once more and says, “You’re not my mirror / Nor my savior / I let go / I set me free / ‘Cause this sacrament of life / Isn’t love, it’s my suicide.” All along she held the keys to her own salvation. Ultimately, this sacrament of life which the narrator has received becomes more than just the gift of eternal love; she has been given a spiritual rebirth which, to be fulfilled, must end with an “internal suicide.” Now, a part of the narrator—the broken-off, second self—is forced to die. In the final verse of “Sassafras & Rain,” there is a feeling of redemption hovering in the air. The narrator states that she is being torn open, is undergoing the act of internal “cleansing” in order to become whole. The narrator expresses how it feels to be rained on “inside,” how warm she feels, giving the impression that this longstanding sense of inhabiting her body but not really living in it—as though she did not fit inside her own skin—is being relieved once and for all. The word “again” is repeated many times, as if the narrator cannot get enough of this “cleansing,” this feeling of restoration (“Something is tearing wide open / And it’s tearing for you … It’s
wrapping me / ‘Cause it’s raining inside / Washing it all away / Making me whole again, again, again…”

Throughout the text is also an emphasis on letting go. The narrator has gone through tremendous emotional changes on her journey; as she faces the harsh process of self-forgiveness—at last becoming her own beauty—she comes to see that she is only at the beginning of something much greater. Therefore, the process of letting go will become the catharsis through which the narrator’s cleansing can take full effect.

The most prominent motivic patterns embodied in this journey were apparent in “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” where the lament progression carried the narrative but never reached the F, indicating that the narrator was not yet meant to die, but was on her way to discover her path. This motive also reveals other underlying forces at work, forces of a metaphysical nature that push the narrator along. She must undergo a shedding, a slicing to the bone, to the marrow, ridding herself of the old form and taking on a new one. In this stage, the narrator is addressed by the “other” in the chorus, instructing, “You won’t let go till I tell you so.” This directive is made manifest by the reoccurring harmonic progression. Hence, B-flat moves down to G-flat, but still refuses to move down to F (Zhang, 2016). From the narrative we already know that the act of ‘letting go” is of primal importance. In “Sassafras & Rain” the lament progression returns, and this time it is more direct: the intervening A-flat harmony is now gone, aligning the movement to G-flat. Once again, the problem of “death” is confronted. This issue is emphasized in the narrative, when the narrator relentlessly repeats (in the choruses), “You won’t let go till I tell you so.” Symbolically, “letting go” means both letting go of life and accepting death. This sentiment
is bolstered by the harmonic progression—B-flat goes down to G-flat but refuses to move farther down to F. As in “Little Girly Ain’t Dead,” the narrator is still refusing to die.

However, as Zhang pointed out (2016), the sonic structure here is constructed in such a different way from “Little Girly” that holding on to the old life is actually a bad thing. In other words, the music now forces the narrator to accept what will happen. This takes place in the following manner: The end of the chorus marks the end of the two-chord shuttle; the chords move down to E-flat and later E. As a result, the pull toward the long-awaited F becomes even more prominent. Succinctly put, B-flat and G-flat advance toward F from above, while E-flat and E come close from below, F being the next semitone (Zhang, 2016). The pull toward F (i.e. the “death of the self”) becomes stronger than in “Little Girly,” approaching it from both angles. But there is still no F (see ex. 6).

![Graphic of musical notation]

Ex. 6. This illustrates how both notes approach F from either direction (Zhang, 2016).

In the chorus, the narrator is instructed as to exactly the right time to let go. She does not know on her own (or perhaps, does not trust her ability to decide). There is a constant rocking in between notes, back and forth, over the cycling nature of the chorus, supporting the directive
“You won’t let go till I tell you so,” where E motivates the narrator to enter F (thus, to let go and accept death), while A pulls the narrator the opposite way.

Ex. 7. Conflict between acceptance and denial.

As illustrated above by Zhang (2016), E encourages the narrator to move on to F, to accept death and let go (see ex. 7); A becomes the foil, forcing the narrator back to B-flat. This creates an impasse between acceptance and denial. After the second verse, at m. 67 of the transcription, the F comes at last, indicating that the narrator has officially accepted death (Zhang, 2016). This is also evident in the narrative. In the last verse, the narrator sings that her inner self is being washed away, made whole. The pieces are coming back together. Still, although the narrator accepts death, something out of ordinary happens: First of all, the harmony is not the major chord, usually expected in the lament progression. It is, rather, minor. Second, the music soon pulls us back into another Intro. This turn of events not only underlines the narrative, in which the narrator undergoes spiritual rebirth; the whole process is reinforced by the
movement of the F harmony as described above (Zhang, 2016). This unexpected sonic change resembles many spiritual tales where, when a character accepts death, something unexpected takes place to prepare for the newly acquired life. Death has come, but not as the narrator first expected. Instead of the major quality of the fullness of death, we get a minor mode variant. In other words, death has come as rebirth. The narrator died and was brought back to life, now whole and cleansed.
"Pandora's Viola"

Dag Rothschild

\[ J = 85 \]

**Piano Intro** Repeat motive throughout verses

Am | G | F | Dm

**Verse**

Am | G | F | Dm

I love your sweet talking soft giggle strange walking

Am | G | F | Dm

rip roaring high rolling tastes like sugar on my tongue

Am | G | F | Dm

Aa Aa Aa Oo

Am | G | F | Dm

Aa Aa Aa Oo

**Chorus**

E\(7\) | A/\(7\) | C\# | D | E

Baby Baby

Dm Dm/F Dm Dm/F

Baby Baby Baby Oo

G Em\(7\) Am

Ah Ah Am

G E\(7\) Am

Ah Ah For ever

G Am

Ah Ah For ever
After the internal storm and stress of the earlier stages, the narrator has finally experienced spiritual death and rebirth with the help of (or rather, the intervention of) the “divine harmony.” This invisible “force” has been with the narrator from the start, guiding her along the path. Now, the narrator enters the world of “Pandora’s Viola” in the key of A minor. In the first lines of this section, the narrator addresses herself in a tender, loving manner. For the first time along this path she can finally see and hear what she sounds and looks like (“I love your sweet talking / Soft giggle, strange walking”). The newly reborn narrator feels, for the first time, right. A smile becomes a soft giggle; walking in these in new “shoes” feels strange but good. In the next lines, the narrator uses scenic-acoustic descriptors such as “rip-roaring” and “high-rolling” that, through their phonetic beauty and romantic resonance, create a perception of what it must feel like to finally come home.

As noted, the underlying motivic content in this album is built around the incomplete “lament progression,” where the main sonic structure uses a reoccurring descending tetrachord. As the narrator develops and undergoes radical changes of a spiritual, physical, and acoustic nature, the descending tetrachord slowly reveals its hidden purpose and meaning. In this stage, the first three chords of the harmonic progression automatically highlight the prevailing secret once again hidden behind the “lament progression”: A minor, G, F, and D minor. Moreover, the D minor interruption brings back memories of the failed attempts at the dominant—in this case E
(Zhang, 2016). Not only are we witnessing the return of the lament progression, we are once again confronted with the same denial we have seen up till this point. In addition, the vocal persona persistently creates profound dissonances with the D minor harmony (Zhang, 2016). Yet, this is only the facade of the upcoming sonic events. Just as before, the voice persona makes itself audible and insists on creating dissonances with a D minor harmony, falling under the words “strange walking.” Funnily enough, the voice persona now articulates the chord we have been waiting to hear. That is, the lyrical content is carried by the D minor harmony, while the voice persona articulates the notes of E minor. Not only does this create a sonic-visual representation of what is actually being said (the melody/voice persona is actually mirroring the linguistic landscape embodied in the words), but emphasizes the fact that the narrator and voice persona are finally one. The merging of these once-separate entities is complete.

The same scenario (i.e. the chord we were expecting to hear) is repeated at the end of the verse, as the narrator utters the word “tongue.” (Thus, the voice persona takes the narrator toward a harmonic change.) Only the voice persona moves to A minor, while the piano harmony remains on D minor (Zhang, 2016). Now the notes articulated by the voice persona show the harmony where it, too, must land (see “Needles of Mother”). Hence, right from the beginning, the chorus—where the narrator is clearly engaged in a self-enticing, almost orgasmic act, exclaiming nothing but prolonged vocalizations of the vowel “a” (“Aaaa, Aaaa, Aaaa”)—is supported by the bass entry on the long-anticipated “right” note. Next, at the fourth measure of the chorus, the harmony also fixes its trail (that is, the half-diminished harmony shifts back to the major harmony). According to Zhang (2016), the entrance of the bass on E signifies the completion of this tetrachord (at least from the perspective of the bass). As we know, the narrator
has already undergone a spiritual death; it is quite evident that both the narrator and the sonic structure are merging.\textsuperscript{13}

The harmony, however, through its move to the dominant E, is set to return to its “tonic,” just like a long-lost child. As a result, it is the harmony that brings the narrator home. The battle reaches its end in the final measures of the chorus, when the music lands on A minor (notably underlying the final word of the narrator “forever”). The lament progression is completed at last. Moreover, the fundamental differences between these lament progressions were the keys the narrator used to carry out her odyssey.

In “Pandora’s Viola” we come to understand one of the crucial findings of \textit{Imperial Butterfly}. One might argue that we are all born within the confines of acoustic parameters that shape, move, and enrich an individual’s experiences and life purpose. As a result of the spiritual death and divine intervention that prevented the narrator from becoming the walking dead, her whole internal acoustic/emotional equilibrium was retuned to new parameters, allowing her to enter a new key. Thus the tetrachord was completed and, most importantly, the narrator found her home. As Zhang pointed out (2016), the previous laments were taking place in B-flat minor; here, the musical structure changes and everything moves down to A minor.

Throughout the story, the narrator was stuck in a relentless battle of selves without being able to leave that cycle. She was simply looking in the wrong places. In “Pandora’s Viola” the cycle is broken when the lament finally enters the key of A minor, the key of the narrator’s

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{13} In previous stages, this progression never reached the dominant, much less a return to the home tonic (Zhang, 2016).}
As a result of her internal, spiritual transformation, the “sonic being” of the narrator is altered. This realignment of the narrator’s internal acoustic equilibrium was made possible by previous stages through which she had to walk. The acoustics were the tools, and the narrator their instrument. Walking through the gates of death, her body—the instrument that played and created this sonic formation—becomes re-tuned in order to play the lament in the right key. The narrator is finally healed.
"Violet Fusion"

-Dag Rothschild

Latin Rock

Intro

Em | Em7 | D | Em7

1 (synth drone) (bass guitar melody) (semi-rubato) (drums play only colors, no groove)

2nd x, spoken: Mary, Mother of God, Please answer our prayers, Now and at the hour of our death, Amen.

Em7 | D/E | Em7 | D/E | Em7 | D/E

8 (bass only sets up groove) (add drum groove & guitar)

Em7 | D/E | Em7 | D/E | Em7 | D/E | Em7 (bass continues simile)

Verse

Em7 | D/E | Em7

I'm not sure if I love you, but what

Em7 | D/E | Em7

I cry in the dark scratching at my face

Em7 | D/E | Em7

and this hissing inside, babe

Em7 | D/E

don't listen, hush don't you listen, baby don't you listen, baby

V.S.
"Violet Fusion"

Ch.

B7 | Am11 | Em7

B7 | Am11 | Em7

B7 (band holds) (drum fill)

Br.

B | Em/B | B7

with disgust you're my mother

and with lust you're my brother

but, daddy your sweet loving

and with trust you're mine mine

B7 | A | B7 | A | B7 | A | B7

V.S.
"Violet Fusion"

(guitar solo)

(共生体): yah-ha ah-ah

(共生体): um, yes, I'm coming too

again, again, again

wetness longing oh - whoa - oh

do you feel, do you yes, you feel, do you yes, you feel, do you

'cause you're mine 'cause you're mine 'cause you're mine V.S.
"Violet Fusion"

'cause you're mine
mine, mine, mine
ch, ch, ch, ch
(chorus)

(groove section)

(spoken): this, uh, hourglass is, uh, empty now
and no more
(sung): voices from the past

(spoken): my precious heart I live in
(sung): belongs to me now

V.S.
"Violet Fusion"

Em7  D/E  Em7  D/E

(spoken): and the windows, uh,

Em7  D/E  Em7  D/E

(sung): now are open

Em7  D/E  Em7  D/E

(spoken): and I'm drowning

so, uh, how can I be dying

when the sky is all so blue

Ch.

Cmaj7  B7sus4  Em7

(sung): how can I be dying

when the sky is so blue, so blue, so blue

Cmaj7  B7sus4  Em7

how can I be dying

when the sky is all so blue

Cmaj7  B7sus4  Em7

how can I be dying

when the sky is all so blue

Em7  D/E  Em7  D/E

when the sky is all so blue

(spoken): when the sky is all so blue

so blue

Inst.

Em7  D/E  Em7  D/E

Vamp & fade
Violet Fusion: Food for Thought

(Color: Violet)

After “Pandora’s Viola” our narrator takes possession of her new self and enters fully reborn into the world of “Violet Fusion.” The word “violet” in the title is a symbolic reference to the flower, which has been at the center of many myths and folktales. The most well known (and the most relevant to this story) is the ancient Greek myth in which Zeus made violets grow in the meadows where nymph Io used to wander. As the story goes, Zeus had fallen in love with Io, and changed her into a white heifer to protect the nymph from his wife’s wrath. When Io wept over the taste of the coarse grass she was forced to eat, Zeus changed her tears into violets that only Io was permitted to eat. This myth led to the ancient belief in violets as a love potion and an aphrodisiac.

The title “Violet Fusion” sheds light on the overall message of the story and connects the songs to each other thematically. We can now understand the main theme of Imperial Butterfly to be love—love that is abandoned and rediscovered in all its myriad forms. The narrator enters the final stage of her journey in the key of E minor, the same key in which she started, indicating she has come full circle. She starts off with a prayer to Mary, Mother of God, asking for her prayers to be answered (“Now and at the hour of our death / Amen”). As the first verse starts, the narrator—without hesitation—expresses her desire for the “other.” She is self-assured now; her

words lack ambiguity and fear. The narrator is completely in charge, claiming her authority. She exclaims her feelings in this way: “I’m not sure if I love you / but what is love anyhow / but an echo that answers?” She can’t quite identify the emotions she feels—all is new and all feels new. Though she has not forgotten the voices of pain (“I cry in the dark / scratching at my face… / And this hissing inside, babe / don’t listen, hush / don’t you listen, baby”), the narrator now has the strength to ignore them. The narrator has become the “other,” yet she is also herself. She has become her own defender and knows she will prevail no matter what.

The chorus in “Violet Fusion” has no lyrics; thus any interpretation can only be surmised from the surrounding music. According to Zhang (2016), the narrator’s question at the beginning, “But what is love anyhow?” is an interesting phenomenological detail—what could be heard as a rhetorical question changes with the line that follows: “But an echo that answers?” Its description becomes autological; what it says describes itself. In the same way that love is an echo, so too is this line. As a result, the answer comes in a heavier vocal timbre. Moreover, the melodic activity on the “rape me “ line is accompanied by music that remains indifferent to the fact that someone is being raped. This points to the narrator’s willingness to surrender (Zhang, 2016). What comes next is a bifurcation of the melody, with higher notes around E and lower notes around A on the line “Do you want me?”

In “Violet Fusion” the narrator uses very direct and passionate language. This is a result of the fact that the voice persona and narrator are now fully connected. The voice persona at last speaks through the narrator, is a vehicle for the narrative. The narrator’s ecstatic feelings are further emphasized by the consistent use of melismas and tonal glides (sliding from one pitch to
the next) which add an emotional texture to narrative. In other words, the sounds created by the voice persona have become synonymous with the emotions that the words describe. The voice persona continues to offer its support with repetitive articulations of “again” to the same harmonic structure—through the sonic coloring of the words “dark” (which ironically climbs to a higher register); and on “shadow,” which comes in at an incredibly low register (Zhang, 2016).

This shows that the two “voices” are now united and no longer battling each other as before. They are now friends—lovers, even—and ultimately each other’s redemption.

The narrative of “Violet Fusion” is saturated with Catholic symbolism. In the beginning of the first verse, the narrator starts off with a prayer to Mary, Mother of God; later, the narrator alludes to “God saved for the sinners” as she engages in an intoxicating dance with herself. (This refers to the love of God but also the love for oneself, where one must sacrifice the self in order to find it.) We have already seen this symbolism of sacrifice, Christian love, and forgiveness throughout *Imperial Butterfly*: In “Needles of Mother” the narrator must forgive herself so that she may find peace. In “Sassafras & Rain” the narrator must be cleansed of her pride through death and asks to be fed by God’s “body and blood.”

The second symbol of love—abundant in this final stage—is physical love. The repeated sexual images painted by the narrator (with the help of the voice persona) are not about the act of sex itself, but rather physical love as the ultimate act of self-possession. Self-love is found in abundance within the narrator, even when explicitly instructing herself in this way: “Rape me, take me,” “Fill me up with thousand babies to be now,” which all create a build-up to the chorus, a wordless force of an orgasmic nature.
However, the most important love she experiences is the love for nature and its beatitude. This realization comes to the narrator when she enters the last verse, saying, “How can I be dying when the sky is all so blue?” It is this kind of love—the love of nature—that embodies the narrator’s ultimate survival. It is the love of the sky that prevents the narrator from dying.

According to Zhang (2016), this is emphasized musically as well: As the narrator speaks of the blueness of the sky, the melodic content mirrors the love-filled choruses, where the turn to C major with the turn to VI sounds like a tremendous release. Moreover, the hermeneutical function of the chorus is transformed from a sexual image to an innocent love of nature. In his view, the chorus should be thought of as a rise from E up to G major, which is a rise in pitch space (we go up from E to G) as well as a rise in modal quality (we go from the minor to its relative major). It is this ascent of the tonal center that adds to the moment of release, making the chorus the encompassing affect of love. The melody changes, the tonal centers shift, and the acoustic landscape widens dramatically: It is eternal love that brings about the most profound transformation.

Thus, in “Violet Fusion,” the concept of “love” itself evolves. It is first portrayed as love of God; then as physical love (sex); and finally as the love of the blue sky (love of nature). As the song unfolds—and as each tide of the chorus returns—these symbolic meanings become clearer. In the last chorus, as the narrator looks to the sky and states, “How can I be dying when the sky is all so blue?” the chorus not only contains the same melodic material as the love-filled choruses we heard previously; it changes to B7sus4, which points to and resembles a “transformation,” in the meaning and the underlying content of the chorus. In this section, we
can hear all the choruses from the previous stages finding themselves tonally and creating a sonic tonic. They are a collage of all of the musical elements found along the path.

As stated above, the mythical symbolism of the violet connects the stages in *Imperial Butterfly*. Likewise, it reveals a hidden meaning within them. In “Hush Velvet Kitty,” the narrator’s pain can be now understood as the pain of abandonment. The “not-dying” in “Little Girly Ain’t Dead” signifies the narrator’s inner strength, as well as her quest for survival and self-love. “Needles of Mother” is now shown to represent the act of self-forgiveness. And, in “Sassafras & Rain,” just as Io had to let go of her body and allow her own tears to become her only sustenance, the narrator must finally let go of her past life in order to begin life anew. Like Io, the narrator’s suffering eventually becomes the “food” that allows her to grow. In “Violet Fusion,” the narrator must adjust her new self to the vicissitudes of life—meaning, she now must really *live*. As Io was given the gift of renewal from Zeus, i.e. from divine intervention, the narrator of this story has been given the gift of renewal and transformation through the experience of a musical intervention that is no less divine.
Conclusion

*Imperial Butterfly* follows one character as she travels through an acoustic odyssey within which she is able to remold her destiny. Through nine stages she experiences nine different emotions, formulates ideas with the help of language, and is led toward redemption. With the help of the harmonic structure, the voice persona (melody), and language, she eventually surmounts her heartache and becomes transformed. In *Imperial Butterfly*, the specific combination of language and sound became the agent by which the narrator was emotionally and spiritually healed. This process I call “sonic nourishment.” In the course of this study, I have come to believe that what my character experienced is available to all human beings—that the intimate interaction between language, voice, and harmonic progression can pave the way toward personal transformation, which takes place mentally (through language), and bodily (through music).

Since most of the musical sequences used here were written and composed before I set out to investigate the relationship between music, language, and healing—and were likewise inspired by personal experience—many questions have arisen in the course of this work. How do we map speech sounds to music sounds? Do we naturally possess acoustic knowledge that can facilitate the creation of a song sequence in which each element works in unison with emotional development, thus leading to healing and transformation? If so, what are the acoustic and neurological parameters facilitating the whole process? Thanks to my compositional work, and later this investigation, I have laid a foundation for a much deeper entry into the still-unmapped
body of research in music cognition. As the internal acoustic environment is always present, why could it not assist in the process of living?

This study has made me realize that our bodies are constructed this way on purpose—that is, we absorb sound through the auditory system, we have the ability to produce sound with the help of language, and we experience sound with the help of the brain-mind mechanism. This study further revealed to me that the physical body is tuned to specific keys and frequencies through which it can align itself, develop, and heal. In Imperial Butterfly, this is best shown in the way that the narrator’s body naturally aligned itself, on its own, with the lament progression, finally landing on the right note as a result of a key change. All of this took place without the narrator’s prior knowledge or intention.

Finally, I might add that the experience of sound as a powerful tool for psychological and physiological transformation has been recognized and employed by many civilizations across the continents for thousands of years. My findings are substantiated even in ancient texts. As it is written in the Old Testament: “Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his lyre and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.”

I feel that this study poses some very exciting questions into the nature of sound and healing, and furthermore hope that science will make greater advances in the study of the human body as an acoustic vessel.

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15 (New International Version, 1 Sam. 16:23)
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