

Belmont University

Belmont Digital Repository

Honors Theses

Belmont Honors Program

4-20-2020

"Love Is More" An Autobiographical Concept Album

Madeleine Lefler

Belmont University, madeleine.lefler@pop.belmont.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.belmont.edu/honors_theses



Part of the [Music Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Lefler, Madeleine, "'Love Is More' An Autobiographical Concept Album" (2020). *Honors Theses*. 25.
https://repository.belmont.edu/honors_theses/25

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Belmont Honors Program at Belmont Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Belmont Digital Repository. For more information, please contact repository@belmont.edu.


“Love is More,” An Autobiographical Concept Album

Madeleine Lefler

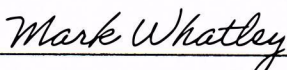
A Senior Honors Thesis project submitted to the Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Music

Belmont University Honors Program

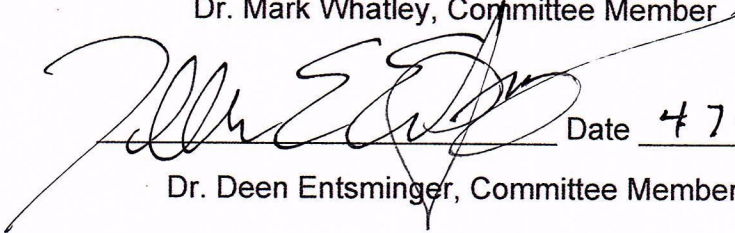
__, 2020

 Date 4/1/2020

Dwayne O'Brien, Thesis Director

 Date 4-16-2020

Dr. Mark Whatley, Committee Member

 Date 4.7.20

Dr. Deen Entsminger, Committee Member

Accepted for the Honors Council and Honors Program:

_____ Date _____

Dr. Bonnie Smith Whitehouse, Director

The Honors Program

Abstract

As a fledgling artist, my purpose in the creation of this album was to undergo a deconstructive experience that enabled me to explore formative events in my life that have contributed to who I am today, especially in regards to my aesthetic preferences as an artist and my personal views of the world. The results of this deconstruction are the ten paired songs and images that compose this thesis. My hope is that each song and image work together to encapsulate the event itself and present my emotional climate during the time at which it occurred, and that my audience is prompted by the choice I have made to evaluate my journey to consider the many individual moments that make up each of their own.

The primary thematic focus of the album is on how I have been affected by my relationships with others. In other words, the role that different types of love have played in my life thus far. From the loneliness associated with years of bullying to the anger that blossomed from unhealthy romantic relationships to the deep sadness that accompanies miscarriages and suicide; these songs showcase some of the most exacting, and consequently transformative, moments of my life so far.

**BELMONT UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM
Artist's Studio Creative Thesis Prospectus Cover Form**

Student Name Adeline Zeffler Date 3/18/2019

Major Classical Voice Major/Minor _____

Thesis Title "Sweet like Honey", an autobiographical
concept album

Thesis Director Dwayne O'Brien

Supervisory Committee Member Signatures:

Kelly K. Garner
John E. O'Brien

Thesis Director's signature granting approval

Dwayne O'Brien

Thesis Overview

My senior thesis will be an autobiographical concept album that explores formative events throughout my life through songs and visuals. I will encapsulate the moments that have led to the creation of my current beliefs and artistic preferences through original music and lyrics. Each song will be accompanied by a visual journal entry that will serve as another medium through which to convey each event and its role in my journey, and will work as an important aspect of my creative process.

I will begin the project by creating a list of life events that were most significant in the creation of my current beliefs and preferences. I will narrow that list down to ten events by researching each of them through examining paintings and songs that I have composed in the past, reading through old diary entries, and interviewing the people who experienced those events with me. This group of interviewees will be made up of close friends, family, and teachers. Then I will begin reading several books that will inform my creative process, including Jimmy Webb's *Tunesmith: Inside the Art of Songwriting*, Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*, David Sylvester's *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, and Jeanne Oliver's *The Painted Art Journal*. I will also use *Reading Lyrics* by Robert Gottlieb and Robert Kimball as a guide in the analysis of projects that are similar to my own. These projects will include Tracy Chapman's self-titled debut album, *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*, Stevie Wonder's *Where I'm Coming From*, David Wilcox's *The Very Best of David Wilcox*, Mumford and Sons' *Babel*, and Erin Faith Allen's *The Underneath: A Visual Memoir*.

I will record the album on the Garageband production platform by Apple, and intend to use my own vocals, acoustic guitar, Zoom H4N Handy Recorder, and MIDI keyboard in the recording process. I will use a variety of mediums to compose the visual profiles, including acrylic and watercolor paints, ink, gesso, and collage materials including photos and magazine clippings.

The background research for the project will be completed through daily reading and research sessions, and I will use the information I gather to create a visual profile for each of the ten significant events. Each profile will take the form of a visual journal entry composed of photos, interview snippets, and my past paintings and songs. During this time I will also begin writing preliminary lyrics and chord progression using the themes, structures, and data from each profile as inspiration. Once the school year begins, I will have weekly meetings with my director and meetings with each of my readers as each draft of the project is completed. These meetings will continue through the fall and spring semesters until the project is finished. I will also have daily writing and editing sessions on weekdays that will last from 30 minutes to one hour, with longer sessions on the weekends that will be coupled with meetings with my committee members. I will also take time at the conclusion of each week to reflect on how I feel I have progressed, and to evaluate where I am in the project in the context of my overall goals. These reflections will be used in the spring of 2020 to compose the written reflection that will accompany the project.

Similar Works/ Influences

The Diary of Frida Kahlo: *An Intimate Self-Portrait*

In the same way that Frida Kahlo's diary combines poetry and visual art, my project aims to combine several artistic mediums for the purpose of self-reflection and storytelling. Through songwriting and visual journal entries, I will present formative moments in my life from childhood to the present. Kahlo's work focuses particularly on her relationship with her fellow artist and husband Diego Rivera, as well as on the frustration and physical pain surrounding the thirty-five-plus spinal surgeries she received throughout her life. Similarly, my project will recount aspects of some of the relationships that have changed my artistic perspective, and explore events in my life that created intense pain and allowed for necessary change to take place. Like Frida, I will explore and present the moments that have made me who I am. Unlike Frida when she wrote this diary, I am a younger artist at the beginning of her artistic journey.

Tracy Chapman: *Tracy Chapman*

Tracy Chapman's self-titled debut album is the mission-statement of a young artist who has been steeped in the harsh world of class and race divisions. Chapman's voice is resoundingly rich, and her lyrics reflect a powerful defiance of the powers that be. They also reflect her hope that her world can be improved. Each song is stylistically-unique, the single musical feature that serves to tie the album together is her unique vocal sound. She has a smooth, almost masculine voice that punctuates the sudden, quick rhythms that are scattered throughout her work. My album will be similar to Chapman's first efforts in that it will likely feature a wide variety of styles, united primarily through my unique vocal tone and lyrics that speak to the things that are most important to me. My final product will not be nearly as polished as Chapman's because I am producing and mixing it myself with little more than a guitar and a MIDI keyboard, but it will be equally honest.

Khalil Gibran: *The Prophet*

Whether they dabble in a variety of mediums or limit themselves to one, I believe that it is vital that every artist expose themselves to artistic projects in a variety of styles, mediums, and genres. *The Prophet* by Khalil Gibran is not a musical or visual work, but a collection of 26 poems framed as the sermons from a wise man who has been asked to share his wisdom on various significant topics including marriage, family, love, and death. The book has become universally appealing to people of different backgrounds and faiths through its beautiful prose and penetrating understanding. This concept of a work having universal appeal through its portrayal of distinctly human experiences is my primary motivator in the creation of my project. I want to offer my audience a chance to remove themselves from personal prejudices and to identify with something that is beyond, and at the same time inexorably bound to, themselves as human beings.

Artist's Statement

My work as an artist reflects a personal search for clarity and truth in my life; it is a search that delves into my own past experiences and into the world around me. My best tool for this search has always been the creative process involved in both writing songs and creating works of visual art that encapsulate a given moment or situation and marry it to my own understanding. I think that music and visual art are uniquely linked by frequency and form: pitches and colors are understood and measured as frequencies that, when pressed into forms such as a Mozart sonata or a Picasso painting, open a door to intense introspection and emotional reactions in creator and audience, alike. I have always been drawn to both of these mediums, and have discovered unique opportunities for expression in music that I simply cannot relate using paintbrushes or pencils, and vice-versa.

My primary goal as an artist is that the visual, musical, and lyrical manifestations of my exploration will move my audience to consider their own journeys as closely as I have. The moments and feelings that I portray are not always beautiful, and the works themselves are not the epitome of technical achievement. However, they reflect my honesty and their purpose is to prompt introspection by showcasing the steps of my own self-exploration.

Timetable

May of 2019

- Create, research, and narrow down a list of significant formative events in my life
- Read and notate:
 - Jimmy Webb's *Tunesmith: Inside the Art of Songwriting*
 - Rainier Maria Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*
 - David Sylvester's *Interviews with Francis Bacon*
 - Jeanne Oliver's *The Painted Art Journal*

June of 2019

- Use *Reading Lyrics* by Robert Gottlieb and Robert Kimball as a guide in the analysis of projects that are similar to my own, including:
 - Tracy Chapman's self-titled debut album
 - *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*
 - Stevie Wonder's *Where I'm Coming From*
 - David Wilcox's *The Very Best of David Wilcox*
 - Mumford and Sons' *Babel*
 - Erin Faith Allen's *The Underneath: A Visual Memoir*

July of 2019

- Use research, analyses of similar projects, and notations of sources to inform a visual profile for each of the ten significant events
- Begin composing early drafts of music and lyrics

August through September of 2019

- Read Julia Cameron's *The Artist's Way* to accompany the creative process of songwriting
- Compose first drafts of music and lyrics
- Meet weekly with artistic director
 - These weekly meetings will continue until the project's completion

October

- Record scratch demos of first drafts
- Submit scratch demos and lyrics to both readers via Dropbox
- Meet with both readers for debrief and suggestions regarding first drafts

December of 2019

- Edit lyrics and music with attentiveness to reader suggestions
- Begin recording and editing process over Christmas break
- Schedule final project-review meeting with project committee
- Begin planning album-release event
 - Book venue
 - Budget for costs
 - Make a guest-list

January of 2020

- Submit second draft demos to readers via Dropbox
- Meet with both readers for debrief and suggestions regarding second drafts
- Record and edit as needed

February of 2020

- Finish recording and editing
- Final meeting with project-committee
- Finish planning album-release event

March 2020

- Burn CDs for attendees
- Print copies of visual journal profiles to accompany CDs
- Finish planning, and execute album-release event

April 2020

- I intend to be fully finished with the project itself by this point in time

Bibliography

- Ackerman, Angela, and Becca Puglisi. *The Emotion Thesaurus: A Writer's Guide to Character Expression*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012.
- Allen, Erin Faith. *The Underneath: A Visual Memoir*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017.
- Cameron, Julia. *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*. Penguin Random House LLC, 2016.
- Cash, Johnny. *At Folsom Prison* Columbia Records, 1968.
- Cash, Johnny, and Patrick Carr. *Cash*. HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 2003.
- Chapman, Tracy. *Tracy Chapman* Elektra Records, 1988.
- Coleman, Patrick, editor. *The Art of Music*. Yale University Press, 2015.
- Esim, Cigdem, and Corinne Squire. "Visual Autobiographies in East London: Narratives of Still Images, Interpersonal Exchanges, and Intrapersonal Dialogues." *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, vol. 14, no. 2. *Art. 1*, nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs130214.
- Gibran, Kahlil. *The Prophet*. Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1923.
- Gottlieb, Robert, and Robert Kimball. *Reading Lyrics*. Pantheon Books, 2000.
- Kahlo, Frida, et al. *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*. Abrams , 2005.
- Mumford & Sons. *Babel* Island Records/ Glassnote Records/ Gentlemen of the Road Records, 2012.
- Oliver, Jeanne. *The Painted Art Journal*. North Light Books, 2018.
- Pattison, Pat. *Writing Better Lyrics: The Essential Guide to Powerful Songwriting*. Writer's Digest Books, 2010.
- Prince. *Prince* Warner Bros. Records, 1979.

- Ramsay, Graham Gordon, and Holly Barlow Sweet. *A Creative Guide to Exploring Your Life*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2008.
- Rees, Vaughan Dai. "Head, Heart, and Hand: a Visual Autobiography." *James Cook University Australia*, James Cook University, 2007.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Letters to a Young Poet*. Translated by Mary D. Herter Norton, W. W. Norton & Company, 1993.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Rilke's Book of Hours: Love Poems to God*. Translated by Joanna Macy and Anita Barrows, Riverhead Books, 2005.
- Steinberg, Saul, and Aldo Buzzzi. *Reflections and Shadows*. Translated by John Shepley, Random House, 2002.
- Sylvester, David. *Interviews with Francis Bacon*. Thames & Hudson, 2016.
- Webb, Jimmy. *Tunesmith: Inside the Art of Songwriting*. Hachette Book Group, 1999.
- Wilcox, David. *The Very Best of David Wilcox* INgrooves Fontana Records/A&M Records, 2001.
- Wonder, Stevie. *Where I'm Coming From* Motown Records, 1971.
- Zollo, Paul. *Songwriters on Songwriting: Expanded Edition*. Da Capo Press, Inc., 1997.

Thematic Overview

1. Come My Way

This is the only song on the album that is not a reflection on past events, but a declaration of hope for the future. The person to whom I speak is a metaphor for my desires in life as a whole, and the song is emblematic of a newfound determination to have patience in the process of the fulfillment of those desires.

2. Love Is More

This is the first of two reflective songs that are concerned with an unhealthy romantic relationship with someone who I dated briefly as a sophomore in college. It is centered on the idea that people cannot always help hurting those that they are close to. This song focuses less on the person that I dated and more on the fact that he had learned unhealthy behavioral patterns from other relationships in his life, and had done the best that he could with what he had been given. It represents my own desire to grow past what happened between us, and to accept it in the context of forgiveness.

3. Lust Is Like Gravity

This song serves as an antithesis to “Come My Way.” It was one of the most difficult to share with the committee for this thesis, and now with the world. It grew out of some deep personal struggles that I have been working through for years, and will continue to work through for years to come.

4. This I Know (Asher's Song)

This song was inspired by the birth of my youngest cousin. That day represented redemption, renewal, and hope for me as a single, and often lonely, young woman. The song takes the form of stream-of-consciousness advice to someone who is new to the world, and is the same advice that I often give myself in moments of frustration and selfishness.

5. The Quiet

I am the oldest of four children, but my parents had a number of miscarriages after me and between my siblings. I remember feeling a new, gaping sense of loss each time I was told that the baby wouldn't be coming home. It was difficult for me to comprehend what a miscarriage was as a young child, but I knew that something was wrong based on my parents' reactions and on the fact that my mom was no longer pregnant. It felt like the absence of a part of our family that we couldn't miss fully, but whose loss we still felt. I wrote this song while thinking about what it was like in the months after those babies would have been born, where there was silence instead of the sounds that accompany new life.

6. Gone Girl

This song grew out of my experiences with bullying in middle and high school. My peers used to call me a lesbian behind my back because I had short hair and enjoyed a variety of activities typically associated with masculinity, and I was frequently the target of

comments that derided my scrawny appearance and the amount of food that I ate. I was always able to escape the feelings of doubt and shame that resulted from those interactions by being involved in theatrical performances in some capacity. Through acting, singing, dancing, building sets, and running sound, I always found a safe and welcoming home in the performing arts.

7. I Remember (Papa's Song)

My grandfather passed away at the end of my junior year of high school, and I was able to be with him on the day he died. My family had a fairly rocky relationship with him and his wife when I was growing up for a variety of reasons, so I was not as close to him as I would have liked to be. This song is a reflection on the strange duality that exists when someone has passed. My family and I went about our daily lives with little change, but it felt like something was missing on a fundamental level that could not be fixed.

8. Free (Neev's Song)

I had a dear friend in high school who committed suicide in 2018. He was one of the most extroverted and kind human beings who I have had the privilege of knowing, and it was not until after he passed away that I was informed of the fact that he had struggled with depression for years. I have wished for some time that I could have had the opportunity to tell him what he meant to me, and to ask him to stay. This song was born out of that desire.

9. Help Me Out

This is the second of two reflections on an unhealthy romantic relationship with someone who I dated early in my collegiate career. I feel that I could not possibly overstate the impact that breaking out of that relationship has had on my life, and this song is a tribute to the frustration I felt in expressing concern about the relationship, and receiving no response from him. It reflects my struggle between wanting to stay in the relationship, and wanting to stop the constant hurt.

10. Raise Your Head Up

This was the first song that I wrote for the album, and it is the result of a lifelong struggle to follow and continue to cherish Christ. I wrote it in recognition of His love and of my struggle to accept that love in an ever-growing understanding of my own sin and its impact on the people around me.

Come My Way - Lyrics

I don't know where you live
 I don't know who you are
 Do you even exist,
 Or am I just wishing on stars?

How can I be missing you when I don't
 know you yet?
 What is it in me that makes all of dreams of
 you so vivid?

I find myself torn in a war
 Between hoping and dreaming and living
 and wishing you'd
 Come my way and bring me home, home

It's started to wear on my heart like a lonely
 song
 When all I can do is just pray and stay true
 to the thoughts that come along

And I guess that's our song
 Oh, playing over and over on repeat in my
 head for days
 Making me wish more and more that you
 would
 Come my way
 And bring me home, mmm

And I've been told home is where my heart
 is
 But I've given my heart away
 To many an unworthy man
 Who promised he would stay

But I'm choosing now to wait
 It's your turn to make a move
 I'll settle down in loneliness
 And wait for your debut

How can I be missing you when I don't
 know you yet?
 What is it in me that makes all of dreams of
 you so vivid?

I find myself torn in a war
 Between hoping and dreaming and living
 and wishing you'd
 Come my way
 And bring me home, home

I don't know where you live
 I don't know who you are
 If you even exist?
 Or if I'm just wishing on stars

Come My Way - Collage



Love Is More - Lyrics

Love isn't held in rationed kisses
 Or warm bodies under blankets in fall
 It's in a grocery store trip
 In a silly kitchen dance
 In the "love ya's" at the ends of phone calls

Love was ours to give and to receive,
 But you chose to hold yours back
 And that's alright,
 You didn't know that you didn't want me
 Love is more than what you gave it credit for

It's in minutes untainted by passion
 In years of commitment and pain
 It's in the sound of tiptoes that alight on the stairs
 In the choosing to leave off the light

Love was ours to give and to receive,
 But you chose to hold yours back
 And that's alright,
 You didn't know that you didn't want me
 Love is more than what you gave it credit for

Love is an everyday effort
 Not commonplace, though it may seem to be.
 There's a place for you in the story of life
 And love, my friend, is the key

Love was ours to give and to receive,
 But you chose to hold yours back
 And that's alright,
 You didn't know that you didn't want me
 Love is more than what you gave it credit for

and I don't love you
 I don't love you
 I don't love anymore

Love Is More - Collage

Love is More

contact with you
 but, both of us would
 place with Christ and
 relationships with Him out of the
 I was also scared that if I expressed
 both fell back to where we were
 to be for reasons that
 I'm sorry for causing you all of that
 that will probably be difficult
 I'm sorry for both of us
 I should have spoken
 relational conflict is to
 (I'm a worrier).
 and approached you with my
 you dismissed my thoughts. You
 I had been tossed
 to catch me,
 offering a
 helping hand,
 told me
 I forgave
 falling.
 I many
 you, not
 thankful
 be open
 need
 love is
 good
 Love
 is
 everyday
 It

When I was ready to speak
 concerns,
 on the
 loved
 and
 you
 you
 me for
 opened as
 that I am able
 and honest
 you to be
 more than
 conversation
 is sacrifice
 difficult
 and not
 kind people
 walls and gets into
 have to be willing
 why weren't you?

with breaks
 that are uncomfortable and scary. But you
 in the process I was willing,

Lust Is Like Gravity - Lyrics

I'm more alone when I'm with you
 When your counterfeit words can't hide the
 truth
 When your darkest dreams propel you
 To me
 Oh, to me

Stop your talking and
 Dance with me
 Feed our heat with your need
 Stop us when we go too far
 And while you're at it,
 Put out the stars

Skies are tall and
 Sugar is sweet
 The seas are salt and
 Time ain't cheap and
 We are free

And we are one, both
 You and me,
 Because lust is like gravity

Could you give me
 Could you give me, oh
 Could you give me wings
 Could you give me
 Could you give me, oh
 Could you give me wings

When we dance we play out and age-old
 scene
 Man and woman made king and queen and
 We rule all over the desolate things

A dove flies over and
 Rain falls down
 She is crying for the lost who won't be
 found
 And you look at me as
 The soft, sweet sound
 Buries our lies in our pain

Could you give me
 Could you give me, oh
 Could you give me wings
 Could you give me
 Could you give me
 Could you give me wings

Could you give me
 Give me
 Could you give me wings
 Could you give me
 Could you give me
 Could you give me wings

Lust Is Like Gravity - Collage



This I Know (Asher's Song) - Lyrics

You opened your eyes just this morning
 A new name is written on the wall
 And I think as I hold you to me
 Lord, we are built so breakable

I've never been one for giving advice
 But for you, I'll give it my all

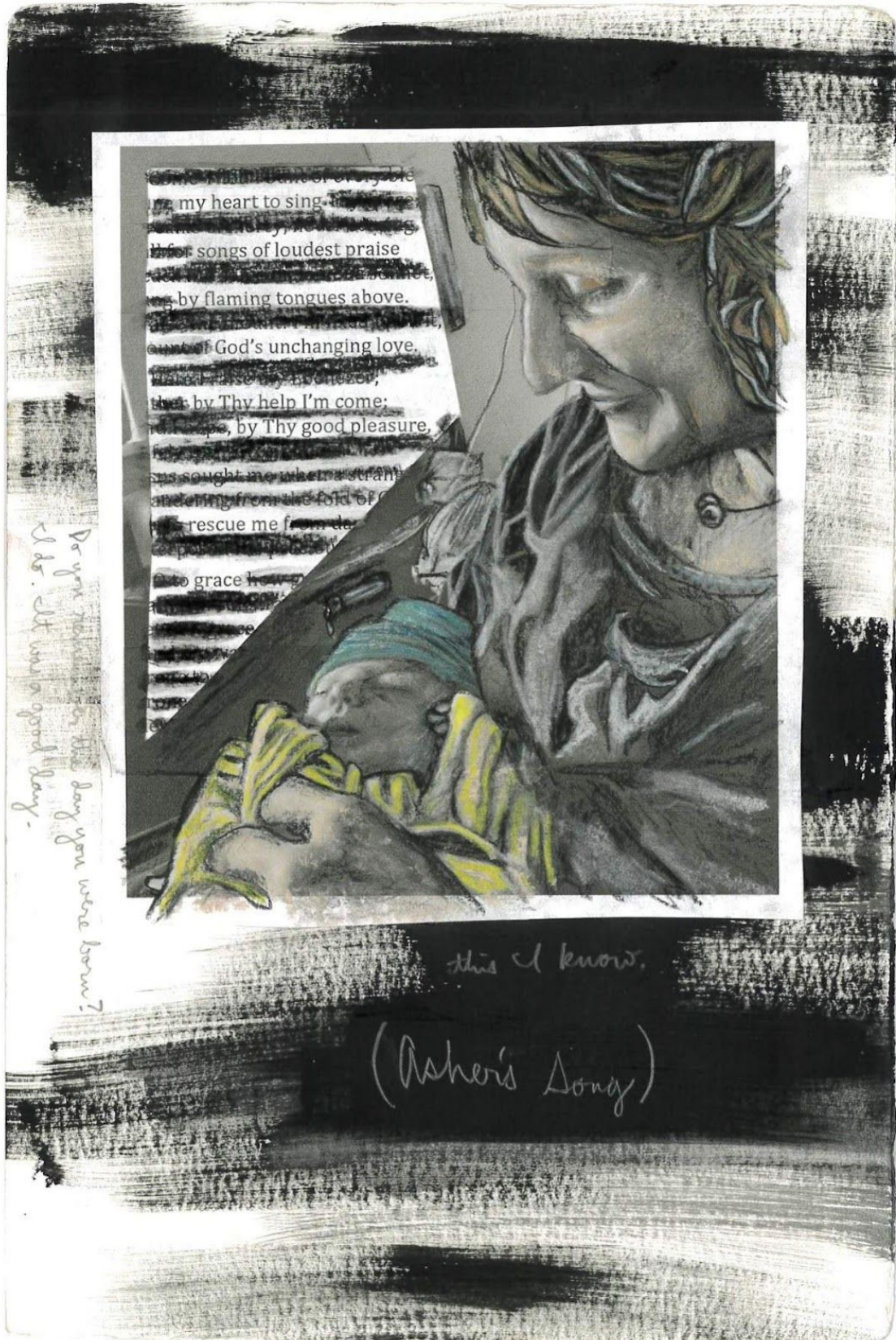
This I know
 Love your neighbor
 Cherish your time
 It's alright to eat dessert first once in awhile
 Hold onto a picture of your childhood room
 and
 Hug your dad when he gets home

This I know
 We're skin and bone
 And to dust we go, but oh
 What a life
 What a great, grand show
 And we're gonna hurt ourselves
 And all our friends, too
 But the stories are worth all the blues
 This I know

Say it's alright
 Even when it ain't
 Cause forgiveness is cheaper than pride
 Remember you're worth more
 Than all of your pain
 And your scars are just cursive on the page
 of a beautiful life

We're skin and bone
 And to dust we go, but oh
 What a life
 What a great, grand show
 And we're going to hurt ourselves
 And all our friends, too
 But the stories are worth all the blues
 This I know

This I Know (Asher's Song) - Collage



... my heart to sing.
 ... for songs of loudest praise
 ... by flaming tongues above.
 ... of God's unchanging love.
 ... that by Thy help I'm come;
 ... by Thy good pleasure,
 ... sought me when a stranger
 ... coming from the fold of
 ... rescue me from de
 ... grace how

Do you remember the day you were born?
 Yes. It was a good day.

this I know.

(Asher's Song)

The Quiet - Lyrics

House is cold this morning
Look outside, the leaves are changing
The seasons move so fast I can't keep track
Of where we are, and where we're going
My love do you hear it, the sound of quiet?
It's gotten so loud that it hurts my heart

I want to wake up to crying all through the night
I want to sing him to sleep and tuck him in tight
I want all the tantrums, the laughter, the fights
I just wanted to bring my boy home

My love, do you recall listening for sound?
How our stomachs sank down like stones
The moment we found that the quiet in our house
Would stay to keep us alone

I want to wake up to crying all through the night
Want to sing him to sleep and tuck him in tight
I want all the tantrums, the laughter, the fights
I just wanted to bring my boy home

Oh little one, we loved you before we even
knew who you were
Oh little one, what can we do
To know you now?

I used to like the quiet, I cherished the silence
Now I want it broken like it breaks my heart

The Quiet - Collage



Gone Girl - Lyrics

I've heard the whispers behind my back
And I know just what you say

Your bloody ink in my skin
Congratulations, you win
I've bared my back for your hate,
But now it's too late

Cause I'm a gone girl
Sayonara to the haters
I'll catch you later, coming live from the
stage
I'm a gone girl, and I've found my place
Far, far away from you

Well you can talk about me in the halls
And under bleachers at football games
Wrap your little minds around
All of the little things
That make me different,
And make you the same

The knives in my back, too deep to reach
But all of you who put them there
Want to watch me try and
That's why (that's why)

I'm a gone girl
Sayonara to the haters
I'll catch you later, coming live from the
stage
I'm a gone girl, and I've found my place
Far, far away from you

And by the way
Why does it matter to you
How I look, what I weigh,
And who I give my life to?

That's why I'm a gone girl
Sayonara to the haters
I'll catch you later, coming live from the
stage
I'm a gone girl, and I've found my place
Far, far away from you

Gone Girl - Collage



I Remember (Papa's Song) - Lyrics

I remember
 Cartoons in the morning
 And berries on the trees outside

I remember
 You checking on the bees
 No suit, they wouldn't know you in disguise
 I remember, Oh I do

Without you
 The bees still know what to do
 And the trees by the fence will still
 Ripen their fruit

Without you
 We still live the days all through
 But when harvest-time comes
 Who will care for your trees?
 When the hives are all full,
 Who will sling to keep the bees from
 leaving?

I remember
 The smile in your eyes
 Strong hands and a generous heart
 I remember
 dancing feet and your love for your wife
 and a faith that you held like a light in the
 dark
 I remember, Oh I do

Without you
 We all still know what to do
 But who do we ask when we want your
 advice?
 And how do we live in a world that doesn't
 care that you died?
 Without you

I remember
 Cartoons in the morning
 And berries on the trees outside

I Remember (Papa's Song) - Collage



Free (Neev's Song) - Lyrics

There was something wrong
From the start of the call
She asked if I had heard the news

And I hung my head low
Didn't need to hear no more
I knew
I already knew

That you had set yourself free
Free from this world
All your pain to your
Loved ones, conferred

And the saddest thing to me
Was your misunderstanding
Of the gift that your life was
To someone like me

Oh gypsy soul
Look around the room
See us all smilin'?
That's all you

Oh gypsy soul
Don't borrow a tomb
Stay a while longer
We've got some things to show you

You set us all free
Free with your laughs
Made us think home was a place
That could last

And you lead us to believe
You were fine but now we see
All your kindness grew
Out of lack

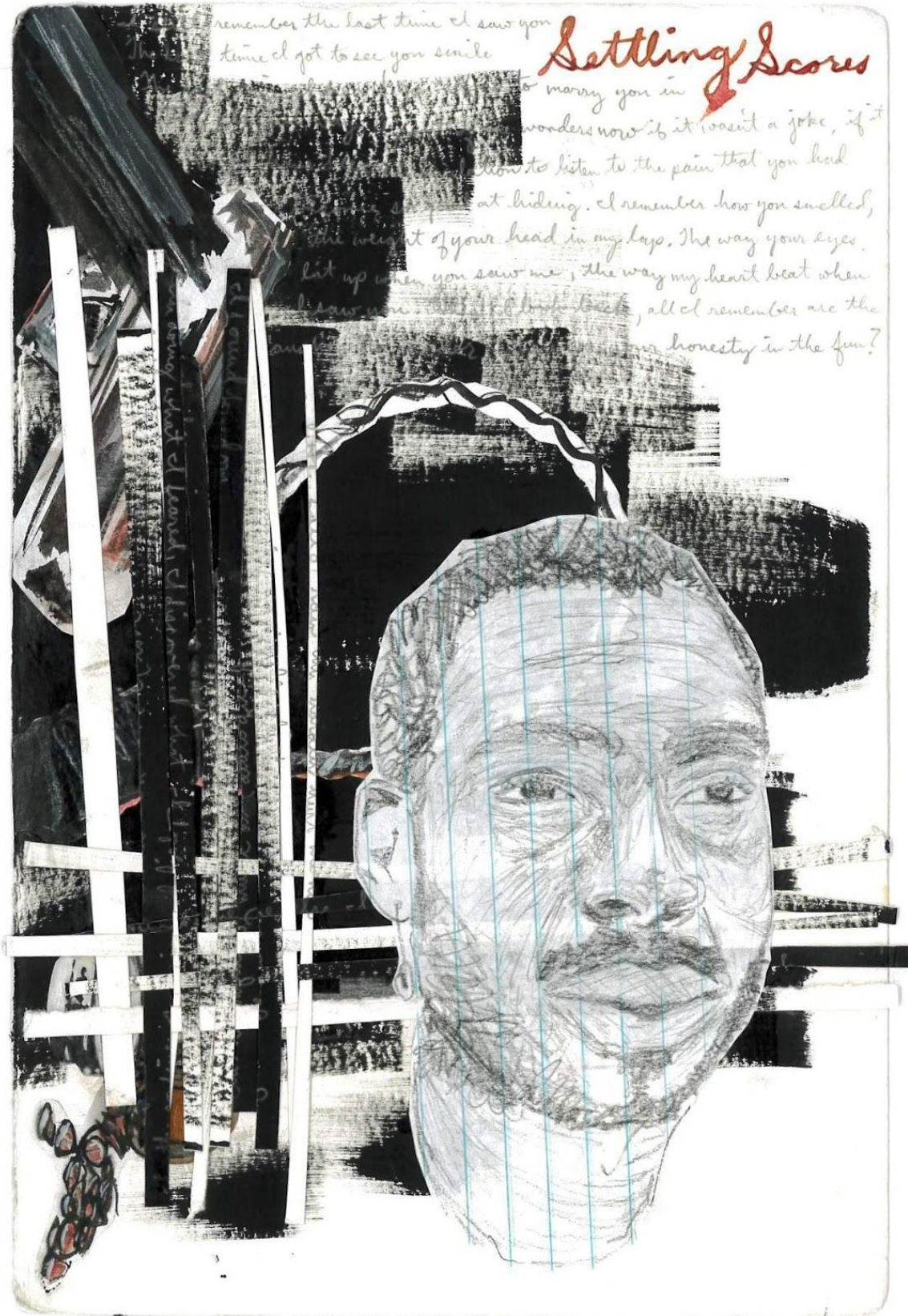
Oh gypsy soul
Wait to settle your scores
'Til all of us have had
Our say

Oh gypsy soul
Tell your friends before you go
We can catch your hands
And make you stay

But you set yourself free
And what about us?
Left to light the flames
And weep for your dust

And it's a damn shame
The losing of life
All the more for your
Blinding light

Free (Neev's Song) - Collage



Help Me Out

Harsh words
 Bitter pride
 Tall man,
 How do you feel so small inside?

Your heart
 Unkind
 So eager to prove
 That you're worth all the trouble of dying.

Help me out I'm in pain right now
 But you go on talking like there's nothing
 To worry about
 Sky's the limit when the claws come out
 But we go on fighting like the world's gonna
 end
 If we stop
 If we stop
 Oh if we stop

Slow voice
 Fill your lungs
 Remind me of all the past pains and the pain
 yet to come

You're the man
 You're the one
 And lifting your ego is a battle I've lost
 Won and done

Help me out I'm in pain right now
 But you go on talking like there's nothing
 To worry about
 Sky's the limit when the claws come out
 But we go on fighting like the world's gonna
 end

If we stop
 If we stop
 Oh if we stop

So I'll put on my armour
 And you'll take your sword
 I'm all out of weapons
 Except you, of course
 And you cry out in the wilds
 You call my name
 But I'm too beaten down
 To come to your aid

Help me out I'm in pain right now
 But you go on talking like there's nothing
 To worry about
 Sky's the limit when the claws come out
 But we go on fighting like the world's gonna
 end
 If we stop
 If we stop
 Oh if we stop

Raise Your Head Up - Lyrics

What is it in my brokenness that draws me
to the close?

Lilting, soft, unspoken are the words that
build my bonds.

There's something in the listless rot of
wanting, gluttoned flesh

That draws me near to night again and
weeps when night descends

Raise your head up

Lift your voice high

The time is coming

The time for you to fly

I know you've waited

For the chance to speak up

Lift your voice high

From the left I hear unworthy

From the right I hear fraud

From below I hear transgressor,

But when I lift my face to God

I hear

I name you worthy

I name you powerful

Bring your strength and

Bring your sorrow

Give thanks to my son

When they rolled the stone away

He was standing in the light of day

saying

My blood is on you covering every shame

and sorrow

I am here, my child

I am here

And I'm telling you to

Raise your head up

Lift your voice high

The time has come, now

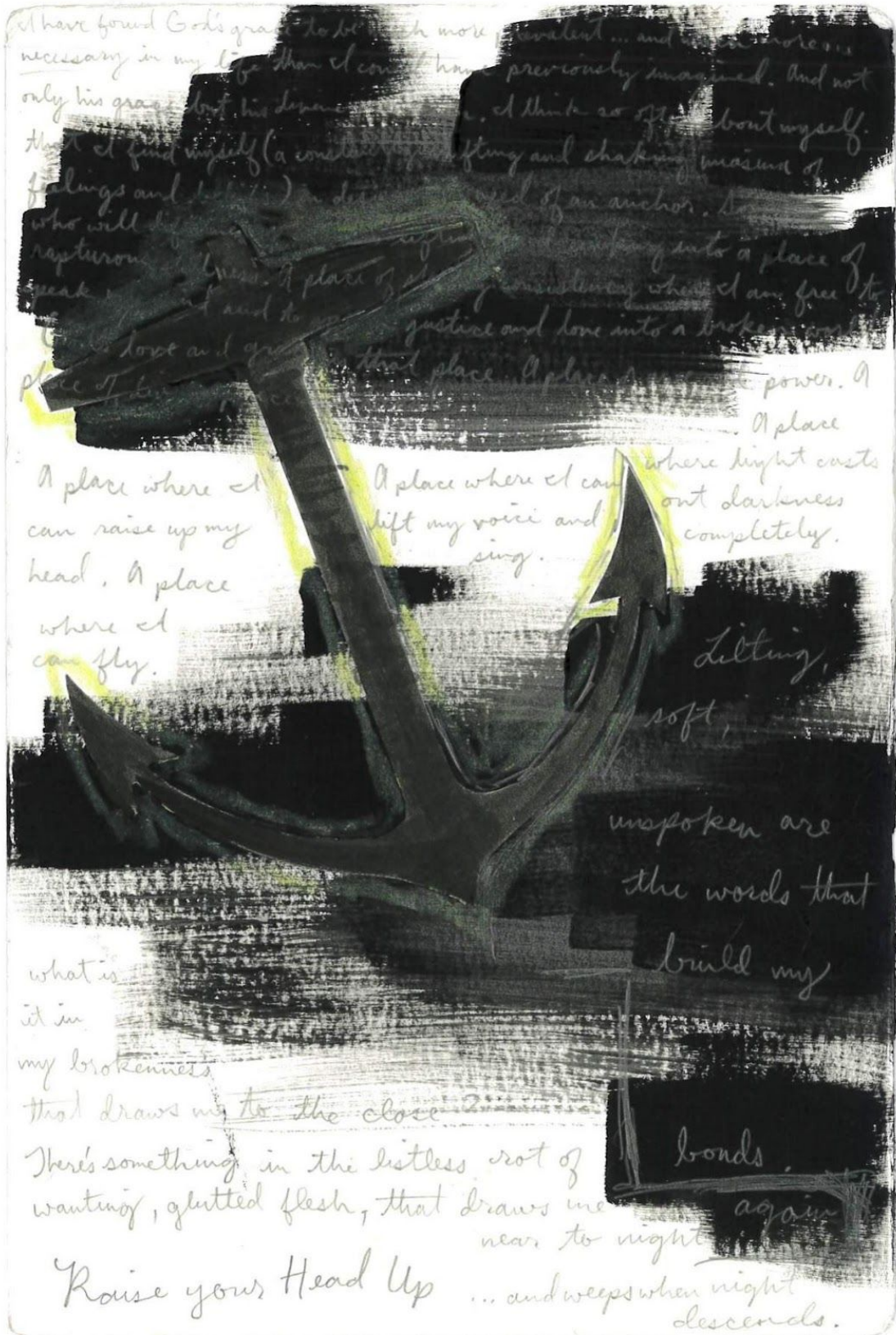
The time for you to fly

I know you've waited

For your chance to speak up

Lift your voice high

Raise Your Head Up - Collage



Final Reflection

From the moment that I was accepted into the Artists' Studio Track in Belmont's Honors Program, I knew that I wanted to write an album for my thesis project. The project would be an opportunity to examine some of the most significant moments in my life that have formed who I am, and to communicate their impact through song. The journey that has led to the creation of this album was life-changing for me as an artist and a human being in ways that are difficult for me to comprehend, let alone interpret in a personal reflection. However, I also believe that it is important for artists to share the concrete details of their experiences with the process of creation as a means of facilitating an understanding of themselves and their work in their audience, and that is what I will endeavor to do here.

Despite some setbacks, I am enormously proud of this project for a variety of reasons. I did everything that I set out to do in my thesis, except present at BURS and host an album-release party due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Aside from these two things, I feel I have successfully accomplished what I set out to do. I have always struggled with attaining long term goals because, while I am an enthusiastic visionary, I am not as good at breaking goals down into smaller steps and putting those steps on a schedule. This thesis has proved a marvelous exception, and I credit that to a number of factors. The first of these was the prospectus format. Thinking through and creating a schedule with set "checkpoints" built into it allowed me to focus on manageable productivity instead of becoming overwhelmed by the project's size. The second, and most important, factor in my keeping with my prospectus was my director. Every meeting was an endless well of encouragement and constructive feedback that functioned to separate me from my work for the process of healthy criticism, encourage me as a young artist who is

actively learning her craft, and refresh my desire to continue writing. I know that not every director-student relationship is like this, and I truly consider it a blessing that I was able to work with such an incredible person.

One thing that will always remain in my mind as a learning point after this project is the importance of being flexible as an artist. One of my committee members resigned over the summer in 2019, and unfortunately they did not communicate the fact that they had resigned to me. I do not blame that person for their lack of communication, they were already participating on a number of committees as well as teaching a full studio, and there is no doubt in my mind that it was an honest mistake. However, this meant that I was not aware of their absence until it was brought to my attention by another member of my committee in August of 2019. This required some adapting, and I was fortunate that my private voice teacher was willing to fill that person's role. Another example of the importance of flexibility came courtesy of the outbreak of Covid-19. As a result of the pandemic, I was forced to move out of my apartment in Nashville and return home prematurely. This meant that I was unable to realize my plans for an album-release party in Nashville, and that I was also unable to present at BURS.

In addition to flexibility, I have learned the importance of ignoring the desire for perfection when I am working. Not only do I enjoy the creative process of songwriting more when I expunge the pressure of perfection from my mind, I also write better music. Through this project, I have discovered that I need to be more open to imperfection and failure generally in my artistic work, because to do otherwise is to completely block myself off from the ability to create. I found this to be especially true early in the process, when I was working my way through *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron. Cameron is an astute observer, and through reading her book I

discovered that I had been letting my desperate desire for perfection, which was really my ego in disguise, to get in the way of my ability to function as a creative. I pursued a classical music degree over a commercial one because I saw classical music as an opportunity to perfect myself. Somewhere in my subconscious, I had come to the conclusion that the world of commercial music was too free, too uninhibited, for me to strive for perfection within it. At Belmont, I have gradually come to understand that perfection is unattainable in every genre of music, and that is what makes music enjoyable to create. Without the possibility of failure, there would be no challenge and therefore no excitement when a project turns out beautifully. I never want to live in a world where beautiful outcomes are simply expected, because in that scenario beauty has essentially ceased to exist.

I have also discovered that it is possible, and necessary, to treat my artistic pursuits as jobs rather than hobbies if I want to accomplish any of my goals. There is a phenomenon that I like to refer to as “momentary motivation” that allows a person to accomplish massive tasks in a comparatively short period of time, and it is a wonderful state of mind to be in. It is a state of being that fills me with focus and determination, and is genuinely enjoyable. However, the problem with this type of impulsive, passionate thinking is that it typically does not last for as long as any given project requires. In fact, if it runs out before a project is finished, that project is usually left unfinished forever— or at the very least this has been my personal experience. The only reason that I have been able to finish a four-year Bachelors of Music degree is because I learned very quickly that I needed to treat classical music as work. There were moments when it was fun, of course, but I needed to adjust my expectations according to the amount of time I would be spending with it. I had to prepare myself to be bored in the practice room, to be

frustrated with difficult pieces, and to even grow tired of singing on occasion. When I was a highschool student, those were not things that I had to worry about. I attribute this to the fact that music-related projects and assignments were a much smaller percentage of my workload at that point in my life, and were therefore easier to enjoy.

My tendency toward harnessing momentary motivation, and consequently losing sight of long-term goals, was a concern that I had at the very beginning of writing the prospectus for this project. I asked myself what might happen if my passion wavered after I had finished the seventh song, or the fifth, or even the second. Despite these fears, I chose to follow my instincts. I am very thankful that I made this choice, because if I had not I may never have known how much I was capable of accomplishing by breaking a project down and working on it for almost a full year. I found that, by making a schedule and forcing myself to take breaks during the process of research and writing, my creative energy was consistently renewed.

I am thrilled to say that one of the outcomes of this project has been a boost in personal confidence. I do not know if I can express in words how much work is involved in the researching, writing, and recording of a ten-song concept album. It was exhausting, and if I had to design the same project again I would begin by decreasing the number of songs. I would also probably leave out the visual elements that accompany each of the songs. I underestimated the amount of work that would be involved for a project of this magnitude, and because of this I am especially proud of the fact that I did what I set out to do in my prospectus.

Overall, the most beneficial outcome of this project was the personal catharsis and progress that occurred as a result of working on it. This year has been a time of spiritual and emotional growth like I have never experienced before, and I attribute that growth directly to the

research and reevaluation of some of the most difficult moments I have experienced in my life, thus far. For a long time, I had chosen to bury the moments that served as inspiration for this album instead of allowing them to hurt, and consequently heal. There was no room for that type of unhealthy psychological behavior when I was writing, and I am very thankful for that because it forced me to acknowledge, and work through, some painful memories.

Dr. Boan utilized the classes in the Artist's Studio Track at Belmont to prepare every student for a healthy creative journey by offering the consistent and positive reassurance that our art is wonderful when it comes from an honest place. He gave me the initial courage to step out and plan an incredibly audacious project, a project that terrified and excited me in equal measure, and a project that has empowered me to believe in myself as a human being and in my work as an artist.