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Josefine Ramm Skaaning, BA

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Dr. Gregor Herzfeld, M.A.

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1. Introduction

The end of the 1960s was a period marked by different political movements in the United States, which came to have huge influences on the American society. Since the early 1950s, the Civil Rights Movement had been advocating equal rights for the African American population through non-violent methods and politics. In 1968, Black Power and its standpoints had begun to overshadow the integrative ideology of the Civil Rights Movement with a more militant and Black nationalistic approach. This reflected a rising disappointment and anger within the Black communities, as they were of the opinion that practical changes in society happened too slow. In the early 1960s, second-wave feminism arose, aiming to end political and cultural gender inequalities as well as discrimination. During the decade, soul became the dominant African American popular music style, and it was closely connected to the African American movements of the time. It developed into an expression of cultural identity and awareness of own race among the Black population. According to Portia K. Maultsby, soul was not only the most popular but also the most influential style of Black musical expression in the American post-war period.¹ Within this context, the African American soul singer Aretha Franklin (1942–2018) released some of her biggest hits in her career on the label Atlantic Records in the end of the 1960s.

The recordings “Respect” and “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” by Franklin were released in 1967, the former as a single and on the album *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love*, the later as a single and also the year after on the album *Lady Soul*. In 1967, Franklin became the most popular female performer within soul music and African American music in general. She was the first female soul artist to achieve that much success solo, the most selling Black musician up till then, and the first performer within southern soul to reach broad crossover success as an artist, not just with one or a few songs.² It was in this period that she was named the Queen of Soul. “Respect” was originally written and recorded by the soul artist Otis Redding in 1965, but Franklin’s version immediately became a hit, entering the charts on number one on both Billboard’s Hot 100 and R&B charts. It has been celebrated as an anthem for the Civil Rights movement, Black Power, as well as feminism, and have been used in many other political scenes, for example within homosexual contexts.

¹ Maultsby, Portia K.: “Soul”, in Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (eds.): *African American Music: An Introduction*, New York / London: Routledge 2006, p. 288.

² Wicke, Peter: “Franklin, Aretha” (2002), in Laurenz Lüttken (ed.): *MGG Online*, <<https://www-mgg-online-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/mgg/stable/46052>>, last visited: 20.06.2019.

Franklin writes about the song in her autobiography *Aretha: From These Roots*:

“So many people identified with and related to ‘Respect’. It was the need of a nation, the need of the average man and woman in the street, the businessman, the mother, the fireman, the teacher – everyone wanted respect. It was also one of the battle cries of the civil rights movement. The song took on monumental significance. It became the ‘Respect’ women expected from men and men expected from women, the inherent right of all human beings.”³

Thus, the song has had influence within the public realm and has meant a lot for a larger number of people. The love song “A Natural Woman” was a hit too, even when it did not reach exactly the same amount of popularity right away as “Respect”. It was written by the songwriter couple Gerry Goffin and Carole King and it reached number two on Billboard’s R&B chart and number eight on Hot 100.

But what do the songs actually mean? What do they present and represent through the musical elements, the sounds, and the lyrics? A lot of aspects could be examined, but I wish to focus on the female representations constructed in the songs because Franklin has been viewed and used as a role model for women. This is more a result of her musical persona, i.e. her performer identity, than her private life, which reportedly was less in control than indicated publicly by Franklin herself.⁴ However, her musical career gave her the position of an example to follow: She became famous as a female solo artist, wrote a lot of her own material, accompanied herself on the piano on recordings as well as in concerts. Furthermore, she released songs like “Respect”, “A Natural Woman”, “Do Right Man, Do Right Woman”, “Think”, and later “Sister’s Are Doin’ It for Themselves” and “A Rose Is Still a Rose”, all emphasising aspects of womanhood, women’s wellbeing, and female power. Franklin was seen as a strong figure and an expression of the fight for gender equality. This may have been unintentional, as she later has uttered that “I’m not a politician or political theorist. I don’t make it a practice to put my politics into my music or social commentary.”⁵ No matter how little she may consciously have turned her music into politics, in her biography, she supports the fight for equality between genders: “more and more in the eighties, I saw women competing for jobs reserved for men – not just doctors and lawyers but construction workers, traffic cops, FedEx workers. My attitude was, You go, girl, If you’ve got the heart, do it. And if you do it, you sure deserve the same money a man makes.”⁶ Furthermore, about the song “A Rose Is Still a Rose” from 1998 she comments that “The song itself speaks to women, stressing that self-esteem is not dependent on anything else but you and service to others [...] The song is about inner beauty”.⁷ Even though this comment was not made about “A Natural Woman”, I see some parallels as “A Natural Woman” speaks to women too. The comment

³ Franklin, Aretha, and Ritz, David: *Aretha: From These Roots*, New York: Villard Books 1999, p. 112.

⁴ Werner, Craig Hansen: *A Change Is Gonna Come: Music, Race & the Soul of America*, 2nd Edition, Edinburgh: Canongate Books 1998, p. 174–175.

⁵ Franklin and Ritz: op. cit., p. 155.

⁶ Ibid., p. 210.

⁷ Ibid., p. 246.

illustrates that Franklin valued the wellbeing and the inner state of women – an aspect which will prove to be important in the interpretation and discussion of “A Natural Woman”.

“Respect” and “A Natural Woman” are widely known and popular songs that have been used in many different contexts from movies over Black Power to feministic and LGBTQ movements. Thus, I find it interesting and important to enquire into what the songs communicate, in this case, with focus on the femininities represented. I am aware that my interpretation of this may differ from other listeners’, not least because of the position I take as an analyst. Other people may find other meanings in the songs. However, as both David Machin and Allan F. Moore point out, the musical material that communicates meaning to us in songs can be described, and so can their possible meaning potentials. I take this as a starting point for my thesis.

My study of femininity in two of Franklin’s songs are based on the following thesis: What types of femininities are represented in Aretha Franklin’s recordings of “Respect” and “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman”, and how are they constructed through lyrics, vocals, and arrangement as well as protagonists, musical persona, and Franklin as performer? Furthermore, how can the represented femininities be viewed in relation to gender theory (exemplified by Judith Butler), intersectional theory (based on Katrin Meyer’s expounding of the subject), and cultural expression as political acts?

The aim of the thesis is to examine how popular music can communicate certain ideas of femininity through lyrics and sound. This is done through thorough analyses of “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” with focus on lyrics, vocal delivery, and different musical elements in the arrangement. The first impression of the songs is that they present very different female figures, and I have chosen these two recordings in the hope of reaching a more nuanced picture through the differences. Because Franklin is the performer on these recordings, her musical persona incorporates and represents both femininities. This illustrates that some musical personae can include different aspects even within the same domain, in this case, femininity. Furthermore, I wish to investigate how these femininities as well as the musical persona relate to certain aspects outside of the songs, specifically, gender theory, intersectionality, political acts through cultural expressions, stereotypes of Black women, and the African American tradition of validating the lives of Black people through autobiography. Can the femininities and Franklin’s musical persona be perceived in relation to, within, or as contributing to these realms? Hence, I argue that it means something that the songs are performed by a woman and an African American.

“Respect” portrays a strong, independent female character that stands up for herself. This corresponds with the immediate impression most people have when listening to the song. However, as will be seen in the discussion, she is presented more human than the typical image of the strong Black woman, as Franklin’s

vocal delivery gives the impression of emotional involvement. Thus, this femininity differs from the expectations for women in general and for Black women, specifically. In “A Natural Woman”, the female protagonist comes forth as passive and conforming to gender norms. Despite that, the analysis reveals that the song is less about the love she feels for her partner and more about her newly achieved positive self-feeling. This is an interpretation that does not correlate with the general impression of the song, although it is said to have meant something for many Black and coloured women, because it seems to promote acceptance of the natural look of a non-white female body.⁸

A premise for my work with the songs is that gender is constructed, at least when presented through cultural expressions. A second premise is the notion that sounds, not only words or visual aspects, can express a gender affiliation, in this case, femininity. This is supported by Machin’s statement that “[c]omplex cultural ideas about things like ‘freedom’, ‘togetherness’, ‘femininity’ can be expressed through spoken language, but they can also be realized, communicated, through other semiotic modes, visually, and through sound.”⁹ Thus, this is my outset for examining the expression of femininity in the musical as well as lyrical elements of “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”.

The idea behind the thesis is inspired by other musicological works incorporating gender- and, in some cases, queer theories into the examining of popular music. Several publications about the expression of gender in the performances by female artists like Lady Gaga and Madonna have been written, for example, the article “‘I’ll Never Be an Angel’: Stories of Deception in Madonna’s Music” by Stan Hawkins¹⁰ and *Lady Gaga and Popular Music: Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture* by Martin Iddon and Melanie L. Marshall.¹¹ In *Queere Tracks: Subversive Strategien in der Rock- und Popmusik*, Doris Leibetseder examines motifs in popular music that differ from heterosexual norms, the idea of a fixed identity, as well as the binary gender system, based on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and gender construction as well as other researchers’ approaches to gender theory.¹² Further, articles and books have been published about the construction of femininity in popular music, for instance, “Representations of Femininity in Popular Music” by Nicola Dibben.¹³ She examines how femininity is communicated in three songs by Gina G, PJ Harvey, and Spice Girls. An example of an article about music contemporary to the songs I examine by

⁸ Taylor, Alex, and Youngs, Ian: “Aretha Franklin’s A Natural Woman: Why the Song Still Moves Us, 50 Years On”, *BBC News*, 2018, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-45226832>>, last visited: 24.05.2019.

⁹ Machin, David: *Analysing Popular Music. Image, Sound, Text*, London a.o.: Sage 2010, p. 212.

¹⁰ Hawkins, Stan: “‘I’ll Never Be an Angel’: Stories of Deception in Madonna’s Music”, in Stan Hawkins (ed.): *Settling the pop score: pop texts and identity politics*, Aldershot etc.: Ashgate 2002, p. 36–65.

¹¹ Iddon, Martin, and Marshall, Melanie L.: *Lady Gaga and Popular Music: Performing Gender, Fashion, and Culture*, New York: Routledge 2014.

¹² Leibetseder, Doris: *Queere Tracks: Subversive Strategien in der Rock- und Popmusik*, Bielefeld: transcript 2010.

¹³ Dibben, Nicola: “Representations of Femininity in Popular Music”, in *Popular Music*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1999, p. 331–355.

Franklin is E. Taylor Atkins' "The Funky Divas Talk Back: Dialogues about Black Feminism, Masculinity, and Soul Power in the Music of James Brown".¹⁴ This thesis rests on the idea development of these kinds of writings and the implementation of gender theory in the musicological field.

The methods used for the analyses are based on the approaches outlined by Moore and Machin in the books *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Music* and *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*, respectively. Machin promotes a discourse analysis for music in his work. I use relevant parts of his methodology, however, not to reveal discourses per se, but to uncover the femininities represented in "Respect" and "A Natural Woman". That Machin's approach can be used for this aim is supported by the comment by him, quoted above, that cultural conceptions like femininity can be communicated through sound (and visuality), not just verbally.¹⁵ The focus in Moore's approach is to discover the meanings of recorded popular songs. With this, he does not mean universal meanings that everybody can agree upon, but interpretations based on the sounds in a specific song and validated through logic. Both methods will be explained further in chapter 2 about methodology.

The analyses of "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" are based on the recorded studio versions of the songs from Atlantic Records, because these are what most listeners usually hear.¹⁶ I wanted to focus on the aural experience, not the visual, and therefore I have not been using videos of concerts (there are no official music videos of the songs). Furthermore, live recordings can differ a lot from each other as well as from the studio versions. To have a single starting point to focus on, I chose to analyse the original studio recordings that were produced for the listeners to hear over the radio or on music players, which is the only possible way for me to hear the music.

As already mentioned, I use the approaches suggested by Machin and Moore to uncover the femininities in the songs and examine how they are constructed through lyrical and musical elements. Additionally, I employ the exposition of musical characteristics for southern soul music found in "Soul: Stilanalyse og Idéer til Arrangement i Southern Soul Stilen" (Soul: Style analyses and ideas for arrangement within the southern soul style) by Torben Christensen and Gert Bach. In the analyses this is used as a tool to consider the individual musical elements in the songs, knowing that some will be typical for the style and others rather signify the individual song. Victoria Malaway's article "'Find Out What It Means to Me': Aretha

¹⁴ Atkins, E. Taylor: "The Funky Divas Talk Back: Dialogues about Black Feminism, Masculinity, and Soul Power in the Music of James Brown", in *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2015, p. 337–354.

¹⁵ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 212.

¹⁶ Franklin, Aretha: "Respect", on Aretha Franklin: *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You*, Spotify, Atlantic Recording Corp. 1967, No. 1.
Franklin, Aretha: "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman", on Aretha Franklin: *Lady Soul*, Spotify, Atlantic Recording Corp. 1968, No. 5.

Franklin's Gendered Re-Auther of Otis Redding's 'Respect'" has proven to be a helpful source into the analysis of "Respect" and has sparked my interests and considerations of the song. However, the article serves more as an entrance into the process than an explicit main source.

Butler's gender theory is used as a foundation for the discussion of femininity and gender construction. Especially, her works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* and *Undoing Gender* have been relevant for this purpose, but other publications of her have been useful too. The basics of Butler's theory are outlined in the first theory chapter. Likewise, the concept of musical persona is explained in the second of these chapters, covering Philip Auslander's concept from the article "Musical Personae" and the moderated model by Moore, which is the one I have assumed because of its focus on the music rather than the artist. *Theorien der Intersektionalität zur Einführung* by Katrin Meyer has formed the foundation for the discussion of intersectionality in relation to the songs and the female figures constructed in them. A couple of publications have been used to form the ground for the discussion of whether the songs confirm or disconfirm stereotypes of African American women. Most important of these are the articles "Three Books, Three Stereotypes: Mothers and the Ghosts of Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire in contemporary African American Literature" by Christine E. Eck and "The Burden of the Strong Black Woman" by Chanequa Walker-Barnes, which treat some of the most dominant stereotypes of Black women. Of these are the Sapphire and the strong Black woman the most relevant regarding "Respect" and "A Natural Woman". Even though Eck's article is concentrated on literature, the stereotypes are general and can be found within several social and cultural aspects of society. Thus, her descriptions can be applied to popular music too. The last written source I want to mention here is Gwendolyn Pough's book *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, a work about women in hip-hop, which contains a small but significant passage about the validation of African American people's lives through autobiography in the chapter "(Re)reconstructing Womanhood: Black Women's Narratives in Hip-Hop Culture". I apply the idea that hip-hop can be used to validate the lives of Black people, in the same way that autobiographies have been used to do it, to soul music and the two songs that I focus on in my thesis.

The sheet music used in the analysis of "Respect" is borrowed from Malaway's article about the song, which I consider to be accurate enough to be used in an analysis of the melody as it is sung on the original recording. For the analysis of "A Natural Woman", I have made my own transcription of the melody on the basis of the 1967 recording because I was not able to find a printed version of it, which I found precise enough to be used as illustration of the original way the melody was sung by Franklin. Both transcriptions can be found in the appendix.

The thesis is organised in the following way: After the introduction (chapter 1), chapter 2 about methodology follows. It outlines the approaches suggested by Machin and Moore with focus on

discovering meaning in popular music through analysis, which are the main methods I have applied in my work. Next, chapter 3 and 4 display the two most important theories, that my interpretation and discussion rest on. The former presents Butler's gender theory, arguing that gender is performed and not based on the biological sex, while the latter puts the concept 'musical persona' by Auslander, further developed by Moore, forward. After the exposition of the main methods and theories, a short biography of Franklin succeeds in chapter 5. The analysis of "Respect" follows in chapter 6, laying out elements in the lyrics, harmony, form, use of instruments, melody, vocal delivery as well as the arrangement for backing vocals, which are relevant for the construction of the femininity in the song. Afterwards, the analysis of "A Natural Woman" (chapter 7) is presented with the same focus on elements creating meaning regarding the gender construction within the same lyrical and musical aspects as in the preceding analysis. Chapter 8 begins with a clarification of the two female characters, revealed through the analyses, followed by a discussion of the results in relation to musical persona. In this way, Franklin as a performer can be taken into account too, when the femininities and what they represent are discussed. In the following section, the two songs and the musical persona are looked at in regard to Butler's gender theory – how can it enrich our understanding of the constructed femininities, if at all? Afterwards, intersectionality is discussed as an aspect which proves to be relevant for the concept of femininity in the songs, primarily, because Franklin was an African American woman. The three last sections of chapter 8 explore the possible understandings of femininity in the songs in relation to whether the recordings can be considered as political acts, if they in some ways confirm or disconfirm stereotypes of Black women, and if the songs can be considered as validation of the life of African American women in the same way as autobiography can, in some instances. The thesis completes with a conclusion in chapter 9, which summarises the results.

2. Methodology

The analyses of “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” are, as mentioned before, based on the methods suggested by Allan F. Moore in *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Music* and David Machin in *Analysing Popular Music: Image, Sound, Text*. Machin bases his approach on the notion that music is comprised of a repertoire of elements, patterns, and conventions which through analysis can reveal discourses. Moore presents an approach designed to study what songs mean and through which means they do so. Both positions contradict the understanding of music as something spiritual.¹⁷ Despite the distancing to such romantic ideas, they recognise the affect of music as an important aspect. Machin writes: “[t]he affect music creates for us cannot be denied, but how we hear something, how we talk about it, and the meaning it has for us, must be understood sociologically rather than as being something in the music”.¹⁸ Thus, the meaning is produced through culturally and socially founded connotations connected to the musical elements.

2.1. David Machin’s Discourse Analysis

In *Analysing Popular Music*, Machin describes a range of tools for analysing lyrical, musical, and visual aspects of music (for example covers and music videos). They are not meant as one fixed model, which should be followed precisely from one end to the other, but as helpful tools from which the parts relevant for the individual analysis can be carefully picked out. Likewise, he does not present the three elements text, music, and visuality as components which in every case should be analysed, but as three aspects which can be worth considering and can communicate together. I wish to examine the songs as aural phenomena and, therefore, I have largely left out the visual elements of the analyses. When we hear a song on the radio, on a CD player, or over streaming services like iTunes or Spotify, the sound is what “fills the room”. Whether we actively or passively listen, it is the aural experience we seek when turning on music. Thus, it is the meaning of this experience I attempt to examine. This does not mean that visual aspects cannot have an impact on our perception of femininity – advertisements, magazines, music videos, and so on prove this. By not bringing in things like covers and videos in my research, I am able to study the femininities offered to us through the sounds that we hear, including the lyrics.

Machin develops his method on the foundation of Critical Discourse Analysis. His aim is to outline a way to analyse the sounds of popular music by using a detailed terminology to describe the meanings of the sounds.¹⁹ These meanings are what makes us connect music with certain moods, atmospheres, and musical styles. Thus, with Machin’s method, we should be able to describe the *repertoire of sound meanings* in music

¹⁷ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 2, 10.

and their associations.²⁰ Hence, it is understood as a premise that music and sound can be described systematically, and that different sounds, sound qualities and sound combinations can communicate different meanings.²¹ This approach builds on Howard S. Becker's notion that art, including music, is more about shared conventions of what different things mean than the creativity of the single individual.²²

As a part of the basis for his analysis method, Machin uses authors like Theo van Leeuwen's and Nick Cook's ideas of music as similar to language. A language is built of a repertoire of words formed to fit into a grammatical structure. Therefore, what we say is to some degree predictable, and it occupies certain predictable forms. Likewise, music is mostly "formulaic and predictable"²³ too. It has similar sorts of repertoires, patterns, and structures used to build and shape it. In this way, music draws on what we have already heard, just as language draws on already said and written words.²⁴ This is what makes communication of meaning through music possible. That is, when something sounds sad, cheerful or angry, it is because of specific features in the specific piece of music which have already been used to create the same kind of mood before. How these sounds from the repertoire are put together in arrangements mostly follows certain structures, a formula, which influences the meaning of the individual sounds. Thus, what the single sounds signify must be considered in relation to the context they are heard.²⁵ For most listeners, the interpretation of meaning happens automatically while they might not be able to describe it. I have incorporated Machin's method in my analyses of the different musical elements to provide descriptions of the meanings. Thus, I single out musical elements which I consider relevant, describe them, consider their potential meanings, and look at them in relation to the song as a whole.

Different musical styles often portray different themes, and lyrics from different time periods approach the same themes differently. For instance, the 1960s soul music often treated the theme love from a specific perspective, viewing loyal and lasting partnership as an ideal. According to Machin, by studying a text thoroughly, we can discover deeper meanings linking it to time, places, and ideas.²⁶ There are no fixed rules or boundaries for musical styles, but we can study the different musical elements drawn from the repertoire within the different styles and examine what they communicate. As mentioned above, Machin uses Critical

²⁰ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 2.

²¹ Ibid., p. 212.

²² Becker, Howard S.: "Art as Collective Action", in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 39, No. 16, 1974, p. 767–776. Becker, Howard S.: "Art Worlds and Social Types", in Richard A. Peterson (ed.): *The Production of Culture*, London: Sage 1976, p. 41–56.

²³ Machin: op. cit., p. 2.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 4. Machin draws on Jason Toynbee's concept of language in "Music, Culture, and Creativity", in Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (eds.): *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, London: Routledge 2003, p. 102–112.

²⁵ Machin: op. cit., p. 2–3.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 3.

Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the foundation for his method, meaning that he “looks for” the discourses in the songs he analyses. His understanding and use of the word ‘discourse’ correspond to the notion of it within CDA, where the term refers to the broader ideas in a text. It can be understood as “models of the world”²⁷ which can encompass places, participants, goals and behaviours, as described by van Leeuwen and Ruth Wodak.²⁸ Machin’s approach is a way to analyse how sounds, words, and images can communicate certain meanings and, through that, form discourses.

Traditionally, CDA focused on written texts, studying the individual lexical and grammatical choices to find out which discourses they would signify. With Gunther R. Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s works, visuality was introduced into CDA as something which can communicate discourses, too. They also presented the idea that a lot of communication is not ‘monomodal’ but rather ‘multimodal’, meaning that choices within different modes like linguistics and visuality function together in connoting discourses.²⁹ In Machin’s suggested approach, sounds are understood as a factor which can connote discourses, too, and songs can communicate multimodally through lyrics and sounds (and visual elements). Throughout the analyses, I look at how music and text work together to multimodally communicate meaning, specifically in relation to femininity.

Machin uses a semiotic approach to study and analyse popular music. Traditionally, a semiotic method would be to look at individual signs to find out in what way they connote or symbolise meaning. As explanation, Machin uses the example of a flag, which can be associated with nationalism. For some people, this means national glory as well as pride of a country and its people, for others, it may symbolise inward perspectives and being narrow minded. In this way, the flag connotes certain values, identities, conditions, etc., which we can refer to as discourses.³⁰ The multimodal semiotic approach presented by Machin is used to focus on the choices of signs and the way these signs and their meanings change in the combination with each other. The approach is also drawn on social semiotic methods inspired by Halliday’s systemic function linguistics, which is based on the concept of language as consisting of shared lexical and grammatical options with which we can create meaning.³¹ An important aspect of Halliday’s concept is that semiotic signs do not have fixed meanings, but ‘meaning potential’. Seen in respect to music, it implies that the different musical elements do not present meanings which are settled beforehand, but illustrate a range

²⁷ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 6.

²⁸ van Leeuwen, Theo, and Wodak, Ruth: “Legitimizing Immigration Control: A Discourse-Historical Analysis”, in *Discourse Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1999, p. 94–96.

²⁹ Kress, Gunther R., and van Leeuwen, Theo: *Multimodal Discourse*, London: Arnold 2001.

Kress, Gunther R., and van Leeuwen, Theo: *Reading Images. The Grammar of Visual Design*, London / New York: Routledge 1996.

³⁰ Machin: op. cit., p. 6–7.

³¹ Halliday, Michael A.K.: *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*, London: Arnold 1979.

of potential meanings which can be understood in relation to the other elements in the music. These meaning potentials emerge through associations constructed in our culture as well as through sounds stemming from “our basic physical experience of living in the world”.³² This brings us to the actual model which Machin outlines for the analysis of popular music: An analysis should consist of 1) a description of the semiotic choices found in a song, and 2) a description of the way the meaning potentials of the choices are realised in the context of the song. Through this process, Machin wishes to uncover the broader discourses which the sound choices connote.³³ I use it to uncover the femininities represented in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”.

This does not mean to indicate that the results of an analysis based on Machin’s model for discourse analysis is definitive. Different people may interpret different meanings in a song, and the meaning for the individual person may change over time. New semiotic resources, i.e. elements with meaning potentials, and new ways to use the old ones emerge as society changes. How music is interpreted depends on individual, cultural, and contextual factors in the life of the interpreter. This supports arguments by Simon Frith and other researchers outlining that sounds’ meanings are not intrinsic in the music, they are assigned by the listeners.³⁴ But no matter how different interpretations may be, the use of semiotic resources in a song can be described because of the patterns and conventions, which music and sounds contain.³⁵

Even though I do not explicitly take a semiotic approach to the analyses, the understanding of musical elements as kinds of signs, which can connote meaning, is implicitly present, underlying the process of analysing. However, rather than calling them ‘semiotic signs’, I write ‘musical elements’ or ‘musical aspects’ to stay closer to the core of the thesis, namely music. Following Machin’s model, I look at the individual musical elements and how they work in combination with each other to produce meaning. Because specific meaning potentials are activated through their combinations, it is important to me to look at different musical aspects in the songs and not just lyrics and vocals, even though they may seem as the most, and to some maybe only, relevant aspects in relation to the construction of femininity. I draw on Machin’s approach, when I argue that parts of the musical arrangement can have meaning potentials effecting the understanding of the female figures, when combined with the lyrics and the voice. Machin wishes to reveal discourses with his method, and he defines “[c]omplex cultural ideas about things like ‘freedom’, ‘togetherness’, ‘femininity’”³⁶ as phenomena which can be communicated through language and sound,

³² Machin: op. cit., p. 8.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Frith, Simon: *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996, p. 249–250.

³⁵ Machin: op. cit., p. 214.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 212.

too, and analysed with the tools he presents. I am focused on the presentation of femininity through lyrics and music, and I use Machin's approach to examine this specific aspect in the songs.

2.2. Allan F. Moore: Analysing Meaning

In *Song Means*, Moore suggests an analytical method for recorded music and presents models for the interpretation of it. He calls his methodology "a process of discovering",³⁷ which can be used on all songs no matter the style, at least within popular music. The interest of Moore is to study the meaning of songs – which meanings can they have and how are these meanings created? This does not mean that he seeks a universal result that counts as the only valid one. Instead, he suggests a method to examine how a song *can* mean, and through which means it does so. That is, a methodology to expose the ways a popular song and its meanings are constructed.³⁸ The sounds that we hear when listening to a song are the minimum that we have in common in our listening experiences. Therefore, it is important to describe and explain these sounds that are the means with which songs can mean. According to Moore, popular songs create meaning in the listeners – or, as he points out, maybe the listeners create meaning by listening to the songs, which he sees as a theoretical, but not a practical, difference. Thus it is Moore's aim to make "sense of specific listening experiences".³⁹ By explaining the details in a song, an interpretation can be founded on the basis of that which leads to the interpretation, namely, the individual elements in the recording. For him, to analyse a song is "to offer an interpretation of it, to determine what range of meaning it has, to make sense of it".⁴⁰ Hence, the point of making an analysis is to expose the meanings of the song and explain the foundation for it. Even though we can often easily determine what a song is not about, we can only specify a range of possibilities of what the song can be about. Moore calls this concept 'affording' – songs afford certain meanings.⁴¹

According to Moore, popular songs can only have an audience if they mean something for people, if they resonate with them. Popular songs are rarely stylistically complex and rarely created on the basis of deep artistic considerations. However, according to him, they are always produced with an ear for a certain audience with which they are meant to resonate. Therefore, it is important to address the meanings communicated through sounds in an analysis of a popular song. We experience music differently depending on aspects like if we play an instrument ourselves, and the competences we have within the music style that is being heard. Thus, when we make an analysis of the meaning that music can have, the

³⁷ Moore, Allan F.: *Song Means: Analysing and Interpreting Recorded Popular Song*, Farnham / Burlington: Ashgate 2012, p. 17.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 1–2.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 6.

result will not be the same as what every listener creates, but it will be a meaning which some listeners potentially will experience.⁴²

Moore argues that we cannot analyse music without already having an idea of the succeeding interpretation: “in order to get a sense that a particular musical detail may prove significant, one already has to have an intimation of how it might contribute to an interpretation – one cannot make analytic decisions without an ear to significance”.⁴³ Thus, we cannot objectively analyse a song without prior presumptions because we already have a subjective idea about the meaning of the song, the interpretation. Even though Moore does not express it explicitly, it can be assumed to originate in the standpoint that we as analysts also create meanings of a song when hearing it before analysing it. Thus, no analysis is neutral, but a valid one is based on specific elements in the music and their associations.

Moore takes the aural experience of a recorded song as his starting point, not sheet music, performances, or other representations of music. In the case of popular songs, transcription of music are mostly, if not always, notated versions made by others than the actual composer or songwriter. Thus, they are other people’s view on the music and can be incorrect.⁴⁴ However, even though Moore takes the aural experience as his starting point, he uses several transcribed music examples in his book. These “serve only to enable writer and reader to focus, to take out-of-time, to make available for reflection, a portion of an actual recorded song.”⁴⁵ I base my analyses and interpretations on the aural experience, too, but like Moore, I use sheet music as a tool to explain and visualise elements of the music and, thereby, attempt to ease the understanding of specific points in the analyses of the melodies as well as the intro of “Respect”.

Moore’s approach builds on theoretical arguments made by Paul Ricoeur in his work *Interpretation Theory*. The first point is that analysis is meant to reveal the meaning of the text itself, not the message from the author. We do not get in “contact” with another ego when analysing a text, but we can expose a possible way to look at things. This is what Ricoeur calls “the genuine referential power of the text”.⁴⁶ Moore’s suggested method is meant to reveal the possible ways to look at things, i.e. the meanings, as well as the elements in the music which these possibilities rest on. For an interpretation to be accessible for others than the single analyst, it has to be communicated through the music and its premises has to be explicit in the song.⁴⁷ Ricoeur also mentions another aspect of an interpretation: even though a text can be

⁴² Moore: *Song Means*, p. 3–5.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ricoeur, Paul: *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning*, Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press 1979, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Moore: op. cit., p. 10.

interpreted in many ways, not all of these are equally valid. Thus, it is always possible to discuss an interpretation, but the validation of it has to build on logic.⁴⁸ Following that, I attempt to uncover possible ways to look at the femininities constructed in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” based on the specific musical elements and their connotations.

Ricoeur’s arguments are about written texts, but Moore applies them to music. It has become common to call the object of an analysis for a text, no matter the form of it. A text is something that is being read and, thereby, something from which a meaning is created and interpreted. This can be transferred to the analysis of popular music. However, Moore notes one important difference between a song and a written text. When a book, a poem, an article, etc. has been written, there are no physical traces of the author left on the paper for the reader to experience. On the contrary, a song contains such aspects after it has been recorded. We hear the voice of the singer, we feel the energy with which the singer has sung, and often it is even possible to create an idea of the body and its movements and postures through the aural traces. For example, when listening to “Don’t Stop ’Til You Get Enough” by Michael Jackson, we can hear that he has to smile to sing the way he does. The physical aspects communicated aurally influence the way we understand and make meaning of a song.⁴⁹ As will be described later in the thesis, the body of the singing voice do have an impact on our perception of the femininities in the recordings.

The approach that Moore presents rests on several other theoretical positions, too, but I will only mention two further, which have proven relevant for my work with the analyses. The first one is the importance of musical styles, which he explains on the basis of languages. The sounds that create a word can mean different things in different languages, and in the same way, sounds comprising music can have different meanings depending on the musical style. The second position is the view that formal musical elements refer to themselves as well as “‘beyond’ themselves”,⁵⁰ meaning that they signify on an individual as well as on a stylistic level. Through that, we are able to categorise the music because we can judge what style we are listening to. Simultaneously, the elements carry meaning on the level of the individual song, which is why songs differ from each other within a genre. I view the work by Christensen and Bach as a general sum up of the set of “rules” and practices, which can signify southern soul, based on careful analysis of a wide range of songs within the genre. For me, this forms a foundation against which I can compare “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” and, thereby, consider in which ways the songs are consistent with the general perception of southern soul, as well as what elements are characteristic for the individual songs.

⁴⁸ Ricoeur: op. cit., p. 79.

⁴⁹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 10–11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

I use Moore's method in my analyses and take the recorded version of the songs, i.e. the aural experience, as my starting point for my analyses and interpretations. Moore writes about meaning in popular songs in general when he describes his methodology. I focus on femininities and the meanings connected to this and use Moore's approach to elucidate this specific topic, even though many other meaning aspects in the songs could be studied too.

3. Sex, Gender, and Sexuality – Exemplified by Butler's Gender Theory

The premise for the analyses and discussion of femininities is first and foremost that gender exists (which is expressed in "Respect" and "A Natural Woman", too), and that gender is constructed, as already mentioned before. This assumption is based on culturalist gender theories arguing that genders are social and cultural constructions. This chapter takes its starting point in Judith Butler's conception of gender, which is used as the example on which the later discussion draws. Thus, the construction of femininities in "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" will be considered in relation to the theory outlined beneath.

In the English language, sex and gender are separated terms. The former is used as a description of the biological characteristics of a male or a female, and the latter is the cultural expression of a gender identification. Butler's theory of gender is based on her concept of gender performativity, with which she suggests a denaturalisation of heterosexuality and the general understanding of sex and gender. These ideas have contributed to feminist theory as well as the foundation of queer theory.⁵¹ Butler treated the subject in her 1990 publication *Gender Trouble*, in which she, among other things, explores the idea that gender, sex, and sexuality are produced within the terms of a "heterosexual matrix". She defines this as "that grid of cultural intelligibility through which bodies, genders and desires are naturalized" as heterosexual.⁵² In other words, our understanding of the three elements as natural is a social and cultural construct. Butler was inspired by Michel Foucault and Monique Wittig as well as Gayle Rubin and Adrienne Rich's collaborative work, to name a few of her sources. She has later elaborated her ideas in works like *Bodies that Matter* and *Undoing Gender*, among others. Butler's standpoint is denied by biological determinists like John Money, who criticises Butler's and other culturalists' view on the subject for ignoring the effect of biological differences like chromosomes and hormones.⁵³ However, biologist Linda Birke advocates a non-deterministic view of the biological body as changing, non-fixed, and socially as well as culturally constructed.⁵⁴ Thus, even among biological scientists, the effect of sex on gender is debated.

In the heteronormative conviction, the relations between sex, gender, and desire are connected in very specific ways: a man with a male sex possesses a masculine gender and desires women, in the same way that a female sex is linked to femininity and attraction to men. People who fit into these norms are intelligible human beings, i.e. normalised heterosexuals. This is what Butler criticises in *Gender Trouble*. She does so by presenting a model, where sex is a cultural construct that is only *perceived* as natural and prior to gender,

⁵¹ Lloyd, Moya: "Judith Butler", in George Ritzer and Jeffrey Stepnisky (eds.): *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists*, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell 2011, p. 545.

⁵² Butler, Judith: *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge 1999 / 1990, p. 194, no. 6.

⁵³ Money, John: *Gendermaps: Social Constructionism, Feminism, and Sexosophical History*, New York: Continuum 1995.

⁵⁴ Birke, Lynda: *Feminism and the biological body*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press 2000.

and by putting the argument forward that gender is performative. With these notions, she demonstrates that the human appropriates a gender identity and, thereby, she is able to challenge heteronormativity as an ideal.⁵⁵

3.1. Repetitive Performance of Acts

Butler is not the first to state that gender is socially and culturally constructed and not a natural consequence of the sex. This notion has been argued by several scholars over the last century. As early as 1949 did Simone de Beauvoir illustrate the opinion in her book *The Second Sex*. Rubin writes that social interventions in which people are told how not to behave according to their gender, i.e. what Butler calls *gender policing*, create the differences between genders.⁵⁶ According to Michael S. Kimmel, gendered aspects depend on contexts like time, culture, sexuality, race, etc.⁵⁷ Mari Mikkola states that we learn the behavioural traits which we connect with women and men through culture.⁵⁸ These are just a few of the arguments that scholars have published on the subject.

According to Butler, gender is a construction developed through the repetitive performance of gender, i.e. the iteration of the acts which we view as ascribed to a gender. The acts which become dominant over time are the ones that come to define what we think of as gender specific. Through the iterations that we perform we create a gender identity. In Butler's own words, gender is

“a stylized repetition of acts [...] which are internally discontinuous [...] so that] the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative accomplishment which the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief”.⁵⁹

In this sense, gender identity is neither stable nor coherent, as the things that are acknowledged as either feminine or masculine have changed through history and vary between cultures. For instance, the “girly” colour pink was earlier often worn by young men because it derives from red which was seen as manly and warlike.⁶⁰ In Western culture, men holding hands on the street is seen as unmasculine, but this is common for men to do in India.⁶¹ Another example located in the US is the view on women on the labour market. In

⁵⁵ Lloyd: “Judith Butler”, p. 456.

⁵⁶ Rubin, Gayle: “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex”, in Rayna R. Reiter (ed.): *Toward an Anthropology of Women*, New York / London: Monthly Review Press 1975, p. 165, 179.

⁵⁷ Kimmel, Michael S.: *The Gendered Society*, New York: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 87-88.

⁵⁸ Mikkola, Mari: “Feminist Perspectives on Sex and Gender”, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2017 / 2008, <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/feminism-gender/>>, last visited: 22.05.2019.

⁵⁹ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 179.

⁶⁰ Broadway, Anna: “Pink Wasn't Always Girly. A short history of a complex color”, 2013, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2013/08/pink-wasnt-always-girly/278535/>>, last visited: 25.04.2019.

⁶¹ Das Nair, Roshan: “If Singularity Is the Problem, Could Intersectionality Be the Solution? Exploring the Mediation of Sexuality on Masculinity”, in Rohit K. Dasgupta and K. Moti Gokulsing (eds.): *Masculinity and Its Challenges in India: Essays on Changing Perceptions*, Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. 2004, p. 80.

the 1960s, white women were fighting to get into it as it was seen as unfeminine to work. This, however, was not the case for Black women who, because of poverty and, earlier, slavery, always had been working, which was viewed as normal for African American females. Today it is, as known, common for white women to have a job, too. Thus, by arguing that gender is performative Butler states that gender is a process and that it is “real only to the extent that it is performed”.⁶² This is connected to the notion in constructivist theories that discourses create subject positions which are occupied by people. This means that linguistic structures construct the self. However, for Butler the discourse or structure defining gender is not verbal but bodily.

The idea of repetition as an establishing dimension for norms was inspired by social anthropologist Victor Turner as well as philosopher Jacques Derrida’s concept of iterability. According to Derrida, all performative utterances are citations, opposite to John L. Austin who distinguishes between authentic and parasitic speech-acts. In this distinction, only the latter is citational.⁶³ Derrida thought that everything said is citational as it “repeat[s] a ‘coded’ or iterable statement”⁶⁴ and that the power of the performative arises from its repetition.⁶⁵ Butler describes gender as having a likewise citational structure – it is “coded”, too. Behaviour is recognisable as feminine or masculine because it cites acts, that is, practices, which over time have become normative signifiers of gendered behaviour. The codes are, however, never completely fixed which means that they can change over time if they are being used differently. Through repetition, an act can become dominant and, thereby, make us perceive it as defining for a gender. Butler’s concept of gender performativity arose from Beauvoir’s view that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”.⁶⁶ For Butler, then, performativity is less of a linguistic act, as by Austin, and rather a corporeal enactment.⁶⁷ Thus, when Franklin sings “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”, she does not only perform the songs but also her gender, like in probably every other situation in her life. This will be discussed further in chapter 8.

The iterating acts are not (entirely) chosen freely by a subject, as they are constrained and regularised by dominant gender norms. Gender is thereby understood as “a daily act of reconstitution and interpretation”

⁶² Butler, Judith: “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”, in *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 40, No. 4, 1988, p. 527.

⁶³ Authentic speech-acts are those which are intentional, singular, and serious whereas parasitic are citational, for example the lines said by an actor in a film or a play. Austin, John L.: *How to Do Things with Words*, London: Oxford University Press 1962, p. 5–7, 21–22.

⁶⁴ Derrida, Jacques: “Signature Event Context”, Translated by Alan Bass, in Peggy Kamuf (ed.): *A Derrida Reader. Between the Blinds*, New York etc.: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1991, p. 104.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 104–105.

⁶⁶ Beauvoir, Simone de: *The Second Sex*, translated by H. M. Parshley, London: Picador 1988 / 1949, p. 295.

⁶⁷ Lloyd, Moya: “Judith Butler (1956–)”, in Jon Simons (ed.): *From Agamben to Žižek: Contemporary Critical Theorists*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2010, p. 79.

of exactly these norms.⁶⁸ In an interview with art historian Liz Kotz published in *Artforum*, Butler explains that “gender is an impersonation, [...] becoming gendered involves impersonating an ideal that nobody actually inhabits”.⁶⁹ This ideal is the gender conventions which have developed over time and which we assume to be natural. For Butler, the execution of performativity has the consequences that nobody can be a gender before engaging in gendered acts: “gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed”.⁷⁰ Thereby, gender is an identity which only exists through the gendered acts, i.e. the “identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results”.⁷¹ Hence, gender only exists through its performance.

Butler claims that the ‘I’ is always already gendered, or, more precisely, it is gendered through its acting and it is not possible to be a nonacting ‘I’. The self cannot exist before the gendered self as well as it cannot stand outside a gendered self. This has to do with the matrix of gender relations, which is already formed as potential and is realised when the ‘I’ starts to act. Thus, the process of gendering takes place within the matrix – the system generating ideal relations between sex, gender, and desire, i.e. the heterosexual ideals. Butler explains this part of her theory in this way:

“if gender is constructed, it is not necessarily constructed by an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who stands before that construction in any spatial or temporal sense of ‘before.’ Indeed, it is unclear that there can be an ‘I’ or a ‘we’ who has not been submitted, subjected to gender, where gendering is, among other things, the differentiating relations by which speaking subjects come into being [...] the ‘I’ neither precedes nor follows the process of this gendering, but emerges only within and as the matrix of gender relations themselves”.⁷²

Consequently, it is not possible to exist outside the matrix of gender relations.

For a certain act to be gendered, its expression must be perceived as associated with a specific gender.

Butler describes that “[i]t seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way”.⁷³ Some acts are, therefore, viewed as normative for either males or females. This means that gender is a regulated phenomenon, otherwise it would not be possible to have a certain, generalised idea about how a gender is. As will be seen further in the thesis, the protagonist in “A Natural

⁶⁸ Butler, Judith: “Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*”, in *Yale French Studies*, No. 72, 1986, p. 40.

⁶⁹ Kotz, Liz, and Bankowsky, Jack: “The Body You Want: An Interview with Judith Butler”, in *Artforum*, Vol. 31, No. 3, 1992, <<https://www.artforum.com/print/previews/199209/the-body-you-want-an-interview-with-judith-butler-33505>>, last visited: 25.06.2019.

⁷⁰ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Butler, Judith: *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “sex”*, New York / London: Routledge 1993, p. 7.

⁷³ Butler: *Performative Acts*, p. 527–528.

Woman” engages in acts (or, rather, non-acts as she is quite passive) linked to female behaviour to a greater extent than the woman in “Respect”. To Butler, it is problematic that gender is seen as a common identity because all women, for example, collectively contain so many and so big differences that they should not be viewed under one single identity as females. Butler states in *Bodies that Matter* that “[t]his ‘being a man’ and this ‘being a woman’ are internally unstable affairs”.⁷⁴ Hence, gender identity is unstable, and we should not expect everybody with the same sex to fit into the same category.

3.2. Biological Sex as a Social Construction

Sex and gender are often viewed as separated concepts binarily related to each other. In this optic, sex is the biological characteristics (genitals, hormones, chromosomes, etc.) which we take to define whether a person is a male or a female. On the other hand, gender is the cultural and social construction and expression of sex, i.e. femininity or masculinity displayed through behaviour. Thereby, sex is understood as something stable. This distinction is a differentiation of the sexed body on one side and the gendered behaviour on the other. This has been argued by several scholars over the last fifty years, for example Kate Millet,⁷⁵ Sally Haslanger,⁷⁶ and Kimmel.⁷⁷ Stoller was the first to describe a distinction between gender and sex thoroughly in 1968,⁷⁸ and this idea has spread widely since. This has been used by feminists to explain how differences between men and women are socially constructed and thereby changeable.⁷⁹

Butler criticises the notion of the binary structure causing the male body to be connected exclusively to masculinity and the female to femininity. “[I]f sex and gender are radically distinct, then it does not follow that to be a given sex is to become a given gender; In other words, ‘woman’ need not be the cultural construction of the female body, and ‘man’ need not interpret male bodies”.⁸⁰ In this way, Butler cuts the direct connections between male and masculinity as well as female and femininity and points to gender as a social construction. Birke supports this notion from a biological point of view. “A Natural Woman” expresses an interesting approach towards the idea of gender as it confirms as well as contradicts the notion of gender’s naturalness. This will be considered further in the discussion.

However, Butler also argues that the idea of separating sex from gender is a misunderstanding as sex could be a social and cultural construction, too. By that, she questions the idea that sex is natural, something that

⁷⁴ Butler: *Bodies that Matter*, p. 126.

⁷⁵ Millett, Kate: *Sexual Politics*, London: Granada Publishing Ltd. 1971.

⁷⁶ Haslanger, Sally: “Ontology and Social Construction”, in *Philosophical Topics*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1995, p. 95–125.

⁷⁷ Kimmel: *The Gendered Society*.

⁷⁸ Stoller, Robert J.: *Sex and Gender: On the Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, New York: Science House 1968.

⁷⁹ Mikkola: *Feminist Perspectives*, 1.2.

⁸⁰ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 142.

has been one of the key points in most feminist works.⁸¹ According to Butler, gender subsumes sex and, therefore, sex cannot precede or cause gender. Gender is thereby the “apparatus” that produces sexual differences which then are neither natural nor biological.⁸² She builds this argument on Foucault’s utterances in *The History of Sexuality*. He questions that sex determines sexuality and suggests that sex is “a complex idea that was formed inside the deployment of sexuality”.⁸³ In this way, Foucault denaturalises sex. Thus, following Butler’s argument, gender identity is not an expression of the sex. Sex is “always already gender”.⁸⁴ Butler explains it in the following way in *Bodies that Matter*:

“the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social. Insofar as it relies on this construal, the sex/gender distinction founders along parallel lines; if gender is the social significance that sex assumes within a given culture [...] then what, if anything, is left of ‘sex’ once it has assumed its social character as gender? [...] If gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not *accrue* social meanings as additive properties but, rather, *is replaced by* the social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges, not as a term in a continued relationship of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces ‘sex’”.⁸⁵

Hence, sex and gender are inseparable and “‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender”.⁸⁶ Following the utterances in the quotes, Butler perceives sex as a cultural norm because in our time and culture sex is something determined by the body.⁸⁷ We view male and female as the only possible and existing sexes. This is the reason why babies born with ambiguous genitalia are operated, but these operations are “normalising” processes making children fit to the dominant norms. Furthermore, in some non-western cultures, more than two genders are acknowledged. The Samoan fa’afafine are one example, studied over many years by Paul L. Vasey.⁸⁸ These examples support Butler’s view that male and female sexes are socially constructed. She refuses the idea of sex as destiny. Sex, and thereby body, can only be understood within and through culture – we cannot perceive it objectively outside of this structure. With this approach, gender hierarchies can be questioned as they are not biologically or naturally founded. Thus, this must be assumed as a premise for the challenge of the social hierarchy in “Respect”.

3.3. Heterosexuality and Subversive Gender Performativity

The dominant norm of sexuality is heterosexuality. This concept describes the situation in which women are attracted to men and vice versa. This is a part of normative gender identities. To be a “real” woman you

⁸¹ Lloyd: *Judith Butler*, p. 545.

⁸² Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 11.

⁸³ Foucault, Michel: *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, Translated by Robert Hurley, New York: Random House 1978 / 1976, p. 152.

⁸⁴ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ Butler: *Bodies that Matter*, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Butler: *Bodies that Matter*, p. 1–3.

⁸⁸ VanderLaan, Doug P., and Vasey, Paul L.: “Relationship Status and Elevated Avuncularity in Samoan Fa’afafine”, in *Personal Relationships*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2012, p. 326-339.

have to be attracted to a man, just as to be a “real” man you have to desire women. “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” were made within the context of the heterosexual norm, and it marks their expressions and meanings. But, in Butler’s notion, as gender is a construction and thereby only *perceived* as natural, heterosexuality as a norm is only an ideology. This ideology is, like gender, developed through repetition and has, because of its domination over a long period of time, become an idealised norm which appears to be natural: “To claim that all gender is like drag [i.e. imitating], or is drag, is to suggest that ‘imitation’ is at the heart of the *heterosexual* project and its gender binarism [...] that hegemonic heterosexuality is itself a constant and repeated effort to imitate its own idealizations.”⁸⁹ Hence, heterosexuality as a gender defining and natural “fact” is just as much a construction as gender itself. People only find heterosexuality more “right” because of the endless repetition of heterosexual performances. At the same time, heterosexuality polices other possible sexualities, thus, it controls which sexualities and behaviours that are acceptable. According to Butler, heterosexuality’s control derives from fear of the other possible sexualities because heterosexuality can never achieve its own idealisation completely. Butler explains this mechanism by continuing the above argument:

“That [heterosexuality] must repeat this imitation [of its idealisation], that it sets up pathologizing practices and normalizing sciences in order to produce and consecrate its own claim on originality and propriety, suggests that heterosexual performativity is beset by an anxiety that it can never fully overcome, that its effort to become its own idealizations can never be finally or fully achieved, and that it is consistently haunted by that domain of sexual possibility that must be excluded for heterosexualized gender to produce itself”.⁹⁰

Thus, heterosexuality as a norm has a constraining effect on people because it polices other sexualities and it restrains the behaviour of heterosexuals to the performance of heterosexuality.

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler uses the term intelligible about the normative bodies, i.e. people who live up to the heterosexual standards and thereby “make sense”. To not fit into the heterosexual frame, that is, when sex, gender, and sexuality align differently, is thus to be unintelligible. In those cases, both relation and person do not make sense. They are “outside the norm”.⁹¹ Butler claims that the norms are used to determine who is human and who is not. She calls this phenomenon “normative violence”.⁹² An unintelligible person, because of its incomprehensibility, is not perceived as a real human. They are the bodies that do not matter. To matter, in this case, means to be meaningful and have value. The exclusion of the unintelligible people supports the force that makes the norms able to define the bodies that do matter.⁹³ Not only abnormal sex or gender characteristics can make a person unintelligible. An abject body in any way, for example because of (a non-white) race, will fall outside the normative body scheme, too. In the

⁸⁹ Butler: *Bodies that Matter*, p. 125.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

⁹¹ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 42.

⁹² Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. xx.

⁹³ Lloyd: *Judith Butler*, p. 549.

discussion, it will be outlined how the concept of intelligibility can be interpreted as having an effect on the protagonist's emotional state in "A Natural Woman". The way a person fits into the norms is decisive to its possibilities of a "livable life" – a concept developed by Butler, which brings together cultural intelligibility, normative violence, and the human, i.e. acknowledgement as a subject.⁹⁴ This term will be elaborated further in the discussion in relation to the woman's attempt to change the norms in "Respect".

Performativity of gender does not always confirm the existing norms of gender identity. Performativity can be subversive which means that the same procedures that creates the conventions of gender identity, i.e. repetition, can potentially be used to denaturalise heterosexuality.⁹⁵ Butler uses drags as an example to support this: "drag is subversive to the extent that it reflects on the imitative structure by which hegemonic gender is itself produced and disputes heterosexuality's claim on naturalness and originality".⁹⁶ The difference between a drag's imitation from a heterosexual's performance is that the drag's mimic of femininity has the potential to display the unnaturalness of genders because the gender performance does not match the sex, according to the heteronormative concept. The relations between sex, gender, and desire are thereby denaturalised. However, parody like those performed by drags can only be subversive if it uncovers the construction of gender and, thereby, its performativity.⁹⁷ Subversion through performance is not easily done nor automatic. There is always the risk that an act meant as subversive ends up confirming the dominant gender identities. In the interview with Liz Kotz, Butler says that "it seems to me that there is no easy way to know whether something is subversive. Subversiveness is not something that can be gauged or calculated".⁹⁸ In Chapter 8, it will be considered if the femininities in the two songs confirm gender norms or if they reveal structures of construction in gender practices, like some performances do.

Critiques understands Butler's notion of gender performativity and subversion as if people can choose and change their gender whenever they want. Butler disputes this in the new preface of the *Gender Trouble* edition from 1999. She explains that her

"whole point was that the very formation of subjects, the very formation of persons, *presupposes* gender in a certain way – that gender is not to be chosen and that 'performativity' is not radical choice and it's not voluntarism. [...] Performativity has to do with repetition, very often with the repetition of oppressive and painful gender norms [...] This is not freedom, but a question of how to work the trap that one is inevitably in".⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Lloyd: *Judith Butler (1956–)*, p. 85.

⁹⁵ Lloyd: *Judith Butler*, p. 547.

⁹⁶ Butler: *Bodies that Matter*, p. 125.

⁹⁷ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 23.

⁹⁸ Kotz and Bankowsky: *The Body You Want*.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

Hereby, Butler emphasises that gender, or subversion of it, is not a choice but something constructed socially and culturally, not by one single person.

3.4. Primary Vulnerability to the Other

Butler has developed a concept of innate vulnerability which she describes in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and further elaborates in *Undoing Gender* (2004) as well as *Precarious Life* (2004). Following this, we are “given over to others”¹⁰⁰ from the beginning of our lives because of our dependence on other human beings, physically and psychologically. An infant would not survive without help. But according to Butler, the dependency continues throughout life, even though we at some point become able to take care of ourselves practically. This is what she calls the “vulnerability to the other”.¹⁰¹ It means that the body is mortal and susceptible to violence, but also that it is open to touch from the Other, whether it is loving, passionate, angry, etc. The body is the medium, through which we are in contact with others and is therefore always communal. Our bodies are never only “our own”¹⁰² because they depend on other bodies and to be intelligible according to the norms. Identity is constituted through the connections we have with others. This conception is relevant to the later interpretation of “A Natural Woman”, as the protagonist demonstrates her vulnerability and her need for the other.

As mentioned before, Butler is not the only one viewing gender as constructed. Sam Killermann advocates a model where gender is divided into three categories – gender identity, gender expression, and biological gender – thus, a ternary instead of a binary model. Gender identity and gender expression, which correlate with what is performed in Butler’s theory, are separated even though they in many theories would be seen as constituting each other.¹⁰³ Butler’s concept of gender performativity and the notion of a heterosexual matrix have proved to be important in several ways, not least because it disagrees with the conventional idea about the relation between sex and gender which has been widely used within feminism. Butler’s approach is not limited to gender, it extends to concern sex, body, and sexuality. Her arguments change the way identity is understood. Instead of being an “expression of an inner truth of the self or a natural property of the subject”, identity is described as an effect of the current power or discourse.¹⁰⁴ Using Butler’s arguments as foundation, sex, gender, and sexuality are all cultural constructs. For the further analyses and discussion, especially the idea of gender as constructed as well as the feminist challenge of the heterosexual hierarchy are relevant.

¹⁰⁰ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 20.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰³ Killermann, Sam: “Understanding the Complexities of Gender: Sam Killermann at TEDxUoflChicago”, published 03.05.2013, last visited: 26.06.2015.

¹⁰⁴ Lloyd: *Judith Butler*, p. 545.

4. Musical Persona

When we listen to music, we often focus on the singer and the identity of him/her. According to F. Moore, we try to understand the meaning of the music by understanding the personality of the singer. But what we actually listen to is a persona communicated by the artist.¹⁰⁵ That is, “an artificial construction that may, or may not, be identical with the person(ality) of the singer”.¹⁰⁶ Whether we perceive the persona and the performer as the same person depends on whether we think of the musician as authentic. In the later discussion of the femininities, the concept of musical persona will provide a way to consider the connection between Franklin as a performer as well as an actual person in the world and the protagonists in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”.

In his article *Musical Personae*, Philip Auslander describes the concept of a musical identity which musicians perform while playing music. He divides a musician’s identity into the private person, the social/public person, and the musical persona, i.e. the performed musical identity which corresponds to Simon Frith’s *song personality*.¹⁰⁷ The musical persona can be intentionally different from the person actually playing the music or it can be very near to the “real” person – the musician might not even be aware of the musical persona him-/herself.

Moore uses Auslander’s concept of musical persona as basis for a moderated version in which the private and the social identities are merged into one category and a new one, the protagonist, is added. In this way, Moore brings in the main character(s) of the lyrics sung by the artist and creates a model that is more suitable for studying a specific song. As Moore formulates it, he is “less interested in musicians than [he is] in music”.¹⁰⁸ The difference between the two versions is illustrated by the examples which the two authors present: Auslander focuses on live concerts and touches slightly on recorded live music; Moore concentrates on recorded studio music which, by and large, leaves out the visual aspects. I choose to use Moore’s model including “real” person, musical persona, and protagonist as I am interested in examining the construction of femininity in two specific songs, “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”. The female protagonists in the songs are highly relevant to this issue and should not be left out, just as Franklin’s musical persona has a significant effect on the perception of the femininities, too. Additionally, in this thesis I am not interested in the “real” Franklin as a private or social person. What she may have thought or said in private is usually not a part of what we as listeners perceive when hearing her songs. I will not go into details about the reception of Franklin as an artist but stick to overall facts about and common ideas of her

¹⁰⁵ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 179.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Frith: *Performing Rites*, p. 211–212.

¹⁰⁸ Moore: op. cit., p. 180.

as a singer, a woman, and an African American. The following chapter covers the theory of musical persona, starting with Auslander's concept, as he presents it in *Musical Personae* and moving on to Moore's idea which is described in *Song Means*.

4.1. Philip Auslander's Concept

Unlike actors, musicians normally do not perform a fictional character when they are on stage. According to Auslander, they do, however, engage in a performance, not just of the music but of themselves – a sort of identity performance.¹⁰⁹ This means that musicians often, if not always, present a specific musical identity while performing, whether this is done intentionally or not. Auslander argues that this identity, which he calls musical persona, is a social construction which is produced at every performance during a negotiation with the audience who, thereby, become co-creators. Every musical genre has its own set of social frames with its own conventions. Musicians as well as the audience draw on these conventions in the presentation of themselves and in their interactions. The musical identity is construed within these frames. Put differently, the object of the musical performer is the successful presentation of this identity, the musical persona, within a socially defined context, for example the setting of a concert. For this to be successfully carried out, setting, appearance, manner (a term by Goffman, which will be described later), music, style, and other aspects of the performance must be consistent with the claimed identity of the musician. In this way, the music played is a part of the expressing means used by the musician to produce the musical persona.¹¹⁰

Auslander takes performance studies and their broader understanding of performance as a concept as his starting point. Especially important are the emphasis on the whole event and the context of it as having an impact on a performance as well as the idea that many things can be a performative construction, not just those made with the purpose of being performed.¹¹¹ As already mentioned, opposite to an actor, a musician mostly does not present a fictional character when performing, but this does not mean that we see the musician's "real" personality. Rather, we see a version of the person produced with the specific aim to play music in a specific context. Auslander describes musical performance as "a person's representation of self within a discursive domain of music".¹¹² Thereby, musicians do first and foremost perform their identity as musicians, i.e. their musical persona, when they play for others. This may seem most obvious for singers,

¹⁰⁹ Auslander, Philip: "Musical Personae", in *TDR*, Vol. 50, No. 1, 2006, p. 117.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 117–118.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 102.

especially famous ones, but Auslander suggests that this applies to all musicians in all genres, also conductors, hidden theatre musicians, bar musicians, and so on.¹¹³

One of Auslander's main points is that the musician presents a musical persona which *can* be a representation of the personality, however, it is not necessarily.¹¹⁴ In this way, it contrasts Stan Godlovitch's concept of *Personalism*, that centres around the performer and the presentation of him/her as the main purpose of the performance, too. However, unlike Auslander, Godlovitch views the performance as an expression of the musician's personality.¹¹⁵

Erving Goffman's micro-sociological studies of everyday behaviour has influenced performance studies a great deal. He is one of the most important theoretical sources on which Auslander draws in his explanation of the construction of the musical persona. Because musicians mostly appear as themselves on stage, Auslander uses Goffman's ideas of interactions in the everyday life to approach musical performance rather than acting theories. Goffman claims that human beings perform themselves in different ways within different routines, i.e. we show ourselves differently in interactions with family, friends, colleagues, etc. Following this, why should musicians present themselves in the same way when they perform as when they do other things in life? Exactly because musical performance (normally) is not fiction, Auslander treats it as one of the routines that a musician engages in. The version of him-/herself, that a musician presents during a concert is the musical persona. Auslander uses the terms *frame* and *lamination*, among others, borrowed from Goffman's vocabulary to describe and analyse the social situations in which the musical persona is construed. A frame consists of organisational principles which manage social situations, and which have been internalised by people and, thereby, become cognitive structures. Through these we perceive and understand experiences. Frames create a common understanding which all members of a group generally agree upon. Lamination is the term that Goffman uses for a frame existing within another frame. By that, an experience can be perceived through several layers of frames. Auslander sees genre as an important lamination. It influences what we expect from music and the way we experience it, because a genre implies the frames for the music as well as the limits for what is acceptable – can we expect improvisation? And how much should a recording be edited? Genre frames establish the norms for these kinds of aspects.¹¹⁶ In this way, soul is an important lamination for Franklin's music and the expectations that we as listeners have for it.

¹¹³ Auslander, Philip: "Performance Analysis and Popular Music: A Manifesto", in *Contemporary Theatre Review*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 2004, p. 7–8.

¹¹⁴ Auslander: *Musical Personae*, p. 103.

¹¹⁵ Godlovitch, Stan: *Musical Performance: A Philosophical Study*, London: Routledge 1998, p. 139–140.

¹¹⁶ Auslander: *Musical Personae*, p. 104–106.

Goffman uses the term ‘fronts’ to describe the means used intentionally or unintentionally by a person to create an impression of him-/herself.¹¹⁷ Fronts can be divided into setting of the performance (in Goffman’s terms, performance refers to any situation where a person presents him-/herself to others) and personal fronts. A personal front consists of “relatively fixed” signs like race and gender as well as “relatively mobile” signs like facial expressions and gestures.¹¹⁸ The fixed signs are of importance as, for instance, many genres are perceived as connected to specific social identities. Taking soul as an example, it is associated with African Americans and hearing a song within that genre, one would probably expect the singers as well as the musicians to be Black Americans, even though many of the studio musicians were white. Fronts that “fit” into the frames make situations more intelligible for us.¹¹⁹ Thus, the fact that Franklin is African American makes “sense” to the listeners when hearing her music. The fixed signs race and gender are both of importance for the analyses and the discussion. The perception of Franklin as female is one of the most influencing factors in making us believe that the protagonists in the songs are females. But, as will be outlined in the discussion, her race has an impact on how we interpret the music and its meanings, too.

Some genres and performance contexts allow more space for individual variation of the personal front than others.¹²⁰ In general, soul and popular music styles are examples of genres within which the degree of individuality is relatively high. But the choices of, for example, clothes are still regulated by the social situation – what does the audience expect from the musician, and what does the musician wish to express? An example of the opposite, very little individual choice, is classical orchestral music where all musicians are expected to dress formally and in black. Thereby, musical personae are to be found on a continuum going from types of musical performances where they are strongly predetermined by the frame conventions of the genre to types where musicians have a lot of freedom to create their persona. I would argue that vocal style is a part of the personal front. Even though Franklin might not consciously have chosen to sing in gospel style, she could still have sung differently if she wanted to. Hence, it is a relatively mobile sign.

In addition to ‘appearance’, personal front also consists of ‘manner’.¹²¹ Manner could be confused with personality in Goffman’s explanation, but it is specified by and depends on the specific performance rather than an expression of a continuous personality trait. Manner has to do with the behaviour which a person engages in in a situation. Auslander presents the example that the manner of a musician changes according

¹¹⁷ Goffman, Erving: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Harmondsworth a.o.: Penguin Books 1959, p. 32.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 34.

¹¹⁹ Auslander: *Musical Personae*, p. 112–113.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 110.

¹²¹ Goffman: *The Presentation of Self*, p. 34–36.

to if he plays a solo, in an orchestra, or illustrates something for a student.¹²² Goffman suggests that the way a pop singer routinely sings out the most extreme feelings without much preparation for it in the moment, like Franklin does, is a manner. The singer presents “instant affect”.¹²³ However, in the everyday life, the person probably would not be so open about feelings in front of strangers. Hence, this manner is not an expression of the person. Instead it is a manner used to give a specific impression of him/her as a pop singer within the pop singer routine. In other words, it is used to perform the musical persona.¹²⁴

An important point in Auslander’s article is that every performance does not create a new persona for the artist. In fact, the audience expects relative consistence in a musician’s persona from one performance to the next. This does not mean that musical personae are or have to be rigid or static. Indeed, some musicians find ways to transform themselves drastically over time, for instance the members of *the Beatles*. In those cases, the audience shows willingness to accept the new personae.¹²⁵ In the case of Franklin, the core of the musical persona stayed quite consistent over the years, even though she had to adjust to changing times, the changing music business, and changings of musical styles.

Auslander makes it clear that the creation of the persona always is a social process that happens through negotiations between the musician and the audience within the limits of the frames. The audience have a decisive role in the production of the persona as they, according to Auslander, construe the final identity from the impressions they have received from the performer. Consequently, an audience can place an identity on a musician – an “audience imposed persona”.¹²⁶ This is often the case by virtuosi, as most people would not label themselves as that. This is also what happened when Michael Jackson was named the “King of Pop”, Bob Dylan the “Voice of His Generation”, and Franklin the “Queen of Soul”. Likewise, an audience can reject a performer created or re-created persona. This sometimes happen when a musician or a band tries to change their image, for instance, by shifting to or incorporating another style. A famous example of this was when Bob Dylan introduced electrical guitar into his music, on which many fans reacted negatively. Musical persona is, thereby, not only produced by the individual. This implies the engagement of the audience in the persona. They can be said to be co-creators. Often they will try to make the artist into the one that they need him or her to be. Thus, the performer fills a social function. This

¹²² Auslander: *Musical Personae*, p. 110.

¹²³ Goffman, Erving: *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Boston: Northeastern University Press 1986 / 1974, p. 571–572.

¹²⁴ Auslander: op. cit., p. 111.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 113.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p. 114–115.

makes it easier to understand why an audience often react negatively to musicians' attempt to change their musical persona.¹²⁷

4.2. Moore and the Protagonist

When we listen to a recorded song and we, thereby, do not have the same visual aspects to respond to as when being at a concert, the musical persona one perceives is created on the foundation of the song and knowledge about the singer. The music that accompanies the singer influences our idea of the persona, too. There can even occur friction between those two components, the singer/persona and the music.¹²⁸ Hence, when discussing the musical persona of Franklin on the basis of two songs, it is important to consider both lyrical and musical aspects of the recordings as well as relevant knowledge about Franklin as a person.

As already mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, Moore merges Auslander's two first categories together and, rather than adding a completely new one, he splits the last one in two. So, where Auslander has the performer as human being or "real" person, the performer as social being, and the musical persona, Moore operates with a model consisting of the performer, the persona, and the protagonist of the song. Moore explains this with his focus on music rather than the musician.¹²⁹ I have chosen to base my use of the concept on Moore's model because I have taken the songs "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" and what they represent as my focus in my work rather than Franklin and her identity, which however, do have an impact on our perception of the femininities constructed in the songs.

In Moore's conception, the performer is the person singing the song. This is an individual with a name, an identity, and a historical position – a person existing in physical form. Just like by Auslander, the persona is not identical to the identity of the performer. The persona is the identity of the singing voice, which we create in our heads when listening to it. Here, Moore builds on music theorist Naomi Cumming's concept of the musical "body". When we hear a voice, we automatically create an idea about what the body, from which the voice stems, looks like (big, small, etc.) and how it moves (heavy, easily, etc.). As Cumming describes it, "the characteristics of sounds are the aural 'marks' of bodily actions".¹³⁰ This body and the identity of it are "shaped" through the technical modifications of the voice, effectively creating an illusion. Thereby, the body and the identity can be changed in the editing of a song, meaning that the producers often play a significant role in the production of a persona. This 'illusion' of body and identity is what

¹²⁷ Auslander: *Musical Personae*, p. 115.

¹²⁸ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 180.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Cumming, Naomi: *The Sonic Self: Musical Subjectivity and Signification*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 2000, p. 22.

Moore calls persona. The protagonist is the main figure in a song, which rarely has no identity outside of the particular track. Mostly, there is only one protagonist. However, in some songs two equally important persons are introduced. A song can also have a secondary protagonist, for example when the protagonist has a conversation with someone less significant for the song. The secondary participant can in some cases be an instrument if it plays the role of an independent agent.¹³¹ In “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”, the female narrator is the protagonist.

The three dimensions can always be identified in a song. A singer can try to melt the three levels together or keep them distant from each other. Thereby, the degree of connection between them can vary a lot. In a song like “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer”, it is obvious that the singer Paul McCartney is not the same person as the protagonist, Maxwell Edison. However, the performer and the persona seem to be the same. In other songs, like *the Beatles’* “Yesterday”, the protagonist comes across as correlating with the persona and the person Paul McCartney. David Bowie’s figure Ziggy Stardust is an example of a persona which clearly is not and is not meant to be perceived as the personality of the performer. As will be seen in the discussion, Franklin’s persona is closely connected to both Franklin as a performer and the protagonists in the songs.

It is usually unproblematic to identify the protagonist and the performer. The persona can be trickier. Moore suggests three questions relevant to ask in this case. First of all, is the persona realistic or overtly fictional? It is not always easy to distinguish between these two because a performer can place him-/herself in between the two ends. A realistic persona means that we as listeners interpret the voice, the message, the story, etc. as coming directly from the singer – “a vocalized version of a direct address”.¹³² An overtly fictional persona is found when a singer takes on a specific role, like Ziggy Stardust, as an actor would do. Second question is if the situation and/or the narrative in the track is realistic or fictional. Is it likely for the singer to be a part of the story told in the song? Realistic would often be when something everyday-like is described, something that the listeners or the singer could realistically be a part of. A situation can be plausibly everyday-like and realistic even when it is not experienced by many people. Fictional is when the narrative or situation seems unlikely to take place or exist in reality, like stories situated in an imagined historical or mythological world. The third question is: Is the singer personally involved in the situation or does he/she rather act like an observer? That is., does the singer sing about his or her own experiences or is the singer not a part of what is going on in the song, like a reporter.¹³³

¹³¹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 181–182.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 182.

Moore characterises a normative position of a persona in a recording, what he calls the “‘bedrock’ position”,¹³⁴ by a *realistic persona*, an *everyday situation* in the lyrics, an *involved stance* of the singer, the song taking place in *present time*, and the *exploration of the moment*. This applies to songs with both positive and negative expressions. Thereby, Moore creates a schema consisting of five aspects as the starting point for the construction of the identity we foster for the voice when we listen to a song: persona, situation, stance, timespan, and temporality. Many songs, however, are more complex than this and to analyse the persona of these, other aspects would have to be considered. The three questions as well as the five aspects mentioned above will be considered in relation to Franklin, “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” after the analyses.

To sum up, Auslander’s concept of a musical persona is the identity constructed by the performer and the audience, which is presented at concerts or other performances. In Moore’s model, the musical persona is the identity we create for the voice we hear when listening to a song. This identity is construed by a combination of what we hear (lyrics, timbre, etc.) and what we know about the singer. The latter understanding of the term is what I apply in the discussion of the femininities in the two songs performed by Franklin.

¹³⁴ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 183.

5. Aretha Franklin (1942–2018)

Aretha Franklin, the performer of “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”, was born on the 25th of March 1942 in Memphis, Tennessee, but she grew up in Detroit. She was primarily raised by her father and grandmother, as her mother moved to her family in Buffalo when Franklin was six years old and died in 1952. Franklin’s father, Reverend Clarence LaVaughn Franklin, was a famous preacher who had founded his own church, New Bethel Baptist Church, in Detroit. In 1951, he began broadcasting his sermons and later recorded and released several of them on Chess Records. Franklin’s childhood in the church gave her a firm Christian belief, which she held on to for the rest of her life, as well as education within gospel music. Among C.L. Franklin’s friends and acquaintances, many were gospel-, jazz-, and R&B musicians or singers who ended up having an impact on Franklin’s childhood as well as her musical education. For example, Franklin partly learnt to play the piano from the gospel pianist James Cleveland.¹³⁵ The renowned gospel singers Mahalia Jackson, Clara Ward, and Marion Williams all helped Franklin develop her vocal skills. Franklin did not like taking music classes, but she would listen to and learn from the guests of the house.¹³⁶ When Franklin was 14 years old, she recorded her first album with gospel tunes at the Joe Von Battle JVB company. She and her two sisters, Erma and Carolyn, who also sang, sometimes performed as a gospel group. In her teenage years, Franklin went on tours with her father, accompanying him on the piano, singing, and visiting other parts of the US, including the race segregated South. She was from early on in contact with the Civil Rights Movement through her politically active father and his associates.¹³⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as several Black politicians from Detroit, would frequently visit their home, and C.L. Franklin often encouraged racial pride in his sermons.¹³⁸

In 1960, Aretha Franklin moved to New York, leaving her two sons in the care of her father and grandmother in Detroit. In New York, she signed with the producer John Hammond and two years later with Robert Mersey, both for Columbia Records (CBS). Hammond was known for having “discovered” musicians like Billie Holiday and Count Basie, and later Bruce Springsteen and Bob Dylan. At this time, Franklin, supported by her father, decided to leave the gospel style and go into the domain of pop music. They saw this as an opportunity to integrate white and Black mainstream culture.¹³⁹ Franklin’s success on CBS was moderate. She had a few hits, “Rock-a-bye Your Baby with a Dixie Melody” was the biggest one, but the real breakthrough did not occur. It has often been said that Hammond and CBS did not understand

¹³⁵ Werner: *Higher Ground*, p. 56.

¹³⁶ Bowman, Rob: “Franklin, Aretha” (2001), in: *Grove Music Online*, <<https://doi-org.uaccess.univie.ac.at/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.45921>>, last visited: 17.06.2019.

¹³⁷ “C. L. Franklin” (2016), in *New World Encyclopedia*, <https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/C._L._Franklin>, last visited: 18.06.2019.

¹³⁸ Werner: op. cit., p. 23.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 4.

Franklin's real talent and put her into genres which she did not fit into, like jazz and rock 'n' roll. This might be true, but, as Craig Hansen Werner comments in his book *Higher Ground: Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, Curtis Mayfield, and the rise and fall of American soul*, Hammond did not have much knowledge or understanding of gospel music, and the music on the albums, in the attempt to reach a broader audience and crossing over, sometimes may have circled around too many genres without getting in the deep with any of them.¹⁴⁰ Her contract with CBS ran out in 1966 and it was not renewed.

In 1967, Franklin signed with Jerry Wexler under Atlantic Records, which was one of the leading labels producing African American music at the time. Wexler arranged a collaboration between Franklin and the Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals, which brought her the success that led her into the pop-charts.

Furthermore, Atlantic wanted her to play the piano at her own concerts and recording session as well as to work with her own material. This gave her much more creative freedom than she had experienced at CBS.¹⁴¹ Franklin flew to Muscle Shoals, Alabama, to record her first single on Atlantic, "I Never Loved a Man (the Way I Love You)", in the FAME studios. However, the next day she left in anger, swearing that she would never go back, apparently because of a skirmish between her then husband, Ted White, and Rick Hall, the owner of FAME, over the hired horn players, who were all white.¹⁴² But "I Never Loved a Man" became such a success, Franklin's first real hit in her career, that Wexler flew the house band of FAME and saxophonist King Curtis' horn section to New York to record a whole album with Franklin. This was the beginning of a cooperation lasting several albums between Franklin, the FAME musicians, and King Curtis. He and the band influenced Franklin's music a great deal with their "southern soul feeling". Franklin's sisters, Erma and Carolyn, and the singer Cissy Houston, formed her backing group on many of her recordings. The album *I Never Loved a Man (the Way I Love You)*, with "Respect" as the second single, gave Franklin the crossover-success which she, despite the intentions, did not reach with CBS. After that, several albums and hits followed, released on Atlantic Records, for example, *Lady Soul* with "(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman" and "Chain of Fools" as well as *Aretha Now* with the singles "Think" and "I Say a Little Prayer".

As the disco music took over the mainstream in the 1970s, Franklin's popularity, as that of many other soul artists, declined.¹⁴³ She tried her hand at disco on the album *Sweet Passion* with the former Motown producers Brian Holland, Lamont Dozier, and Eddie Holland, but it failed to maintain her high position on the charts. In 1979, she signed with Arista Records where she achieved sort of a comeback in the 1980s by releasing pop albums. Additionally, she recorded several duets with contemporary pop artists like George

¹⁴⁰ Werner: *Higher Ground*, p. 89, 94.

¹⁴¹ Bowman: *Franklin, Aretha*.

¹⁴² Werner: op. cit., p. 132–133.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 218.

Michael (1987), Whitney Houston (1989), and Elton John (1989). But there is no consensus in the descriptions of her actual success (or the missing of it) in the 1980s in the music histories. Rob Bowman views Franklin's comeback in the 1980s as successful, though she failed in maintaining the success on following albums.¹⁴⁴ Peter Wicke, on the contrary, sees the album *A Rose is Still a Rose* from 1998 as her first success since her heydays in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁴⁵

Franklin's voice was marked by power and intensity, and her range covered five octaves. She shifted easily between dynamics, ranges, and timbres, and improvisational skills as well as gospel phrasings were part of her routine. Franklin is recognised as one of the big musical influences on soul and popular music genres developed from and inspired by it. She reached this position through her vocal skills, lyrics, powerful performances, and agency in own musical venture. Rob Bowman describes the songs on *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You* as "the most powerful recordings by a female soul singer in the genre's history".¹⁴⁶ Hansen divides her achievements into three overlapping categories: hits, covers, and original compositions.¹⁴⁷ She sang about respect – for women, for African Americans, and for people in general, which made her a voice of the Black freedom movements.¹⁴⁸ Several times throughout her career, she expressed her affiliation to the Civil Rights Movement and its ideology, but her songs became anthems for Black Power and other political agendas, too, even though she apparently did not intend to write political songs.¹⁴⁹ She was the first woman of colour to reach success as a solo singer within soul music at the time and the most selling African American artist ever when her first album with Atlantic came out. This, her identity as a woman in control of her own musical output, and her musical/lyrical manifestations of an independent woman demanding respect, made her an icon within feminist groups across racial borders.¹⁵⁰ Over time, she received 15 Grammys, among others the Living Legends Award in 1991, and the Civil Rights Award in 2013. She was the first woman to represent the Black community on the title page of Time Magazine (1968) and the first female to enter Rock and Roll Hall of Fame (1987).¹⁵¹ These accomplishments, and her role in the development of soul music, earned her titles like "Queen of Soul" and "Lady Soul".

¹⁴⁴ Bowman: *Franklin, Aretha*.

¹⁴⁵ Wicke: *Franklin, Aretha*.

¹⁴⁶ Bowman: op. cit.

¹⁴⁷ Werner: *Higher Ground*, p. 182.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 2–3.

¹⁴⁹ Franklin and Ritz: *Aretha*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁰ Bowman: op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Wicke: *Franklin, Aretha*.

6. Analysis of “Respect”

As mentioned in the intro, “Respect” was originally written and sung by the soul artist Otis Redding, who released it in 1965. Two years later, Aretha Franklin recorded it at Atlantic Records in New York with the house band of the Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals. This version was significantly different from Redding’s version, as Franklin had rewritten the text, composed a new arrangement, and added new parts to the form. It was Franklin’s second single since she had started cooperating with Atlantics, and it is by critics as well as audience acknowledged as one of her signature songs. It had a large crossover success rare for its time and it became number one on Billboard’s R&B- as well as Hot 100-charts.

In this analysis, the focus is on the version recorded and released by Franklin on the 1967 album *I Never Loved a Man the Way I Love You*. The analysis begins with an examination of the lyrics because, in most popular songs, the lyrics describe the themes and narratives (if any) and articulate the potential message. Thereby, it is possible to point out musical links to the topics of the lyrics throughout the rest of the analysis which is presented in the following order: melody; form, harmony, and instruments; Franklin’s vocal delivery; and the function of the choir. First, a few basic features of the song will be outlined to establish a general frame for the rest of the analysis.

Franklin’s original recording of “Respect” is played in C-major with a time signature of 4/4. The tempo is medium¹⁵² and the form is a refrain form, which was common within the 1960s’ soul as well as R&B in the 1950s.¹⁵³ The form of the song is as follows:

Intro – A – A’ – A’’ – B (saxophone solo) – A’’’ – C (Break) – Outro

A is comprised of a short verse and the refrain. A more detailed schema and an explanation of the form can be seen on page 51 in the part of the chapter concerning form, harmony, and instruments. The harmony is simple and consists for the most part of the three main chords of the key (C, F, and G) with added lowered 7ths. The arrangement is dominated by the lead vocals (which is normative for popular songs) but the backing vocals are salient, too. The groove created by bass, drums, and piano is significant for the creation of the mood and feeling in the song. Horns are left out of most of the arrangement but do play an important role as genre-signifiers and are distinctive in the passages where they are played. The last two instruments in use, organ and guitar, tend to blend in and almost disappear in the overall sound image. Only in the intro, the guitar has been handed a central role.

¹⁵² Christensen and Bach divide southern soul songs roughly into three categories defined by the tempo: slow (ballads), medium, and up tempo. Christensen, Torben, and Bach, Gert: “Soul: Stilanalyser og Idéer til Arrangement i Southern Soul Stilen”, in *Col Legno*, Vol. 4, 2003, p. 32–43.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 114.

6.1. Lyrics

Overall, the lyrics in “Respect” are about a woman who demands her husband or boyfriend to treat her with respect. It presents the woman’s frustrations and the message to her partner about better treatment of her. Machin suggests making an activity schema to uncover the basic action in the lyrics.¹⁵⁴ What is happening on the simplest level? In this case, it could be illustrated like this:

Woman is in a relationship with a man, but she is unsatisfied
∨
Woman tells her partner to give her respect

Interpersonal relationships are a normative theme¹⁵⁵ which “Respect” exemplifies with its treatment of the situation between a man and a woman, but in a quite untypical way for the time, which will be seen.

Sometimes, the basic activities are obscured by other elements and details in the lyrics but, in this case, it is consistent with the immediate accessible understanding of the song offered through the construction and performance of the lyrics. The action taking place is less of a narrative and more of a focusing on the moment. We do not know what the actual consequences of the woman’s utterances will be, even though it is implied that she will leave if the man does not change his behaviour. It is typical for lyrics in popular songs not to have much action in them.¹⁵⁶

The next step according to Machin’s model for analysis of lyrics is to identify the participants and their roles in the lyrics. In “Respect” there are only two participants, the “I” (female) and the “You” (male). The word “home” implies that the two people live together, and “kisses” (v. 4, l. 1) indicates that they have an intimate relationship with each other. “I”, the narrator and the protagonist, is the one who wants respect. She describes herself as everything “You” wants and needs (v. 1). She is loyal to “You”, because she wants to, not because she has to. “I” supposedly has a job as she has her own money, which she shares with “You”. It seems like she loves her partner, which is illustrated through the nicknames she calls him (baby, babe, honey), her loyalty, and the kisses she enjoys. She comes forth as a strong and determined woman. These are the features dominating the picture drawn of her. It is presented through the repetition of her demand as well as imperative conjugation of verbs creating orders directed to her partner – “give it to me” (v. 4, l. 3), “Find out what it means to me”, “Take care, TCB [take care of business]” (the two latter both in the break).

The “You” is less described than the “I”. The words attached to him are baby, babe, and honey, as already mentioned, as well as mister, which indicates the male gender. The nicknames are so common in the

¹⁵⁴ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 80.

¹⁵⁵ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 109.

¹⁵⁶ Machin: op. cit., p. 89.

American sphere that they work as anonymising elements in this context. The person who is addressed in the song is not presented with identifying personalising features like a name, but with words that could be applied to anyone. The only thing implied is that the addresser holds positive feelings towards the addressee. It is implied that he works by the several times it is mentioned that he comes home. In “I”’s opinion, which is the only one we have access to, he does not give her the respect she deserves. Furthermore, the word “fooling” in the outro hints that he may conduct an unacceptable behaviour. This is everything explicitly described about the two characters in the lyrics. The fact that “You” has no name seems to create the impression of a certain type of relationship rather than of a specific person. This gives the performer a chance to tell a story which is more about herself than the other person.¹⁵⁷ Thus, the personal features of the addressee are not essential for the story.

Van Leeuwen has listed a set of features which can be used to describe participants in a text or in other forms of linguistic communication.¹⁵⁸ By comparing the “I” to these features, “I” is represented as *personalised*, given that we get access to her feelings and opinions. Oppositely, “You” is *impersonalised*. “I” is *individualised* as the listeners are meant to feel connected to her alone and not several characters at the same time. Both persons are *unnamed* but the difference between the two is that “I” is connected to a persona, namely that of Aretha Franklin as the performer of the song. Through her vocals and knowledge about her as a person, the female gender of “I” is confirmed and associations are added to the figure. On the contrary, “You” is *anonymous* and presented more as a *function* than a person – he is the protagonist’s partner. His role is generic, while the woman’s is specific.¹⁵⁹

Song lyrics often contain monologues, like in “Respect”, but they are often directed at someone outside of the song.¹⁶⁰ In this case, it is directed to “you”, the second person singular. According to Alan Durant, “you” can be addressed in 4 different ways. In “Respect”, two of these are mixed together: it is at one hand addressing a specific individual, her partner. On the other hand, the listener can take up the imaginary position of the performer and the “I” and thereby, the addressee can become a person identified by the listener. This opens up to a great range of identification possibilities because the listener can fill in the blanks of the “You” with whoever he or she finds apt.

The female protagonist is the one with the power of agency in the lyrics. She is the one speaking, the one who has got “it” (v. 1), who gives out orders, who demands, and who will walk away if nothing changes.

¹⁵⁷ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁸ van Leeuwen, Theo: “The representation of social actors”, in: Carmen Rosa Caldas-Coulthard and Malcolm Coulthard (eds.): *Texts and Practices: Readings in Critical Discourse Analysis*, London: Routledge 1996, p. 46–61.

¹⁵⁹ Machin: op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁶⁰ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 117.

Meanwhile, “You” engages in what Michael Halliday calls *existential work*¹⁶¹ (coming/getting home) and *mental work* (wants and needs, v. 1).¹⁶² In this way, the man does not contribute anything “real” to the situation. Said differently, “I” is presented as active while “You” is passive (even though he presumably is active outside of the home as he seems to be working). There is, however, as mentioned, not much actual action in the lyrics – the actions consist in the protagonist’s verbal expressions. Where physical action could have been applied, she does not get to it, like when she is “about to” give her partner her money, but also only “about to” (v. 3, l. 1). Thus, the only “action” taken place is verbal, i.e. her monologue, which emphasises that the lyrics are taking place in a specific moment or within a short period of time equalling the length of her monologue.

The last step in Machin’s analysis model is to define the setting. In “Respect”, the location where the action takes place is mentioned several times: home. This is a typical scene for songs within soul music as romantic relationships are a normative theme within the genre. The home is contrasted to the outside world where the man is when he is “gone” (v. 2, l. 1), from where he returns when he comes home, and where “I” will go if he does not give her respect (outro). There is a clear distinction between home and work, the private and the public sphere, and the plot is placed in the former one. The time is simultaneously specific and unspecific. The lyrics describe the time when the man gets home and the time he spends at home, pointing to late afternoon and evening, if we assume that he works within common working hours – thus, a specific time of the day. But it is not linked to a specific day, it could be any and every day of the year. This implies agelessness – the song is connected to no time period, neither seasonal nor historical. The home and the everyday life of a working couple form associations of ordinary people – they are like most people (even though, at the time it was more common for Black women than white to be working).¹⁶³ This broadens the possibilities to identify with the protagonist of the song.

Halliday uses the terms *actor* (agent), *goal*, and *process* to describe the basic aspects of song lyrics or other texts.¹⁶⁴ These can be used to quickly summarise the content in the lyrics: “I” (the female protagonist) is the actor, the goal is to get respect, and the process is her demands articulated in different forms like asking and orders. The location where it all takes place is their shared home.

There are no fix norms dictating the content of lyrics in popular songs, but it is possible to extract some general features and often used themes. According to Richard Middleton, song lyrics can be classified as

¹⁶¹ Halliday, Michael A.K.: *Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar*, Fourth Edition, London / New York: Routledge 2014 / 1985, p. 307–308.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

¹⁶³ Taylor, Ula: “The Historical Evolution of Black Feminist Theory and Praxis”, in *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, 1998, p. 249.

¹⁶⁴ Halliday: *op. cit.*, p. 76.

either constituting an affect, a story, or a gesture.¹⁶⁵ Even though the listeners get access to the mind and emotions of the woman in “Respect”, the story is in several ways suitable as a description for the lyrics. The issue revolves around the woman’s feelings but the lyrics describe the point where she delivers knowledge about this to another person and demands a change of behaviour. The monologue thereby becomes an act in itself and the song does in this sense contain a narrative. The singing style characteristics ascribed to the story-model also seem to dominate in Franklin’s recording of “Respect”: The words tend to control the rhythmic flow. The free rhythm in which she sings is based more on the lyrics and the length of the sentences than on a fixed melody. Furthermore, Middleton points out that a vocal delivery nearing speech often is found in songs built on the story-model. This applies to Franklin’s singing in “Respect”, too.

However, to call it a narrative is problematic as no real change is taking place within the song. It is only implied that change will come after the song has ended, either in form of the man’s alteration of behaviour or consisting in the woman leaving. But on a much smaller scale, there may be a difference between the beginning and the end of the song: the woman communicates her inner needs to another person who maybe gains new knowledge through this. That would be a change, even though it is not a physical one observable in the material world.¹⁶⁶

Despite the argument above, the song contains many elements of the static lyrics focusing on the moment which is the most normal type within popular songs. The verse may suggest a development while the chorus, or in this case the refrain, each time takes us back to the starting point.¹⁶⁷ In “Respect”, the verses elaborate the situation as she experiences it and the refrain keeps turning back to the demand. The plot takes place over such a short time period that it could be described as a moment. But on the other hand, as already outlined above, there might be a process from the beginning of the woman’s speech to the end. The song is complex in this way. It works in between the single moment and the process of an action and thereby in between the models of story and affect.

In relation to Middleton’s description of the words influencing the rhythmic flow as common for the story model, Griffiths’ concept of verbal space can be applied.¹⁶⁸ This concerns the relation between the lyrics and the relative tempo with which it is delivered. In “Respect”, the lyrics are mostly delivered quite fast, i.e. a lot of words are sung within short time. This enhances the feeling of urgency and agitation. It is normative for popular songs to let the lengths of the lines variate to reach a more speech-like modus.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁵ Middleton, Richard: *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham: Open University Press 1990, p. 231–232.

¹⁶⁶ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 109–110.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁶⁸ Griffiths, Dai: “From lyric to anti-lyric: Analyzing the Words in Pop Song”, in Allan F. Moore (ed.): *Analyzing Popular Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 43.

¹⁶⁹ Moore: op. cit., p. 113.

This is characteristic for “Respect” too, as it contains a lot of variation concerning lengths of sentences. The break is an exception. It displays the lyrics in a more solid and precise rhythm which makes the articulation very clear.

The song contains three sets of rhymes that seem to hold a special position in the text due to the lack of continuity of rhyming. The first pair, “money” / “honey”, is found in both verse 3 and 4 (the second time switched around). This creates a connection between the two words: Money is sweet. This is emphasised by the repetition of the rhyme. On a higher level, this can be interpreted as the protagonist’s cherishing of her own economic independence. This suggests that money is a secondary theme in the lyrics. The break is the only section of the form where all lines rhyme: “T” / “me” / “B”. This underlines the message of respect which through the spelling out of the word ‘respect’ is displayed in an almost cheerleader-like way. The spelling and the rhymes create a linguistic clarity which makes the lyrics, and thereby the message, easy to remember. The last set of rhymes is found in the outro and is less significant than the other two. When Franklin rhymes the words “trying” and “lying” it appears like a play with words in the more freely performed outro which seems to be even more improvised than the rest of the song. But the two words do mark and elaborate her view on the situation (“I get tired / I keep on trying / You’re running out of fools / And I ain’t lying”). More than rhymes, the song is characterised by repetition. Franklin is economical with the words in her version of the lyrics.¹⁷⁰ She goes straight to the point without any detours or decorative adjectives. The repetitions put weight on the message and underlines the importance it is given by the protagonist. She has something on her mind.

Leonard Talmy points out that language only enables a focus on one or some parts of a scenery that is referred to, and the listener will pay attention to this.¹⁷¹ He describes these parts which are in focus as “windowed”. In “Respect”, the language describes the protagonist’s message, her needs, demands, and her monologue. As listeners we receive no information about the man’s reaction, what has been going on ahead of the song, and how the relationship will work afterwards. You could even question if the man is in the room or if the woman is imagining what she will say to him. However, I do not find this question of much relevance as the message reaches the audience no matter if the man is “present” in the songs setting or not. When a listener experiences a gap between what is windowed and what is not, a space for interpretation is created. The anonymity of the man and partly of the woman fosters, as already mentioned, a high degree of identification possibilities. A wide range of people and relationships could be imagined. And if the listener is willing to bend gender and other factors of the song the message does not even has to come from a

¹⁷⁰ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 114.

¹⁷¹ Talmy, Leonard: *Toward a Cognitive Semantics, vol. 1: Concept structuring systems*, Cambridge: MIT Press 2000, p. 258.

woman and be said to a man¹⁷² – it could be opposite, it could take place in a homosexual relationship, within relations that are not romantic or contain more than two people. Likewise, the reaction of the addressee and the outcome of the utterances are up to interpretation, too.

Hence, the lyrics present the relationship between a strong, determined, and economically independent woman and a man, who is anonymous, passive, and rather serves as the function of being the other part of the relationship than as a person. The female protagonist wants respect from her partner – a message, which is articulated clearly throughout the song, especially in the break. Thus, the actor in the song with the power of agency is the woman, the goal is to get respect, and she attempts to achieve this by demanding the man to give it to her.

6.2. Form, Harmony, and Instruments

The form of “Respect” is what Christensen and Bach calls a refrain form, simply meaning a form consisting of verses with refrains.¹⁷³ This form was common within the 1950s’ R&B and kept a central position in the 1960s’ soul music. As already presented in the beginning of the analysis, the overall form is as follows:

Intro – A – A’ – A’’ – B (saxophone solo) – A’’’ – C (Break) – Outro

Table 1 illustrates the form more detailed and shows the chords within each section. The track keeps a simple harmony built on only a few simple chord progressions alternating between C, F, and G almost all the way through the song. The plagal connection between C and F is central and is clearly represented in the intro, the refrains, the bridge as well as the outro. The harmonic rhythm is kept simple, too, as the changes always happen at count one in each bar, except in the bridge where each chord is held two bars. The many lowered sevenths added to almost every chord enhances the bluesification of the sound. The only section in which the harmony moves away from the three main chords is the instrumental bridge. Here the harmony goes as follows: F#m⁷ – B – F#m⁷ – G⁷. It is not clear how this is meant to be interpreted within a functional analysis, but a suggestion could be to see it as a secondary cadence in E-major with a ii – V-movement between F#m⁷ and B. G⁷ is used to modulate back to the C-major key while the second F#m⁷ could be interpreted as an unusual and a bit quirky secondary dominant leading to G. F#m⁷ would in this case be seen as a variation of D⁷. This chord, the second F#m⁷, is tricky as it contains a C#, not a C, which would make it a Dmaj⁹ without a tonic. This is not an actual dominant chord, nevertheless, it seems to be the function of the F#m⁷-chord, in this context.

¹⁷² Talmy: *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*, p. 258.

¹⁷³ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 114.

Section	Bars	Phrases	Motifs	Chords
Intro	1–4 (4)			C F C F
A (Verse and refrain)	5–14 (10)	a (verse)	x – y	Verse: G ⁷ F ⁷ G ⁷ F ⁷ Refrain: G ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷
		a' (verse)	x' – y'	
		b (refrain)	x'' – z – r	
		c (tail) (refrain)		
A'	15–24 (10)	a	x – y	Verse: G ⁷ F ⁷ G ⁷ F ⁷ Refrain: G ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷
		a'	x' – y'	
		b	x'' – z – r	
		c (tail)		
A''	25–34 (10)	a	x – y	Verse: G ⁷ F ⁷ G ⁷ F ⁷ Refrain: G ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷
		a'	x' – y'	
		b	x'' – z – r	
		c (tail)		
B (Bridge, saxophone solo)	35–42 (8)			F#m ⁷ F#m ⁷ B B F#m ⁷ F#m ⁷ G ⁷ G ⁷
A'''	43–52 (10)	a	x – y	Verse: G ⁷ F ⁷ G ⁷ F ⁷ Refrain: G ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷
		a'	x' – y'	
		b	x'' – z – r	
		c (tail)		
C (Break)	53–56 (4)	d	s – s	C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷
		d'	s' – s''	
Outro	57–68 (12, fades out)			C ⁷ F ⁷ C ⁷ F ⁷ (repeats until it fades out)

Table 1. The form of "Respect".

Even though the song has a harmonically tricky passage in the bridge, it is not in the harmony that the actual development of the song takes place. In return, the simple harmony leaves a lot of space for improvisation in the melody. It points to the aspect that the meaning of the song is to be found elsewhere in the track – in the text and the overall feeling established by groove, melody, and vocal delivery.

According to Christensen and Bach, the intro, the bridge, and the outro are three central parts of the form within southern soul music.¹⁷⁴ These and the other sections of the song (verses, refrains, and break) are the focus of the following part of the analysis, treated in chronological order.

¹⁷⁴ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 115.

6.2.1. Intro

The 4-bar intro in “Respect” is pivotal for the song and very recognisable. Christensen and Bach points this out as common features of the intro as the refrains in southern soul music often were less singable,¹⁷⁵ which is true for this track, too. The guitar in the intro plays a simple lick consisting of only two pitches, including the lowered seventh (Example 1). The lick is played four times, but in bar 2 and 4 sequenced a fifth down. The style of playing is loose and the exact rhythm is therefore difficult to pin down as it is played a bit imprecisely (this is typical for southern soul and a significant aspect of its feeling) but the rhythmic idea behind it is the same in every repetition. Basically, the rhythm consists of a sixteenth note on the second beat followed by an eighth and a lift to the third beat. Quite a lot of accent is laid on the eighth as well as the lift which creates a contrast to the rest of the arrangement in this intro.



Example 1. Guitar lick in the intro.

The guitar is used to start the track. Simultaneously, the two-bar groove in the rhythm section, which continues throughout the song, is presented. It is not unusual within southern soul that the guitar plays the intro even though more often it would be the horns playing a line.¹⁷⁶ In this case, the trumpets and saxophones carry the harmony. Together with the piano, they form the chord foundation in the intro. This is one of the three main functions of the horn section in southern soul alongside horn lines as well as riffs and accents.¹⁷⁷ But the horns in the intro also plays a significant role in pointing to the genre of soul, as they are widely associated with this and other African American musical styles.

The guitar lick is only presented in the intro. This is unusual for southern soul tracks as the intro often reappears later in the song because of its recognisable characteristic.¹⁷⁸ After this, the guitar plays an insignificant role in the rest of the recording. It more or less vanishes into the overall instrumental sound. But the groove from the intro, as mentioned, continues. Moore writes that it is not unusual for the harmonic pattern from the intro to re-emerge,¹⁷⁹ which it does several times in “Respect”, strengthening the plagal connection established in the intro.

The guitar lick seems to point to the topic of the song. The blue notes, which add a lowered seventh to the chord in each bar, the odd rhythm, and the gliding movement a little third up, produce a feeling of tension.

¹⁷⁵ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 23, 115.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁷⁹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 83.

This hints that something is wrong and foreshadows the dissatisfaction felt by the protagonist. The guitar strings are picked hard, which creates an effect of aggression. The sound of it is muted which can be associated with restrictions.¹⁸⁰ The sound of the guitar lick could therefore be interpreted as symbolising feelings of being trapped, desperation to experience social liberation, and anger – all emotions that could be applied to the protagonist. This adds to the understanding of the woman's experience of the relationship.

6.2.2. Verse and Refrain

Section A is divided into verse (4 bars) and refrain (6 bars) and appears four times in the song. The arrangement in the verses accompanies new lyrics every time while the words often are repeated in the refrain with variations, for example "When you get/come home". In every verse, new aspects of the situation are revealed:

1. "I" have everything what "You" want and need
2. "I" is loyal to her partner
3. "I" shares her money with "You"
4. "You"'s kisses are sweet, which connotes their intimate relationship, but just as sweet, i.e. valuable, is "I"'s own money

The refrains always return to the message of the song, the protagonist's demand for respect. According to Jocelyn Neal, a distinguishing feature of a verse is that it develops the narrative or explores the situation, at least within in country music.¹⁸¹ But this can be applied here too, as exploring in the form of elaboration is the function of the verses in "Respect".

The harmony changing between C, G, and F remains the same through all A sections. The groove is static in the way that it does not change in any significant way throughout the track. As mentioned, the development of the song happens in the top of the arrangement, i.e. the melody and backing vocals. But the groove and the feeling produced by it are crucial to the song as for most soul music. Especially in southern soul, a laid-back feeling associated with both the geographical area of the southern states as well as African American music in general became defining for the style. In "Respect" the groove-creating rhythm section primarily consists of the electrical bass, the drum kit, and the piano. In this way the significant piano play carries a double function as a percussive instrument, which is a part of the general accentuation pattern in the groove as well as a carrier of the harmony. The groove accents the first beat in every bar creating a

¹⁸⁰ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 126.

¹⁸¹ Neal, Jocelyn: "Narrative Paradigms, musical signifiers, and form as function in country music", in *Music Theory Spectrum*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 2007, p. 45.

secure sense of time. Maybe this is done because the rhythmic feeling generally is quite loose, especially in the melody where the first beat only rarely is accentuated. The accent on the first beat in the groove may also play the practical role of making sure that everybody in the band knows exactly where they are rhythmically and temporally despite the laid-back feeling. The drums mark all four beats, with the snare drum on two and four. This is normative not just of soul but of popular music overall. The drummer adds several lifts which produces dynamic, drive, and a resilience in the groove. The relatively loose drum play gives an effect of abandon.

The mainly walking bass, which incorporates eighth notes, is very active and plays a significant role in creating the drive of the groove. A walking bass produces a smooth groove feeling¹⁸² which, however, is partly disturbed by the syncopations in every second bar. They create a tension, an unsettledness, within the overall supple, but significant, groove-feeling. The groove contains no locks, it is constant with a thick density. The density is especially established by the piano which fills out a lot of the “space”, but the activity in the bass contributes to this too. This groove is one of the most obvious differences to Otis Redding’s original version of the song.

Unlike the intro, the horns are not included in the arrangement of the verses but are “saved” for the instrumental bridge and the outro. Some of the instruments can be difficult to distinguish from the overall sound of the arrangement because of the thick density which makes the sound of the individual instruments blend together. This is partly due to the fact that many of the instruments play within the same registers, with the voices lying on top of it. An organ with an unusually thin sound for the genre¹⁸³ is added in the A sections but it plays no significant role in the overall impression of the track. It is mixed so far into the background that it almost disappears. So are the guitars, which, however, in many live recordings are more apparent. The voices are in focus because they are positioned in the front of the mix, pointing to that they are the elements of the song to which attention should be paid.

The biggest difference between the verse and the refrain is the function of the backing vocals. In general, the backing vocals sing when there are room for it in the melody. In the verses, they accent the first beat. As the groove tends to be a bit heavy, the higher pitches of the female voices give the overall sound a dynamic boost, despite their accentuation of the first beat. The “ooh” is not repeated steadily through all four verses but gives a little bit of variation to the arrangement. In the refrain, the backing vocals are much more significant than in the verse as they engage in a call and response with Franklin. This technique and the function of it will be treated in the section about the backing vocals. Here is only to be said that they serve

¹⁸² Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 129.

¹⁸³ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 106.

the track with a great amount of variation and highlight the refrain as an important section. This is primarily due to the easily recognisable and singable lines sung by the backing vocals which are made even more attainable as a sing-along part by repetition, lower pitches than Franklin's, a relatively simple rhythm, and the lack of improvisation. In these ways, the backing vocals contrast the lead.

6.2.3. Instrumental Bridge, Break, and Outro

According to Christensen and Bach, the bridge in southern soul was often used as a substitution for a solo as instrumental solos were not too common within the genre.¹⁸⁴ Instead the horn section could be handed an "arranged" solo. But in "Respect", this is not the case. The saxophonist and band leader King Curtis plays a solo on his tenor saxophone over the groove and the horn section playing pitches in harmony. As already discussed, this is the only part of the track where the harmony moves away from the three main chords and the established key in C-major. It is often seen in popular songs that the bridge constitutes a harmonic contrast to the rest of the song.¹⁸⁵ This together with the saxophone solo creates significant variation in the recording. The soloistic character of the saxophone is manifested through its higher pitches and its break out of the horn section to play an improvised passage instead of the harmonies. The solo can be interpreted as a "visualisation" of the conflict between the two partners and/or of the protagonist's frustration about the situation. This is expressed through a fast change of tones and short note values, the rough sound of the saxophone, the hard attacks, and the gliding in on some of the pitches. The high degree of tension and the roughness in the sound suggest a high level of sexual tension, according to Machin.¹⁸⁶ This does not seem unfitting for the song. The harmonies out of the main key could symbolise that something is wrong. Furthermore, the harmonies contain dissonances and a minor chord, F#m⁷, which are often associated with negative emotions.

The saxophone can be said to carry the function of provenance.¹⁸⁷ This means that the instrument or the sound of it represents or symbolises the origin, or the perceived origin, of the music and thereby creates associations with a specific time, place, or culture. The saxophone engenders associations with jazz, which is perceived as an African American musical style. By using this instrument, especially in a solo where the instrument automatically is in focus, these associations of provenance are highlighted, also when it might not have been done intentionally.

The break (section C) extends over four bars and is thereby one of the shortest sections of the form, the other one being the intro. However, it could be regarded the most important one. Malaway calls this part

¹⁸⁴ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁵ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁶ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 122, 126.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

for the signature section,¹⁸⁸ which makes sense on several levels: it spells out the song title (i.e. the actual signature), it is the section where the message is expressed most clearly, and it is the most recognisable part of the track. The spelling out loud of “respect” becomes a hook and the gimmick. Thus, break, hook, and gimmick are all gathered at the same place in the song

The break consists of four breaks marked on each first beat by all instruments. Within the individual breaks Franklin sings alone without accompaniment which is the most significant reason why the message stands out so clear in this part. This is emphasised by the simple rhythm of loosely sung eighth notes and the plain lyrics. This section is the one standing out the most from the rest of the form. It is mainly due to the abrupt change of density. The rest of the song is, as mentioned, marked by a thick instrumental texture which produces a constant flow without any holes. On this foundation, the breaks have a dramatic effect when the instruments suddenly only play on the first downbeat in every bar and Franklin’s voice unexpectedly stands naked. Form, texture, simple melody, and rhythm stress the message: The protagonist wants respect. And the job of changing the situation lies on the shoulders of her partner.

The outro in “Respect” is what Moore would call a playout, meaning that the music fades out over a repeated sequence.¹⁸⁹ This gives the effect of continuation of the song. The texture re-emerges after the break by the beginning of this section and the dynamic rises. The groove is back and a horn line is added which gives the outro a dynamic lift. A playout is often used to give the lead vocals the possibility to improvise.¹⁹⁰ That applies to this outro too. In the process of Franklin’s improvisation, her wielded pitch range extends to include G5. Thus, the final ambitus of the melody is an octave reaching from G4 to G5. Thus, the melody is very high pitched. The backing vocals constitute the primary countermeasure to the lead, like in the refrains. In the outro, they have more space and it seems like they play a little with their lines (not to be misunderstood, the backing vocals are fully arranged, but the lines seem more playful and looser). It appears through Franklin’s the improvisation as if the emotions, not least the frustration, of the protagonist get a free run. Now, when she has said what she wanted and made her message clear, she does not have to keep her emotions under control. The emotional outburst emphasises the necessity and urgency of her demand by showing how deeply she feels it. This is, among other things, expressed by the higher notes sung by Franklin with a mixed upper chest voice giving it power. In a later section of the analysis, Franklin’s voice will be examined further.

¹⁸⁸ Malaway, Victoria: “‘Find Out What It Means to Me’: Aretha Franklin’s Gendered Re-Authoring of Otis Redding’s ‘Respect’”, in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2014, p. 193.

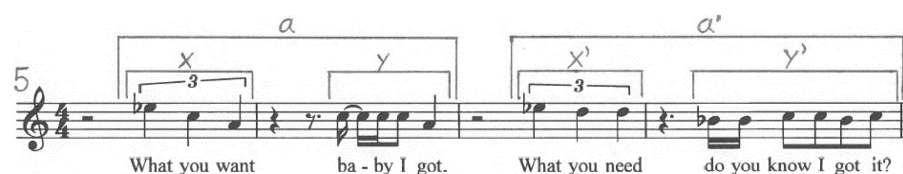
¹⁸⁹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 83.

¹⁹⁰ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 115.

6.3. Melody

The melody in “Respect” is in the dorian modus which, with the incorporation of the blue notes *Bb* and *Eb*, contrasts the harmony in C-major. This is a significant factor in creating the bluesy feeling in the song. The tones C and A (the first and sixth note of the key) connect the melody to the key (the fifth note is only used once and therefore do not serve this function which is common for it),¹⁹¹ while the lowered seventh and third constantly pull the melody away from the comfortable main key. This points to the need for change which the lyrics proclaim – if the main key in major symbolises the home, then this home is not quite as it should be.

Section A of the form can be divided into the phrases a (two bars), a' (two bars), and b (three bars) plus a following “tail”, which extends over the last three bars of A and can be called c, even though it cannot be described as an actual phrase (Example 2 and 3). Based on the first verse, a and a' both start with a descending movement (motif x) and end more circulating (motif y). Phrase b begins with a variation of motif x too, while the second part of the phrase consists of two motifs (motif z and r). Looking at z and r as a whole, the passage can be characterised as circulating. But the tones and words after “respect”, i.e. motif r, are partly drowned out by the choir and seem less important because of the way the sound is mixed. Motif z moves stepwise up from A4 to C5 on which “(re-)spect” is sung and the phrase peaks. This gives the word extra weight. This is enhanced by the fact that “-spect” is sung on the accentuated first beat of the bar which is the first time in the song that a part of the melody is sung on a first count. The C5 occurs again on the second beat, i.e. the first tone of motif r, but this is not perceived as a peak because the beat is less accentuated, and the choir is dominating the sound image at this point. Phrase c is, as mentioned, not really a phrase but seems more like improvisation or a tail to phrase b instead of an independent melody line. The backing vocals seem to carry the melody at this point. All phrases are varied throughout the song, but section A is in this analysis taken as the prototype and starting point for the variations in the other verses.



Example 2. Phrase a and a' in the verse.



Example 3. Phrase b and c in the refrain.

¹⁹¹ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 107, 111.

The melody in A consists of several descending lines which in many cases would hint to a more sad, melancholic theme than what is presented in “Respect”. However, the descending lines seem to have more to do with the song as a proclamation. When you want to have someone’s attention it seems natural to raise the volume of the voice and talk or shout in a higher pitch than normally. This is what Franklin does. She calls out to get people’s attention, which she wants right from the start, by starting on the highest note of the whole melody, the *Eb5*. When you start on the highest pitch, you obviously cannot go higher (although Franklin do reach *G5* twice on “Ooh” in the outro, but this seems more like improvisation than an actual part of the melody). This can have a surprising, even chocking, effect. The significance of these descending lines can be explored by using Philip Tagg’s method *hypothetical substitution*.¹⁹² When converting a part of a melody, the effect of the original one is sometimes more easily understood as the converted version will produce a different effect – often what could be described as the opposite one. In the case of motif x, the melody line can be created as an ascending variant (Example 4). This prepares the listener for the (potential) emergence of a high note. The surprise is removed, and the effect seems less insisting and the message less urgent. This form seems to lay the ground for a dialogue which goes against the intention of the song – it demands, it does not discuss. This is illustrated in the descending lines starting on the highest point.



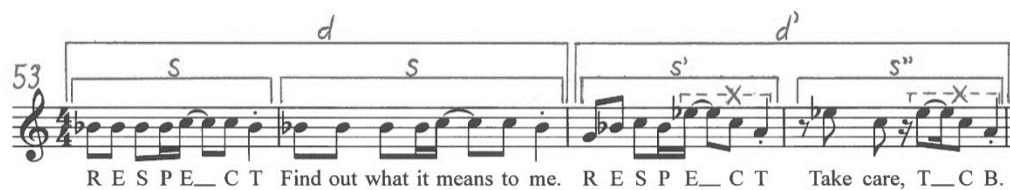
Example 4. Hypothetical substitution of motif x.

The break, in which respect is spelled out, is built of two phrases, d and d’ (Example 5). Each consists of two lines expanding over one bar. Phrase d is made of a repeated line of seven syllables. It contains only two tones, *Bb4* and *C5*, and is sung in an eighth note rhythm (motif s). The repetition of the line and the individual tones creates an effect of steadiness and certainty, emphasising the message and the confidence with which it is delivered. Franklin appears as if she is sure about her case. She proclaims her demand for respect without hesitating. In d’, motif s is varied. The rhythm is the same in s’, but the tone span is extended and forms a curve starting on the lowest note of the whole melody *G4*, rising to the high *Eb5*, and ending on A. That both the highest and the lowest note of the melody are incorporated may signalise the importance that the message has for the protagonist. But this line also seems slightly more desperate than the melody up to this point. In motif s’’, not only the tones are different from s, the first and the fourth eighth notes are removed so only five syllables are left. This time the variation starts on *Eb*, rises to it a second time and descends to A. The last three pitches in s’ and s’’ are the same as in motif x, the melodic

¹⁹² Tagg, Philip: “Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method, and Practice” (1982), in Richard Middleton (ed.): *Reading Pop: Approaches to Textural Analysis in Popular Music*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000, p. 85–86.

“proclamation” from the verse. It produces a circular melodic form where the end, phrase d’, reaches back to the beginning of the song. This also establishes a melodic contrast to phrase d which stubbornly sticks to its two notes. Metaphorically, the break could illustrate the protagonist’s break free from the social ties represented through the rigidity of d, while d’ symbolises desired or actual freedom.

In general, the song consists of several short melody lines with short attacks and delays.¹⁹³ These phrasings seem to signalise the urgency of the protagonist’s message. The short attacks bring a lot of energy into the recording. Especially the descending phrases starting on *Eb5* seem like energy outbursts. Even though the energy level decreases through many of the phrases, as they are starting on the highest level, the energy always returns. The energy expressed in the song has a lot to do with Franklin’s vocal performance, too. The repetitions of the lowered third, in the beginning of the phrases seem to confirm that there is a problem. The melody does not at any point rise to the major third which often is associated with happiness and positive feelings. The lowered seventh on *Bb* reinforces the troubled feeling. The spelling out of respect and the following lines in the break seem like energetic outbursts, too, as every letter and syllable



Example 5. Phrase d and d’ in the break.

are accented. This together with the contrast between first, the very little melodic movement and thereafter, the wide tone span creates an intensity and a sense of confidence which points to the authority of the protagonist.

6.4. Aretha Franklin’s Vocal Delivery

According to Moore, the sound of an artist is one of his/her primary sources to subjectivity.¹⁹⁴ No actual methodology has been developed to analyse this sound, among other things, because the lyrics have been considered as more important. Simon Frith states that “[i]t is through the voice that star personalities are constructed [...] The tone of the voice is more important in this context than the actual articulation of particular lyrics”.¹⁹⁵ This highlights the importance of examining the vocal delivery in a detailed analysis of a song.

¹⁹³ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 111.

¹⁹⁴ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 101.

¹⁹⁵ Frith, Simon: “Towards an aesthetic of popular music”, in Richard Leppert and Susan McClary (eds.): *Music and Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987, p. 145.

Aretha Franklin delivers a powerful vocal performance at the recording of “Respect”. Her singing style is inspired by gospel, which is audible in her vocal techniques of belting, the free phrasings, and the great use of pitches in between the tones defined in the Western tone system. Her style is improvised, which is typical for southern soul singers. This is obvious when looking at the variations of the melody in the four A-sections. Furthermore, she sings with what seems to be a high degree of identification with the song and its lyrics because of the emotional involvement heard in the voice.

Moore lines out four aspects to consider in the examining of a vocal performance: *register*, *resonance cavity*, *heard attitude towards rhythm*, and *heard attitude towards pitch*.¹⁹⁶ On “Respect”, Franklin sings in a high *register*, which can connote virtuosity as well as physical effort. She seems to reach the high pitches easily, and the effort appears to regard the act of bringing out a message more than to be of a physical character. Despite the high register, she mixes her upper chest voice with her head voice from C5 and above. When using belting technique, Franklin was able to do this all the way up to D6 and thereby to keep a relatively big *cavity for resonance* on the high pitches. This was characteristic for her way of singing. Barb Jungr describes belting as a “full-throttle sound”,¹⁹⁷ which conveys power. The integration of the chest voice gives the sound a richer quality, producing the effect of weight, seriousness, and power. This, for example, applies to the break where Franklin almost exclusively uses her chest voice. Additionally, it causes a sense of presence in the moment.¹⁹⁸ Franklin engages a quite high degree of nasality while singing, especially in the middle registers. In many cases, nasality can give the effect of distance, stylisation, and contemptuousness.¹⁹⁹ But, as Marquese Carter explains in his article “Aretha Franklin: Paragon of Vocal Technique”, the way Franklin and many other soul- and gospel artists use nasality produces an effect different from that. Referring to a study from 2018 showing that a proper amount of nasality can increase the resonance in the middle registers,²⁰⁰ he outlines the effects of nasality in Franklin’s singing voice: “Aretha Franklin exhibited a fair amount of nasality throughout her expansive range. Nasality added a visceral, earthy quality to her upper range belt. In her middle to low range, though, the use of nasality gives her an acoustical boost while lowering vocal load.”²⁰¹ The nasality and the use of the chest voice gave Franklin’s voice fullness on the high pitches and essentially produced the powerful expression she was able

¹⁹⁶ Moore: op. cit., p. 102–103.

¹⁹⁷ Jungr, Barb: “Vocal expression in the blues and gospel”, in Allan F. Moore (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002, p. 107.

¹⁹⁸ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 102.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Gill, B. P., Lee, J., Lã, F. M. B., and Sundberg, J.: “Spectrum Effects of a Velopharyngeal Opening in Singing”, in: *Journal of Voice*, 2018, <<https://www.sciencedirect-com.uaccess.univie.ac.at/science/article/pii/S0892199718304466>>, last visited: 01.04. 2019.

²⁰¹ Carter, Marquese: “Aretha Franklin: Paragon of Vocal Technique”, 2018, <<https://medium.com/@marqueseccarter/aretha-franklin-paragon-of-vocal-technique-8e323f0155bb>>, last visited: 25.02.2019.

to engender in all registers. Additionally, it could provide her high registers with a sense of groundedness which supports the seriousness of the topic in “Respect” and makes the demand for respect seem reasonable.

The *heard attitude towards the rhythm* is that of unboundedness. The lines of the lead melody never start on the first beat, except in the break. Franklin’s entrance on the beats are imprecise and it often lies a little ahead of the actual count. This can for example be heard on the first word of the song, “What” (0:09). This creates an unsettling feeling of urgency and gives the impression that Franklin refuses to restrain herself to the established rhythm.²⁰² This can be interpreted as a rebellion against social norms, symbolised by the 4/4-time signature, and it relates the song to the soul genre’s roots in blues and gospel. Blues is often characterised by a strong rhythm in the instruments, while the words are rarely placed directly on the beats. According to Tagg, blues singers can express their attitudes towards regulation of time as well as the social context through the music. The bass instruments create the normative time of the song, the pulse, against which the lead vocalist can creatively locate him- or herself by using syncopations.²⁰³ The lead singer seems to sing in his or her own time and does not obey to the rhythmic accents of the music. In that way they can express trouble and unwillingness to conform.²⁰⁴ The same impression is created by Franklin’s way of singing freely over the rhythm. The protagonist in the song wants to place herself differently in her social world by demanding to receive the amount of respect she feels that she deserves. Franklin’s rhythmic performance can thereby be interpreted as an illustration of the fight against social norms. Once again, the break is an exception, as Franklin here sings much more precisely on the beats than in the rest of “Respect”. This improves the effect of resolution. The rhythm sung by Franklin is not as if the words had been spoken in a normal pace. This means that the linguistic syntax is destroyed by the way Franklin sings.²⁰⁵ The free way a singer creatively can respond to a beat is called ‘sanctified speech’. This term was applied to the technique in the middle of the 20th century and points to its connection with gospel singing.²⁰⁶

The *heard attitude towards pitch* is equally free to the one towards rhythm. Franklin does not sing directly on the notes, in fact she often seems to sing right in between two tones. This explains why transcriptions of the song into sheet music often are somewhat different. It creates a similar effect as the rhythmically expressed attitude does. The protagonist refuses to act within established social frames.

²⁰² Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 128, 130.

²⁰³ Tagg, Philip: “Understanding Musical Time Sense. Concepts, Sketches and Consequences”, in *Tvärspel – 31 Artiklar om Musik. Festskrift för Jan Ling (50 år)*, Göteborg: Skrifter från Musikvetenskapliga Institutionen 1984, p. 31–32.

²⁰⁴ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 130.

²⁰⁵ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 103.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Franklin's voice is in the front of the mix. The volume is high, the timbre is sharp, and the voice nears shouting. The shouting quality connotes passion, a high level of energy, and emotional outburst. This affects the perceived mental state of the performer. Franklin seems to have had enough. According to Machin is volume associated with personal expression.²⁰⁷ This seems to fit with the lyrics in which the protagonist expresses her opinion and needs. Additionally, a high volume connotes power because it challenges the socio-acoustic order.²⁰⁸ It conquers lots of space and the delivery of a high volume requires physical power. The act can seem provoking, unless you have a high status which makes it alright to take up space.²⁰⁹ This, however, does not appear to be the case in "Respect". Van Leeuwen has theorised the social distance connoted by a voice's volume and quality. A soft, low voice indicates intimacy and physical as well as relational closeness, while a loud, sharp voice points to the opposite.²¹⁰ Franklin's voice appears to illustrate a social gap between the protagonist and her partner. It seems like the protagonist literally has to call out her partner to make him listen and understand. The lack of intimacy supports the sense of conflict. The distance further suggested by the lack of breathiness. We do not hear any of the small sounds combined with breath that are audible when a person stands close to you. According to Tagg, shouting in a high pitch is done to make oneself understood and to express oneself as an individual.²¹¹ Hearing the lyrics and the demanding way it is performed on the track, it seems very likely that this is what Franklin wishes to do.

The voice has not been added reverb or echo. This confirms that the distance may be a social rather than a physical one. Reverb and echo can create associations with loneliness and isolation. The lack of the two may therefore hint that the protagonist does not stand alone with her demand for respect. She expresses what other people feel too. Furthermore, she is not afraid of leaving her partner and thereby become single ("Or you might walk in / And find out I'm gone"). It is thereby not evaluated as something negative to be alone. The use of reverb can indicate sacredness or a feeling of spirituality.²¹² Oppositely, the lack of it points to a more ordinary, everyday-like situation which coincide with the setting of the home and gives the impression that the message is relevant for ordinary people.

Franklin's voice is tensioned, and the timbre is mostly quite dense. According to Machin, tension in a voice can create the impression of no emotional lingering and a lack of space for considerations.²¹³ Franklin's

²⁰⁷ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 117.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 116.

²⁰⁹ van Leeuwen, Theo: *Speech, Music, Sound*, London: Macmillan Press 1999, p. 133.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Tagg, Philip: "Reading Sounds: An Essay on Sounds, Music, Knowledge, Rock and Society", in *Records Quarterly*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1990, p. 4–11, <<http://www.tagg.org/articles/readsound.html>>, last visited: 18.06.2019.

²¹² Machin: op. cit., p. 125.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 122.

vocal delivery produces the sense of her being in control of her feelings even though she is in an agitated state of mind. The tension shows the intensity of the situation and shuts out possibilities for discussions of the topic. The few places in the song where her voice is less tensioned appear mostly where something positive about the relationship is uttered, for instance on “honey” in the third and fourth verse. At other points, the more relaxed voice creates a sense of fatigue, as if the current situation exhausts her, for example on “money” in the third verse and “keep on trying” in the outro.

The voice is characterised by a high degree of raspiness in most of the song, meaning that the voice contains “noise”. This makes the timbre of the tones sound less pure. It can be associated with aggression and make the voice and the persona appear worn.²¹⁴ Both fit the impression of the performer’s emotional state with “worn”, illustrating her tiredness of the situation. Even though the sound is not pure, the emotions expressed with them can still be perceived as so. They are presented in a form where agitation is not oppressed and tension is audible. This, according to Machin, can be perceived by the listener as authenticity because the sensed emotions make the singer seem genuine.²¹⁵

The emotionality in the song is emphasised by small breaks in the voice which occur on, for example, “need” in the first verse and “come home” in the first refrain, bar 11. They seem like small give ins to her emotions and exertion despite her high level of control. The imperfect impression created by the vocal breaks can make the performer appear more ordinary and human and, thereby, her problems more relevant to the common listener. Only in the break of the song, where the message is belted out with confidence, the voice is completely steady and performs no breaks or other signs of insecurities or exhaustion.

Franklin often used vibrato in her singing style, also in “Respect”. Vibrato suggests emotional identification and points to her inspiration and schooling within gospel music. It creates variation in the vocal delivery. But every time the demand for respect in the lyrics is sung in the refrains and the break vibrato is avoided. This enhances the impression of stability. Melisma are included in the performance too, though not excessively. They are mostly found in the improvised outro where Franklin shows of her virtuoso abilities. The otherwise minimal employment of it seems to underline the idea of security. An extended use of melisma could disturb the sense of coming straight to the point.

Generally, Franklin’s vocal performance contains a lot of variation, both in the sense of improvisation over rhythm and melody and in the use of vocal techniques including vibrato, vocal breaks, melisma, etc. Her voice is characterised by belting, use of chest voice in all registers, and nasality. The voice is used to convey

²¹⁴ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 122.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

an expression appropriate for the message of the song, which is central to all performances.²¹⁶ The overall effect of the vocal delivery supports the idea of a strong, powerful woman who is emotionally involved in the message of the song. The expression is simultaneously demanding as well as frustrated. The heard emotionality and involvement communicate authenticity to the listener which is important for us to perceive the performer and the message as genuine. Additionally, the “imperfections” of the voice like raspiness and breaks make the performer seem like an ordinary person, whom it is easier to identify with for most listeners.

6.5. Backing Vocals as Supportive Unity

Backing vocals were frequently used at Atlantic Records, especially on the recordings by Aretha Franklin who mostly arranged them herself. Sung by two of Franklin’s sisters, Erma and Carolyn Franklin, the backing vocals hold a significant position in “Respect”. Like in many other of Franklin’s works, they are used a lot and take up space in the front of the sound image. This is very defining for her music from that period, especially because backing vocals rarely were as prominent as horns within southern soul.²¹⁷ They play an independent role in the song. Horns and backing vocals often constituted the same function in a song as countermeasure to the lead vocals.²¹⁸ Because of this, horns would often occupy the space where background singers otherwise could have been used. In “Respect”, however, the backing vocals are more present than the horns and do not share their functions with them as the vocals are used in a melody-like way.

The backing vocals assist in making the top of the arrangement vivid and varied, especially in the refrain and the outro. The singers primarily use their chest voice, and the voices lie with the interval of a third apart all the way through the song. This was typical for Franklin’s arrangements of backing vocals.²¹⁹ The choir mostly sings where the melody leaves space for it. That said, Franklin does give them a lot of space because of her short phrasings and delays. They even take over what seems to be the melody function in the last three bars of the refrains and in the outro where Franklin improvises. In these sections, call and response creates a dynamic ping-pong effect between lead and backing vocals, which is typical for this technique. The responses in the refrains are arranged like a horn riff with auxiliary notes and they follow the change of chords. The lines sung by the choir, especially those in the outro, set the lead vocals free to improvise while the backing vocals perform a singable melody line with simpler rhythms and lower pitches. The arrangement of the choir changes between the commenting function, where call and response is used, and

²¹⁶ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 107.

²¹⁷ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 84.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 75.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

the accompanying role in the verses. In the accompanying part, the background voices work rhythmically as they mark the first beat in the bars with an “Ooh”. Christensen and Bach describe the backing vocals as very creative in the way they comment on the lyrics.²²⁰ This is especially true for the outro where they do not just repeat what has been sung in the lead, they get their own lyrics. “Respect” was often used by Franklin as the last piece in her concerts which made the outro the last part of the whole performance. The outro could be dragged out as long as she wanted, showing off her improvisational skills. This is one of the big differences between the live and the studio versions of the song. In the 1967 track, Franklin’s improvisation is “tamed” to fit to the radio version of the song.

The call and response techniques derive from gospel, and Franklin became known for using this in her recordings and performances. It constructs a dynamic between the lead and the backing vocals (or horns, in other cases), and it creates associations to community and unity. This effect is enhanced in “Respect” by the backing voices being in harmony.²²¹ It fosters the impression that the choir supports Franklin and her perceived project. The constantly close pitches signalise agreement and steadiness in the support. They produce a sense of solidarity – they stand firm behind her. The role as supporters is further illustrated in the lower degree of tension in the backing vocals, especially in the deepest one, which make them seem less emotionally involved. They come forth as more relaxed, but the softer voices also suggest intimacy and confidentiality,²²² which can be interpreted as relating to the lead singer as well as the audience. Additionally, the deeper pitches sung by them (they lie below the melody throughout the song) offer more gravity and earnestness to the vocal arrangement. On the basic level, it is the women who supports the protagonist in her conflict with her partner. Viewed more broadly, it could be interpreted as any group of people supporting one or more individuals in demanding respect from someone or more with a higher status in society.

It is normal that there is a clear hierarchy between lead singer and backing vocals like in “Respect”. However, the backing vocals occupy a quite prominent position in this track. They are placed in the front of the mix, sometimes even further in front than Franklin’s voice when they perform the melody function. The timbre of the backing vocals is less sharp and the volume is lower which together with its position in the mix makes them appear physically closer to the listener. The “Ooh”s in the verses are quite airy, and natural sounds like breath are better heard from the choir than the lead which implies closeness, too.²²³ This points to Franklin as the one who wants to call out people, including the listeners, while the backing vocals connote a collective which the audience can feel like they are a part of. This sense of a unity standing

²²⁰ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 80.

²²¹ van Leeuwen: *Speech, Music, Sound*, p. 84, 206.

²²² Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 125.

²²³ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

behind the performer and in which the audience is invited to participate in is supported by the lines sung by the choir that are way more sing-along friendly than the melody of the lead singer. This connotes the culture of solidarity between African Americans in the time of the Civil Rights Movement as well as “Black sisters”. The listener gets a chance to feel a part of a group. The use of the backing vocals implies inclusion. The listener has the possibility to identify her- or himself with the front person shouting out the message or to occupy a “safer” position in the crowd backing up the course.

The analysis shows that the femininity represented in “Respect” is specified in the lyrics as a strong, independent woman, and the musical arrangement further emphasises this idea, for instance, by creating the impression of a proclamation. The vocal delivery constructs a feeling of emotionality as well as of unwillingness to conform to norms, which applies to the perceived femininity and underlines the message of the song. The backing vocals appear to form an individual unity that seems to back up the performer’s intention, who thereby comes forth as a front figure as well as a community member.

7. Analysis of “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman”

Aretha Franklin released the song “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman” in 1967 as a single and later on the album *Lady Soul*, as already presented in the introduction. It was written by Gerry Goffin and Carole King and credits are given to Jerry Wexler, too, who asked the songwriter couple to compose a song for Franklin under the title “Natural Woman”. It became one of Franklin’s biggest hits to date reaching number 8 on Billboard’s Hot 100-chart and number 2 on the R&B-chart.

The track is a ballade with a typical slow tempo in the time signature 6/8. It is played in shuffle beat with an underlying sixteenth-note triplet subdivision which, however, was more common in the 1950s than the 1960s.²²⁴ The key is C-major and the instrumentation consists of bass, drums, piano, strings, and a brass section as well as lead and backing vocals. A certain disagreement about the actual time signature exists in the literature and transcriptions of the song. In most printed versions, the time signature is notated as 3/4 which makes the melody easier to read. However, Christensen and Bach wrote it as 6/8 in “Soul: Stilanalyser og idéer til arrangement i southern soul stilen”.²²⁵ I choose to interpret it as a 6/8-time signature in my analysis, too, for the following reason: It is typical for the time signature 6/8 that the bass drum accents the first beat while the snare drum accents the fourth. This is the well-known drum pattern where the bass drum marks the main accent and the snare drum the secondary. This fits the pattern in “A Natural Woman” when it is played in 6/8. On the contrary, if the song was played in a 3/4-beat, the bass drum would only mark every second first beats and the snare drum the rest. The piano, which emphasises the tripartite time signature with arpeggios, often marks the first count quite strong in opposite to the fourth beat. Despite these observations, the fourth beat is accented quite heavy in the overall sound picture and the song’s time signature could therefore be interpreted as 3/4. But I let Christensen and Bach’s understanding of it as 6/8 support my decision of using 6/8 as basis for the analysis.

The overall form of the record is AAB. On a lower level, the song can be divided into the following sections:

Anacrusis – A – B – C – A – B – C – D – C – C... (fades out)

Section A functions as verse, B as pre-chorus, C as chorus, and D as bridge.

Like the prior analysis of “Respect”, this one will on the succeeding pages examine the lyrics, form and harmonics, the functions of the individual instruments, melody, the vocal delivery as well as the use and effects of the backing vocals.

²²⁴ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 28.

²²⁵ Ibid.

7.1. Lyrics

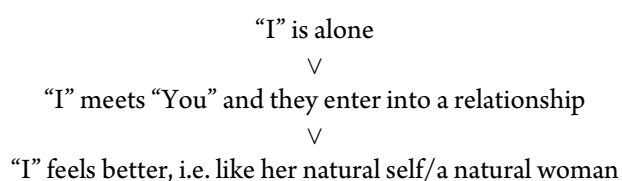
The lyrics of “A Natural Woman” describe a relationship between a woman (“I”) and her partner (“You”), who has a positive influence on the woman’s feeling about herself. Table 2 below summarises the content of the lyrics in each section of the song.

Section	Content
Verse 1	A look back on the time before “I” met “You”, a period marked by discouragement and lack of inspiration in life
Pre-chorus 1	“You” is presented as the turning point in “I”’s life. Life was hard before she met him, but now “You” gives “I” peace of mind
Chorus	The point of the song is presented: “You” makes the protagonist feel like a natural woman, i.e. like herself
Verse 2	What “You” means for “I”. He has helped her realise things about herself
Pre-chorus 2	The doubt in her life is gone. To make “You” happy is what makes sense for “I”
Chorus	(repetition)
Bridge	What “You” does is to make “I” feel good and feel alive, and “I” wants to be together with “You”
Choruses until faded out	(repetition)

Table 2. The lyrical content of “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman”.

The point of the song, as summarised in the chorus, is that the “You” makes the protagonist feel like a natural woman. The meaning of the concept ‘natural’ will be discussed later in the chapter. Here will only be pointed out that the word in the song is connected solely with positive formulations – to have “peace of mind” (pre-chorus 1, l. 1), to feel “good inside” (bridge, l. 2), to feel “alive” (bridge, l. 4), and to realise important things about oneself (verse 2, l. 3-4).

Following Machin’s procedure, an activity schema of the lyrics could look like this:²²⁶



The schema illustrates that even though the song is about a relationship between two people, in its essence it is about a woman’s changing relationship to herself. This exemplifies Machin’s point that sometimes the core meaning of a song can be hidden by other details in the lyrics. By reducing the plot to its simplest level of activity, sometimes a surprising meaning of the song can be exposed.²²⁷ Through the analysis, it will be shown that the protagonist’s relationship to herself in many ways is supported as the core meaning of the

²²⁶ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 80–84.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 77–78.

song. This, though, is not to undermine the importance of “You”, but his function is rather that of the means than of the end. Using Halliday’s terms, feeling like a “natural woman” is the goal, whereas “You” is the process.²²⁸ This suggests that the song is more about exploration of the personas individuality than the interpersonal relationship between the characters, both normative themes within popular songs.²²⁹

There are only two participants in the song, “I” and “You”. The lyrics do not say anything specific about “I”’s physical features, except that she is a woman, but her emotions are described thoroughly. We as listeners have access to her mind. This is achieved through the lyrics’ construction as a monologue. There is a clear ‘before’ and ‘after’ “You” who temporarily marks the changing point in “I”’s life. Before “You”, “I” describes herself as “uninspired” and “tired” (verse 1, l. 2 and 4). She felt that her life was “unkind” (pre-chorus, l. 2), that she was lost, maybe forgotten and of no significance (“soul was in the lost-and-found”, verse 2, l. 1), and she had the feeling that something was “wrong” with her (verse 2, l. 3). The weather, “morning rain”, reflects her blue mood. All in all, the protagonist was unhappy and did not feel well about herself until she met “You”. The woman delineated after the turning point of getting to know “You” is almost the exact opposite to the one before. Now she has got “peace of mind” (pre-chorus, l. 3), the doubts about her life have left her (pre-chorus, l. 2), she feels “good inside”, “alive” (bridge, l. 2 and 4), and, most importantly, like “a natural woman” (chorus, l. 3). Thus, a significant change from a negative to a positive self-feeling has taken place.

“You”, the addressee, is barely described. The only nouns attached to this figure are “baby” and “key to peace of mind”, which does not say anything specific about the person only that “You” seems to have a positive effect on “I”. The word “baby” connotes that an intimate relationship exists between the two participants. “You”’s role is generic as the figure is completely anonymous. Actually, there is nothing specific in the lyrics that links “You” to a gender. The only aspect labelling “You” as a man is the fact that “I” is described as a woman. As heteronormativity is normative within soul music and was it in the 1960s’ society, it appears natural to suppose that “You” is a man. This is supported by knowledge of Franklin as heterosexual, which have an effect on our perception of the song as Franklin performs it, even though she did not write the lyrics. Yet, her performance rather than the writers intention is what we as listeners experience when hearing the song. In the discussion, it will be considered further how Franklin’s gender through her musical persona has a meaning for the listener’s understanding of the recording. Nevertheless, the gender of “You” is, as I see it, less important to the message of the song. Like in “Respect”, “A Natural Woman” is about a relationship, but the person addressed is unnamed. “You” therefore represents a kind of relationship rather than a specific person (or gender). In this case, it is a relationship described as positive

²²⁸ Halliday: *Halliday’s Introduction*, p. 76.

²²⁹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 109.

and rewarding. The anonymity of the addressee creates an opportunity for the performer to tell a story about him- or herself.²³⁰ In “A Natural Woman”, it is about the change of the “I”’s state of mind.

It is typical for love songs to address a person in the second person singular.²³¹ Regarding Durant’s four ways that a “You” can be addressed, in “A Natural Woman” it is clear that “You” is meant as one single individual. But, as outlined above, “You” is not specified in other ways than that he/she is in a relationship with the protagonist. This makes it possible for the listener to insert any person found suitable at “You”’s place if the listener engages in the imaginary position of the singer.²³²

Van Leeuwen’s list of linguistic representations helps to clarify the differences in the descriptions of “I” and “You” even more.²³³ “I” is *personalised*, meaning we get access to her history, thoughts and emotions. She is, however, not *specified* with any outer descriptions, a name, or a function, other than her gender. But because of our detailed knowledge of her inner activities, she cannot be classified as *anonymise*. “You”, on the other hand, is *impersonalised* and *anonymise*. We have no information about his inner activities. He is *unnamed* and represented as the *function* of being the other part of the relationship. They are both *individualised* as they are described as single persons – it is clear that “You” is not meant to be in plural. Both of them are not *aggregated*. “You” is at one point *objectified* as a kiss (verse 2, l. 4). This objectification underlines the intimate relationship between the characters and emphasises the idea that he is a tool rather than the actual goal in the lyrics. What he does is more important than who he is. With Talmy’s concept of *windowing of attention*,²³⁴ the lyrics window to “I”’s emotional state whereas “You”, concrete aspects of their relationship or of the surrounding conditions are out of focus.

Machin and Thornborrow claim in their article “Branding and Discourse: The Case of *Cosmopolitan*”, that the woman in romantic fiction often is the one who performs most activities. However, these activities are mostly what they call trivial, like waiting, longing, hoping, etc.²³⁵ Meanwhile the man is handling material matters. This division of activity types is confirmed in “A Natural Woman”. The verbs connected to “I” are “looking”, “feel”, “knew”, “met”, “(didn’t) know”, “am”, “make”, “don’t”, and “living”. This row is dominated by existential conditions (am, living) and activities taking place only on an inner level (feel, knew), i.e. mental processes.²³⁶ The verbs linked to “You” describe action in the outer world (except for

²³⁰ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 86.

²³¹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 117.

²³² Durant, Alan: *Conditions of Music*, London: Macmillan 1984, p. 204.

²³³ van Leeuwen: *The Representation of Social Actors*, p. 46–61.

²³⁴ Talmy: *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*, p. 258.

²³⁵ Machin, David, and Thornborrow, Joanna: “Branding and Discourse: The Case of *Cosmopolitan*”, in *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 2003, p. 455.

²³⁶ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 96.

“am”), namely “make”, “came to claim”, “helped”²³⁷, and “done”. These lists of verbs suggest that the woman is primarily passive in the material world whereas the man is active. This confirms prejudices about men and women. Even in the one sentence where the verb “make” is linked to “I”, it is about feelings and not physical aspects (“And if I make you happy I don’t need to do more”). But oppositely to the man, “I” is portrayed as self-reflexive. Her actions hand us access to her mental state, the focal point of the song. Additionally, her actions are specified and, as opposed to this, those of the man are abstract.²³⁸ We know what “I” feels, what she looks at, and what she knows (verse 1, l. 1 and 3), but nothing tells us what the man does exactly, when he helps her or makes her feel.

Concerning the setting of the lyrics, there are only a few hints pointing to a certain location where the plot could take place. The lyrics contain three comments on this. The first one is in the first line of the song – “Looking out on the morning rain”. “Looking out” implies that the protagonist is inside. Combined with the word “morning”, it suggests that she is likely to be at home. On the contrary, the two other comments on place have nothing to do with where the characters may be in the physical world. Instead, they concern her emotional state – “You make me feel so good *inside*” (bridge, l. 2) and “in the lost-and-found” (v. 2, l. 1). With “Looking out” as the only marker of a kind of physical setting, which maybe is at home, the plot could in fact take place anywhere. However, the intimate theme of the song points to a location within the private sphere, which implies the home, too.

The marking of time is not much more specific than the place. Formulations like “morning”, “another day”, and “before the day I met you” help to narrate the story and place events within the protagonist’s life, but they do not place the plot within a specific period, year, or season. The day or the morning could be any day or morning. Events in “I”’s life are temporally organised in relation to each other (“*When* my soul was in the lost-and-found”, “*till* your kiss helped me name it”, “*Now* I’m no longer doubtful”), but they do not give us information about the historical time. According to Machin, no temporal placing creates an effect of agelessness.²³⁹ This can be applied to “A Natural Woman”. As mentioned, there is an obvious ‘before’ and ‘after’ the meeting with “You”, but the sequence of events could be happening at any time, like the location could be (almost) anywhere. The lack of a fixed setting mainly serves two functions. First of all, it creates a sense that the new inner state of the protagonist will last as it is not bound to time and place. She carries it with her wherever she goes, though, it might be bound to “You”’s presence in her life. Secondly, it is a significant aspect in making the song relevant to people of different times and places. This is confirmed by

²³⁷ As we have already classified “kiss” as being an objectification of “You”, I take the liberty of regarding the verb in the line “till your kiss helped me name it” as connected to the partner.

²³⁸ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 88–89.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

the fact that the song reached the single chart in the UK for the first time in 2018 after Franklin's death – 51 years after its release on another continent.

To classify "A Natural Woman" as one of Middleton's three norm poles *affect*, *story*, or *gesture*²⁴⁰ is problematic because the song applies to both affect and story. Story is present because the "I" acts like a narrator telling about her life within a timeline with a 'before' and 'after'. At the same time, the lyrics are linked to the affect pole through the focus on feelings and inner states, which is stressed in the chorus. As mentioned in the analysis of "Respect", in songs within the affect category, words are commonly used as expressions and there is a tendency that they merge with the melody. Additionally, the voice is used in a singing rather than talking way. These three aspects are pronounced in the chorus of "A Natural Woman". Common for songs characterised as stories is that the words describe a narrative and that they tend to regulate the rhythmic and harmonic flow. Furthermore, the use of the voice is more speech-like. The vocal delivery in the verse is a bit more speech-like than in the chorus. The pitch range is lower, and the rhythm is more as if it was spoken. But the voice is quite conformed to the rhythm established by the instruments and does not regulate neither the rhythmic nor the harmonic flow. Overall, the song is characterised by affect, while the story-aspects are implemented through the actual narrative told in the lyrics.

According to Moore, a main aspect, which can divide all song lyrics into two overall categories, is if a change is happening within the song. Hence the question is raised, if the lyrics are static or if something or someone is undergoing a change.²⁴¹ In the case of "A Natural Woman", a change has happened prior to the song. The protagonist has undergone a personal, inner transformation due to her romantic relationship with "You", which she reports in the lyrics. But during the course of the song, no change occurs. There is a past and a present, and the song takes its starting point in the present from where the woman tells about the past. The narrative is in "I"'s story rather than in the process of the song. "A Natural Woman" is therefore better characterised as having static lyrics. This is the most common condition in popular songs, and it is often found in songs with a chorus. The verses can suggest a narrative, which in this case they do, but the chorus takes us back to the starting point.²⁴² Thereby, the focus is on the moment presented in the chorus, i.e. the moment when "I" feels like a natural woman because of "You". Despite this, and as already mentioned above, her state of mind seems sustained, which may suggest that it extends to the time not spend with "You". This idea is supported by Moore's remark that "emphasis on stressed nouns can suggest stasis".²⁴³ A lot of emphasis is placed on "woman" in the third line of the chorus where the first syllable falls

²⁴⁰ Middleton, Richard: *Studying Popular Music*, p. 231–232.

²⁴¹ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 109–110.

²⁴² Ibid., p. 110.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 117.

on a first beat. In this context, the weight on “woman” creates the sense that the female protagonist’s feeling of being a natural woman is static.

Contrary to “Respect”, “A Natural Woman” contains structured rhyming. Both the verse (line 2 and 4), the pre-chorus (line 2 and 3), and the bridge (line 1 and 3 as well as 2 and 4) feature end-rhymes. They are all full rhymes, except for the last one in the bridge which is a near rhyme made of “inside” and “alive”.²⁴⁴ In this case, it is important to consider Franklin’s pronunciation of the words. She does not articulate the ‘v’ in “alive”. The dominating feature is thereby the [aI] sound which correlates with the last pronounced vowel in “inside”. The rhymes are important for the structure of the lyrics and helps to make the text more easily remembered. Furthermore, they suggest a greater conformity to norms than was found in “Respect”.

The first part of the chorus consists of three repetitions of the sentence “You make me feel” and the melody linked to it. This illustrates that the sentence is of importance. It establishes “You” as the cause of her state, and her inner condition is pointed out as essential. Beside this, the repetitions also function as creators of tension within the dramatisation of the song – what is it that she feels? The listener is left to wait for the answer. The suspense is extended and is not dissolved until after the third iteration: She feels like “a natural woman”.

As seen above, the lyrics are on many points unspecific and contains several implications. This leaves the listener with a broad interpretation frame due to the possibility to negotiate between what is windowed, i.e. what is in focus, and what is implied.²⁴⁵ The most obvious example, which has already been discussed, is the identity of “You”. The lack of knowledge about this person makes it possible for the listener to insert whoever he/she finds suitable for the position – even a woman. Furthermore, the range of listener interpretations is, as argued, widened by the absence of a concrete setting. But other unspecific elements of the lyrics leave space for personal interpretation, too, for example the metaphor “my soul was in the lost-and-found”. This implies that something emotionally was wrong with the protagonist, but it does not say what it is. It could point to confusion, loneliness, to feel lost or forgotten, or not to feel like your real self. Almost all personal troubles could be inserted in this metaphor. The expression is an importation.²⁴⁶ The idea of a place for things lost and found belongs to public institutions like schools and sports centres and is normally not used to describe feelings. Another of these indefinite instances is what “You” actually has done to help “I”. The question is asked by “I” herself in the bridge, but no answer is given. Again, all these implications are aspects which opens the relevance of the song to more people as the lack of specifications

²⁴⁴ Griffiths: *From lyric to anti-lyric*, p. 50–51.

²⁴⁵ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 111.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

expands the possibilities of interpretation and, thereby, the listener's possibility to identify with the situation.

Regarding the economy of the words,²⁴⁷ "A Natural Woman" is not extreme in neither one nor the other way. The lyrics do not consist of an abundance of words, but words do also not seem to have been spared to create a specific effect. In this sense, the lyrics seem quite typical for popular songs. Likewise, there is nothing special to point out regarding Griffiths' concept of verbal space.²⁴⁸ The melody is quite clear and generally the lyrics follow it, despite that the length of the phrases are adjusted to the varying length of the text lines. The calm tempo in which the words are delivered reflects the reassuring element and groundedness in the text and it almost replicates a slow speech tempo.

7.1.2. The Word 'Natural'

In the song's hook line, the protagonist proclaims that she feels like a natural woman. The importance of it is underlined by this being the title of the song. But what does it actually mean? Which associations are connected with the word 'natural'? The expression is meant positively in the song, which is seen in the protagonist's elaborations of it as to "feel good inside" and to "feel alive" (bridge, b. 37 and 40–41). The immediate notion given by the lyrics and the song as a whole is that 'natural' describes a woman who feels good about and is satisfied with herself. This can be applied on a physical as well as mental and emotional level.

When the word 'natural' is looked up in the dictionaries *Random House Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionaries*, and *Den Danske Betydningsordbog* (the Danish meaning dictionary), a long list of definitions appears. I allow myself to exclude definitions like "unenlightened or unregenerate" as well as "a fool or idiot"²⁴⁹ from the start, as everything in the song points to a positive meaning of the concept. Leaving out this and the musical explanation of natural, which will be considered below, five overall definition categories can be put forward:

- Definitions where natural means something directly connected to nature either by existing in it, belonging to it, being a part of, formed by, or originating from it.
- Definitions describing an original state, for example by being untouched, being at a natural stage, no human involvement, non-processed, or a natural product.
- Definitions concerning physical/bodily aspects, like physical existence as opposite to spiritual, intellectual, fictional, existence.

²⁴⁷ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 114.

²⁴⁸ Griffiths: *From lyric to anti-lyric*, p. 43.

²⁴⁹ Both from "Natural", in *Random House Dictionary*, New York: Random House, Inc. 2012, *Dictionary.com*, <<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/natural?s=t>>, last visited: 05.06.2019.

- A behavioural and personality-based definition, like when something lies in or comes natural to someone, seems natural for a person, when something is free from affectation or constraint, or a relaxed, spontaneous behaviour. This could be about natural abilities, inherent nature, or instinctive reactions as well as persons, actions, and phenomena appearing physically or behaviourally non-artificial, evident, and true to nature.
- Undyed hair or an afro hairstyle.²⁵⁰

The different meanings of 'natural' can be applied to the song to enrich the understanding of the protagonist. First of all, the definition of 'natural' as being something directly connected to nature contains connotations of something real and true. Thus, when the protagonist calls herself natural, she presents herself as an honest person true to herself. When the second definition, pointing to something in its natural, original state, is applied to the lyrics it can create the idea that the woman has found her way back to her true, original self. Thereby, 'natural' regards the inner wellbeing of the protagonist's, her mental and emotional state. The definition concerning behaviour and personality seems to emphasise our perception of her as a person presenting her true self and acting without affectation and constraints. But, as seen above, the concept of natural also contains a physical, bodily aspect. By saying she feels like a natural woman, the protagonist appears as if she feels good about herself in the body she possesses. This is one of the aspects that has made the song important for many African American women.²⁵¹ The song validates the look of the performer and, as one of her signature songs, Franklin has been strongly associated with its content. Thereby, when Franklin sings it, the body of African American women is validated – a look, which culturally has been undervalued compared to the one of white women. This will be elaborated further in the discussion in chapter 8.

To put it briefly, "natural woman" can be interpreted as if the protagonist is being her true self. She has returned back to her original state as a person and evaluates herself and her body positively. She seems well-balanced, which makes her come forth as trustworthy. "A Natural Woman" is a love song and "You" plays a significant role in "I"'s transformation. But the kernel of the song seems to be about the female protagonist's relation to herself rather than to the man. This is the real change: she has achieved a state of appreciation of herself. "You" is the process, and the woman's new self-perception is the goal. His assumable accept of her as she is has made her realise her own worth. Another interesting element linked to

²⁵⁰ The categories are a sum up of the definitions of "Natural" and, in Danish, "Naturlig" given in the three dictionaries *Random House Dictionary*, *Oxford Dictionaries Oxford*, and *Den Danske Betydningsordbog*. *Oxford Dictionaries Oxford*, Oxford University Press [without year], *Lexico.com*, <<https://www.lexico.com/en/definition/natural>>, last visited: 05.06.2019. *Den Danske Betydningsordbog*, Odense: Ordbogen A/S 2012, *Ordbogen.com – Danmarks Største Online Ordbog*, <<https://www.ordbogen.com/da/search#/cent-definitions-dada/naturlig>>, last visited: 05.06.2019.

²⁵¹ Werner: *Higher Ground*, p. 213–214.

the conception of 'natural woman' is that the protagonist *feels* like a natural woman, but it does not say in the lyrics that she *is* one. This correlates with the understanding of gender as constructed, which will be discussed later, too.

One last definition of 'natural' to be mentioned is the musical one: A tone which is neither sharp nor flat, i.e. the white keys of the piano. Is this the reason why the song is played in C-major? It is most likely to be a coincidence, but it is noticeable that a song with a title containing the word natural and a message based on this term and its associations is played in the only major key without any sharp or flat tones. In this way, the harmony underlines the lyrics. It is, however, partly contradicted by the Bb-major chord appearing in the verses.

7.2. Form, Harmony, and Instruments

The form of "A Natural Woman" is a typical refrain form with pre-chorus. As already presented earlier, the overall form looks like this:

Anacrusis – A – B – C – A – B – C – D – C – C ... (fades out)

A more detailed illustration of the form is offered in table 3, which shows the harmonic process in the song as well as phrases and motifs. The accompaniment presents a quite

simple functional harmonic harmony consisting primarily of chords based on the C-major key. The harmonic rhythm in the verse consists of one change of chords at every first count, except by transitions where a faster change of chords pushes the song forward and creates variation. The anacrusis has got the same effect. The tempo of the harmonic rhythm rises in the pre-chorus and chorus where the chords change at every first and fourth beat. This is one of the components in the music that causes the increase in tension and intensity in these sections. The harmonic tension built up in the pre-chorus is not dissolved until the word "feel" in the chorus where the tonic C-major chord appears. The break with the temporarily established harmonic rhythm in bar 16, where the harmony stays at C-major on the fourth beat instead of shifting, enhances the grounding of the word "natural". In this way, the part of the lyrics in the refrain concerning the female character, i.e. "feel like a natural woman", is all accompanied by the tonic. This points to the interpretation of the main theme of the song as being what the protagonist feels about herself.²⁵² "you" is sung on the subdominant, which suggests that the partner is second priority in this matter. The plagal connection, however, links the two aspects, i.e. what the woman feels and "you", closely together. It also connects the song further to gospel, as plagal chord progressions are typical for that

²⁵² Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 107.

style.²⁵³ The Bb-chord in the verse (b. 4 and 8) has a blue note as its root, which may symbolise the unhappiness in the past. Something was not in its “right place” for the protagonist, just as a Bb-chord does not belong to the key of C-major in a basic functional harmonic understanding.

Form	Section	Bars	Phrases	Motifs	Chords
	Intro	1			F – Gm ⁷ – F/A
A	A (Verse)	2 – 9 (8)	a	i – j	: C G/B B ^b F – C/E – Dm ⁷ :
			a'	i' – j'	
			a	i – j	
			a'	i' – j'	
	B (Pre-chorus)	10 – 13 (3½)	b	K	Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ^{7(add 4)}
			b'	k'	
			b''	k''	
	C (Chorus)	13 – 17 (5)	c	l	F/G C – F C – F C Dm – G ⁹
			c	l	
			c + tail	l + tail	
A	A	18 – 25 (8)	a	i – j	: C G/B B ^b F – C/E – Dm ⁷ :
			a'	i' – j'	
			a	i – j	
			a'	i' – j'	
	B	26 – 29 (3½)	b	k	Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ¹¹ – Em ⁷ Dm ^{7(add 4)}
			b'	k'	
			b''	k''	
	C	29 – 33 (5)	c	l	F/G C – F C – F C Dm – G ⁹
			c	l	
			c + tail	l + tail	
B	D (Bridge)	34 – 41 (7½)	d		C Gm ⁷ C Gm ⁷ Fmaj ⁹ Cm ⁹ Fmaj ⁹ – F/E Dm ⁷
			d		
			d'		
			d''		
	C	41 – 45 (5)	C	l	F/G C – F C – F C Dm – F/G
			c	l	
			c + tail	l + tail	
	C (repeated until fades out)	45 – fades out after about 7 bars	c	l	F/G C – F C – F C Dm – F/G ...
			c	l	
			c + tail ...	l + tail ...	

Table 3. The form of “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman”.

Despite that Christensen and Bach appoint intro, (instrumental) bridge, and outro to be likely the most central form sections within southern soul,²⁵⁴ these three parts in “A Natural Woman” do not play the same significant role as described by the two authors, or as intro and outro do in “Respect”. The intro in “A Natural Woman” is almost non-existing and is better described as an anacrusis consisting of four strokes on

²⁵³ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 30.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 115.

the piano. This sets the tempo, starts of the song, and presents the mood of the recording – it is sensible from the start that the song is a ballade. The dominating role of the piano as an accompanying instrument carrying the harmony is indicated, too. The style of the piano play has its foundation in gospel. This is, for instance, implied by the plagal turn in the intro (i.e. a turn up to the fourth step of the chord), which is widely used within gospel.²⁵⁵ Furthermore, the use of an acoustic piano instead of electrical keys supports the statement of a natural woman because we associate acoustic instruments more with naturalness. They appear less mediated to us than electrical ones.²⁵⁶ Thus, the same argument can be applied to the other acoustic instruments used in the song too.

7.2.1. Verse

When the first verse (section A) begins, drums and bass guitar followed by lead and backing vocals are introduced. However, the piano strum possesses a dominating position in the sound picture, filling out the whole bar with its figures. Besides its harmony carrying function, the piano underpins the 6/8-time signature with arpeggios on the eighth notes, making the piano play supple. The tripartite time signature and the shuffle subdivision provide the sound with a sense of lightness which is opposed by the heavy marking of the first and the fourth beat. The drum pattern is simple and maintained through the whole recording with only small variations of fills at transitions of form sections and up to “feel” in the chorus – a very economical way of playing the drums, which was typical for ballads in the 1960s.²⁵⁷ Together with the drums, the bass form the bottom of the rhythm section. The bass play is simple and heavy, marking the downbeats on one and four. Generally, the pitches of the bass are based on the roots of the harmonies, at least in the verse and pre-chorus. But the play is made suppler by the insertion of triads in first inversion, which allows a more chromatic bass line. The little activity in the rhythm section leaves a lot of space for the vocals to fill out. Thereby, the lead vocals and that, which is sung become the most obvious focus point in the sound image, indicating that this is where the meaning of the song primarily is to be found.

Furthermore, the development of the song happens mainly in the top of the arrangement. However, the simple repetitions in drums and bass create a stable ground in the arrangement’s bottom, which could be associated with the security that the protagonist feels about in herself.

The choir marks every first count between the phrases, thus, in every second bar, and generates a dynamic lift in the otherwise a bit heavy accompaniment. This works because the “a-oooh” of the backing vocals lie in a higher register than the instruments and the lead vocals at this point. In the repetition of the phrases in the first verse, strings and horns are added. They play a significant part in constructing the romantic mood

²⁵⁵ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 30.

²⁵⁶ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 48.

²⁵⁷ Christensen and Bach: op. cit., p. 42.

of the song, matching the theme of love. The strings mark all eighth notes with short strokes on the bows and indicate the transition to the pre-chorus with longer strokes, which fill out the time and, thereby, make the density even thicker. The horns, dominated by trombone, introduce a slow, non-dominating counter-melody line based on the harmonies. Its slow, descending movement connote a melancholic feeling, which applies to the female character's emotional state in the past. Generally, the calm music, the slow tempo connoting low energy, and the hint of sadness all fits the lyrical content of the verses, presenting the earlier unhappiness in the female's life.

The accompaniment of the second verse has not changed a lot from the first verse. The backing vocals are left out, the bass is a bit more active, and the strings participate from the beginning of the verse by marking the eighth notes. The piano does not play arpeggios this time – it does not seem necessary for it to mark the beats when the strings do it. Instead it engages in a freer and more varied way of playing, including longer fills. Generally, the activity level appears slightly higher than in the first verse, following the overall dramatical increase and complementing the lyrics which now are not only about the sadness in the past, but also how the man helped the protagonist move on. Thus, the music reflects the lighter mood of the protagonist.

7.2.2. Pre-Chorus and Chorus

The intensity and the tension rise in the pre-chorus (section B), but not in a drastic way. Bass and drums stay the same as before. The piano stops playing arpeggios and starts marking the first and sixth beat even harder, with long note values in between. The backing vocals are silent in the passage. The strings stop marking the eighth notes, instead they fill out the holes between the melody's phrases using call and response technique – again, an element collected from gospel. They introduce a stepwise sixteenth note figure circling around *D4* followed by long notes under the voice. The fast sixteenth-notes enhances the intensity and the energy level. The form section is consistent with the typical function of a pre-chorus: it prepares for the chorus by building up tension. It creates an eager and excited effect which seem to apply to the feelings the female character holds for her partner, about whom the lyrics of the pre-chorus are.

The climax of the song is reached in the chorus (section C) with the lyrics "You make me feel like a natural woman". The intensity peaks and the melody reaches its highest pitch, *E5*, on the "you". Generally, "A Natural Woman" has a thick and filled out texture, but this is even more characterising for the chorus because the activity in most of the instruments rises, among other things. Altogether, it creates a bombastic and grandiose effect, emphasising the protagonist's deep affection for "You". The melody is supported by the backing vocals, which sing along on the lyrics in close positions. This enhances the attention on the vocals as well as the bombastic effect, which is boosted by the contrast to the pre-chorus where the backing vocals were not present. As pointed out earlier, the drums play long fills up to the word "feel" which

stresses the word significantly. The bass points to this word too, as it marks every eighth note on the three previous counts and lands with a longer note value on “feel”. This also emphasises the prior words, “you make me”, because they fall on the straight eighths. The strings play long, chord-based notes which function as connective tissue between the stressed beats, keeping the density thick. The horns inherit the call and response function and fills out the space between the melody’s phrases. Dominated by the trumpet, they play a horn line in unison consisting of the same pitches as the preceding melody line “You make me feel”, but with another rhythm, staying longer on the high *E5*. It lands on *A4* instead of *G4* to stay inside the harmonies. The horn lines serve the high dynamic and create an interplay with the vocals which, however, dominate the interaction.

The chorus is a contrast to the verse, not just because of the rise in the sensed energy level and the musical intensity, but because of the different emotions expressed in the two form sections. Opposite to the sadness and melancholy communicated in the verse, the first part of the chorus creates the impression of positive and deeply felt feelings. The high pitches in the melody and horns connote positive emotions,²⁵⁸ which matches both the woman’s appreciation of “You” as well as her new self-feeling. The bombastic effect makes the expressed emotions come forth as strong and intense, underlining the depth with which they apparently are felt. Furthermore, the clear rhythm in the melody and bass marking the eighth notes makes the statement seem clear and secure – there is no trace of hesitation or uncertainty in the protagonist’s announcement, which enhances the impression that she means what she says, and that she is a confident woman.

The texture and density change drastically in the last part of the chorus on the words “like a natural woman”. All instruments fall out and the lead and backing vocals are left alone, only with support from the bass guitar, which serves to keep a solid bottom and a steady rhythm. The backing vocals still sing the melody with the lead. The lyrics stand out clearly, which enhances the articulation of the message as there suddenly is nothing to take attention away from the voices. The bass doubles the melody, too, two octaves below. This gives the words gravity and makes the statement seem grounded and reliable. With reference to the definition of ‘natural’ as something appearing as non-artificial, the musical arrangement at this place seems to create exactly this effect. The voice stands naked, which enhances the impression that the protagonist presents her true self – unmasked, unhidden, and undecorated. The musical texture re-emerges in the second half of bar 17 when the backing vocals repeat “woman”. This repetition underlines the main theme of the song: the woman. The placement of “You” on the highest pitch and “woman” on some of the lowest will be further looked into in the analysis of the melody.

²⁵⁸ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 100.

7.2.3. Bridge and Repetitions of the Chorus

The bridge (section D) does not contain an “arranged” instrumental solo, like Christensen and Bach suggest.²⁵⁹ Instead, Franklin and the backing vocals engage in a call and response dominated by the lead and constituting the most significant role of the backing vocals in the song. It creates a sort of echo, pointing more to what the lead presents and represents than to the backing vocals as an independent union. This effect will be discussed in the last part of the analysis concerning the backing vocals. The drums stay the same while the bass is more active, striking eighth and sometimes sixteenth notes. The piano plays broad chords and arpeggios, the strings perform harmonised voices in stepwise motion with vibrato, while the horns are on pause. All in all, the accompaniment functions as a background of harmonies against which the lead vocals can perform. It leaves a lot of space for Franklin’s voice, which is placed in the foreground of the sound image. Thus, Franklin’s voice is what demands most attention, which puts focus on the lyrics and the female character represented in it, suggesting that these are the central elements of the song. It underlines the message which is elaborated in this section, that is, the woman’s transformation and her affection for the man.

The last choruses are almost exact repetitions of the earlier ones, only the intensity rises even more creating the conclusive climax of the song. The drums play longer fills and Franklin improvises a little bit more. The recording does not have a “real” outro but fades out instead. In soul music, the outro is often used by the lead vocals as an opportunity to improvise over a repeating groove, in this case, the chorus. But in Franklin’s recording of “A Natural Woman”, we almost do not get to hear the improvisations before the sound is faded out. Even though a little bit is included in the last chorus, knowing other recordings of Franklin, it is as if she is only about to start the “real”, virtuoso improvisations in the very last seconds of the track. The performance of the outro at concerts was often different from the studio version, as it was common practice within soul to play freer and improvise more at concerts than on studio albums. Recorded live versions of the song illustrate this.²⁶⁰ However, the little improvisation heard on the recording seems to emphasise the happiness felt by the female protagonist after her meeting with “You” and the realisation of her true self. As this impression is maintained to the end of the song, it suggests that the woman’s confidence and positive emotions last after the song has ended, further making the new self-feeling appear stable and grounded.

Summarising the use of the instruments, the bottom of the rhythm section, i.e. bass guitar and drums, is not very active, playing with simplicity and only small variations throughout the song. This can be viewed as

²⁵⁹ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 53.

²⁶⁰ “Aretha Franklin - A Natural Woman (Christmas 1967)”, broadcasted 25.12.1967, published 08.09.2009, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ek01I2Ps6Bg>>, last visited: 30.03.2019, 2:08–2:41.

applying to the woman's feeling of being grounded in a natural self. The varying and "exciting" parts in the overall sound are located in the top of the arrangement, primarily in the lead but also in the backing vocals. Different engagements of strings and horns as well as changing strums in the piano create variety, too. The strings and the piano also play significant roles in building up the romantic and ballad-like mood, which relate to the love that the protagonist seems to feel for her partner. The timbre of the horns is what could be called classical and do not sound typical for jazz or African American music in general. This emphasises the romantic feeling rather than creates associations connecting the song further to African American music. However, the vocal style, the call and response techniques, and the style of the piano play strongly link the song to gospel. The piano is mostly played softly, which has the effect of creating a sense of intimacy that appears to exist between the partners.²⁶¹ Furthermore, it enhances the impression that the song is of a personal matter. This, and the arrangement in general, supports the content of the lyrics which lay out the feelings of the female character.

7.3. Melody

The melody of "A Natural Woman" can generally be heard as C-ionian. The major key, among others, constructs the positive feeling in the song.²⁶² However, *B* is avoided throughout the melody, and in the bridge is the blue note *Bb* presented several times. This suggests that the melody should be understood as mixolydian which, because of its incorporation of the lowered 7th, could be interpreted as holding a balance between the positivity felt in the present and the discouragement of the past. This understanding of the melody is supported by the *Bb*-chord occurring in the verses. But the bridge also contains another blue note, *Eb*, which implies that the melody in this section is dorian while the rest of the melody stays ionian. It can seem contradictory that the tension-creating blue notes²⁶³ occur in the bridge which elaborates the positive message of the song. But it could be interpreted as emphasising the wondering aspect of the lyrics ("what you've done to me?") and the longing expressed in "I just wanna be close to you". This is supported by Machin, according to whom the lowered seventh is especially suited for expressing yearning.²⁶⁴ Furthermore, Neal suggests that a bridge is "defined as a unit that provides a point of contrast both textually and musically",²⁶⁵ which may explain a shift of modus and the slightly different focus in the lyrics.

Even though "A Natural Woman" is very melody based and Franklin primarily sticks to it (her improvisations are limited compared to other recordings of her), the melody does contain a lot of small

²⁶¹ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 125.

²⁶² Ibid., p. 107.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 110.

²⁶⁵ Neal: *Narrative Paradigms*, p. 45.

variations in rhythm, pitch, and note numbers throughout the song. This is primarily because of adjustments to the varying length of the lines in the lyrics. The following analysis of the melody is based on what could be called the main ideas of the motifs.

As shown in the introduction to this chapter, “A Natural Woman” consists of the form

Anacrusis – A – B – C – A – B – C – D – C – C... (fades out)

The melody in the verse (section A) is built of the phrases *a* and *a'*, which are repeated. Each phrase contains two motifs, *i* and *j* (Example 6). The main idea of *i* is three tones forming a descending curve (*G* – *E* – *G*) with accent on the last *g*, which falls on the accentuated fourth beat. The first part of motif *j* is in three out of four cases identical to the preceding *i*, except that the length of *i*’s last tone is longer. The number of syllables in the text line determines if more changes between *E* and *G* are added to the inherited *i*-motif in *j*. Afterwards, the motif goes up to *A* and descends a fourth to *E*, sometimes followed by a glide to *D*. Thus, *j* starts with a certain number of changes between *E* and *G* and ends with an ascending curve.

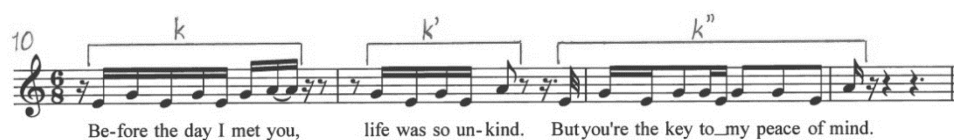


Example 6. Phrase *a* and *a'* in the verse.

Phrase *a'* is a sequenced version of phrase *a*, a second under, consisting of *i'* and *j'*. Thereby, the melody follows the chord change from C-major to F-major. *j'* differs from the original motif as it skips the inclusion of *i'*. Motif *j'* contains essential elements from *j* (except in bar 8–9): the curve and the descending quarter interval. Thus, the phrases *a* and *a'* consist of (1) changes between two pitches with the interval of a third and (2) a closing ascending curve. The changes back and forth between two tones, the small intervals in most of the two phrases, and the relatively small ambitus of a fifth create a lingering effect and the feeling of not really going anywhere. This can be interpreted as symbolising emotional stagnation experienced by the protagonist, who, apparently, was stuck in a situation which she could not change by herself. Furthermore, a descending line like the one with which *a* and *a'* end can connote “incoming emotions”, i.e. feelings directed inwards to oneself. Deryck Cooke argued this already in 1959,²⁶⁶ although he has been criticised for interpreting effects of feelings onto musical elements in a too one to one-like way. However, the ending of these melody lines seems to emphasise the female character’s introverted, miserable mood described in the verses.

²⁶⁶ Cooke, Deryck: *The Language of Music*, London a.o.: Oxford University Press 1959, p. 115–129.

The melody in the pre-chorus (section B) is made of one phrase, b, presented three times. All of the phrases consist of a variation over the motif k (Example 7), which can be described as an extended version of motif i. Generally, it is comprised of eighth notes and it changes between the pitches *E* and *G*, but ends on an *A*. The number of changes in the three motifs depends on the length of the line in the lyrics, but the lengths of the three phrases, compared to each other, follow the order of middle length, short, and long every time. Even though motif k primarily changes between the same two pitches as phrase a in the verse, i.e. *E* and *G*, it seems in the listening experience as if the melody lies higher because it follows after a', which is sequenced a second down. Additionally, Franklin sings the pre-chorus in a lighter timbre which has the effect of making tones seem higher than if they were sung with a darker timbre.²⁶⁷ Motif k closes on a higher level of energy than the phrases in the verse due to the ascending movement to *A*.²⁶⁸ That the phrases end with an ascent also plays a role in changing the mood of the music. Applying Cooke's concept, an ascending melody line can reflect an outward expression of feelings. This is consistent with the emotions expressed for "You" in the pre-chorus. The first "you" is even sung on the first ascent on *A*, which until this point is the highest pitch of the song. This, again, supports the impression of the positive feelings regarding "You". Additionally, the ascent creates a dynamic lift and takes part in producing the effect of a build up to the chorus. This ending of motif k seems slightly abrupt and the effect of it is of unfinishedness. This helps to maintain the tension created in the pre-chorus. Contrary, motif j and j' round off the phrases in the verse, especially j' which lands on the tonic.



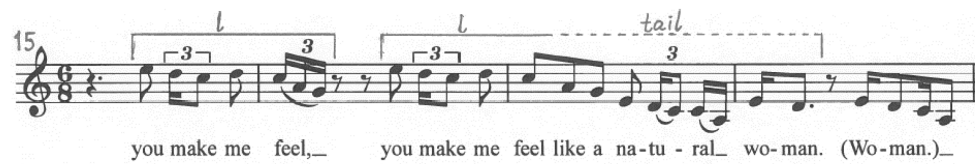
Example 7. Motif k, k' and k'' in the pre-chorus.

The chorus (section C), like the pre-chorus, is comprised of three repetitions of the same phrase, c. The last repetition has a tail following it. The phrases consist of motif l (Example 8), which often is presented in slightly varied versions because of Franklin's improvisations. The first phrase starts with *G* which serves as a launch pad for the chorus. In its main version, l is built of a descending movement from *E5* to *G4* which is performed stepwise, except that *B* is left out. *E5* is the highest pitch of the melody and is only sung in the chorus. This constitutes the climax of the recording, which is emphasised by its location on the accentuated fourth beat. The prominent position of the word "you" on the high *E* and the accentuation of "feel" through its placement on the first beat in the following bar, constituting a fairly heavy ending of the two

²⁶⁷ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 32.

²⁶⁸ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 101.

first phrases, show how the song contains two themes. It is about the relationship to “You” as well as how the woman feels about herself.



Example 8. Motif *l* and the tail in the chorus.

The tail added to the third phrase is a descending line from C5 to A3. Again, the movement is stepwise with omission of the pitches B and F. The phrase ends with a jump up to E4 and lands on D. The pitches of the sixteenth-note triplet in *l* are “stretched out” to eighth notes, so to say, and the line continues down. One of the effects of the drastic descend is that it prepares for the pitch-wise lower located verse following the chorus.

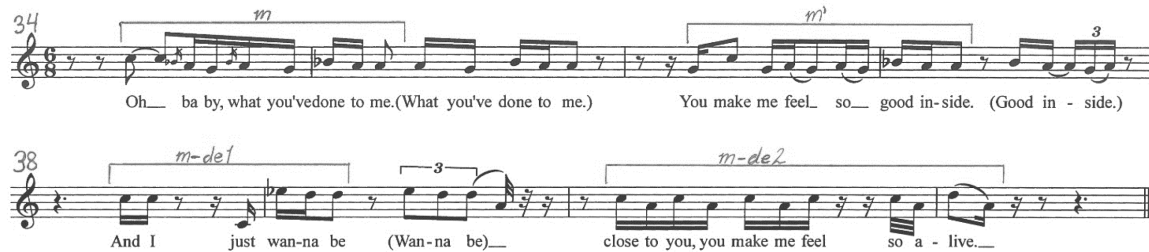
Allen B. Forte suggests paying attention to the high and the low points in the melody because they can provide words with extra weight.²⁶⁹ The chorus contains both the highest and the lowest pitch of the melody, namely E5 and A3. The effect of E5 on the word “you” has already been mentioned briefly. “You” is handed an important position which is underlined by the repetitions of it. It is almost as if “You” is put upon a pedestal formed by the melody. The positivity with which the protagonist views “You” is further emphasised by the word’s placement on the key’s major third which is associated with positive emotions.²⁷⁰ This may express the love felt by the protagonist towards “You”. When the tail descends over an octave to A3 and stays in the lowest register of the song, the lyrics “natural woman” receive extra gravity. The contrast between the high notes just before the descending tail enhances the sense of groundedness in the passage – an effect that colours the understanding of the expression ‘natural woman’ as a grounded, balanced personality trait.

The four phrases in the bridge (section D) each occupy the length of two bars. The two first phrases are made up of motif *m*, though variated the second time (Example 9). The motifs in the two last phrases derive from *m* but contain great differences. To indicate the origin of the motifs, I have called them *m-de1* and *m-de2* for ‘derived’. Motif *m* starts on C5 and engages in changes between G and A while ending with an ascending curve coming to rest at A4. The biggest differences between *m* and *m-de1* are that the G–A changes are left out and replaced by a pause and that *m-de1* contains a minor tenth leap to Eb5, the second highest pitch of the melody. Motif *m-de2* contains the changes between two tones, but this time between

²⁶⁹ Forte, Allan B.: *The American popular Ballade of the Golden Era 1924–1950*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1995, p. 26.

²⁷⁰ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 110.

A4 and C5, which again can be associated with lingering and, in this case, seems to point to the wondering elements of the lyrics indicated by the question “what you’ve done to me”. The motif ends with jumping a quarter down to A4 and thereby, ends like the original m. This creates a concluding effect on the word “alive”, which could symbolise that this, the woman feeling alive, is the end goal.



Example 9. The motifs in the bridge.

Summing up the melody, it generally circles around a few tones within each section, except in the chorus. According to Van Leeuwen, who builds his theory on speech, a small pitch range can signalise misery and tiredness, if it is supported by other elements in the music.²⁷¹ This is characterising for the verses where the lyrics focus on the past. The chorus differs significantly by containing a wide pitch range of over an octave from A3 to E5. Thus, as mentioned, the chorus features the lowest as well as the highest pitch of the melody, which are both not presented elsewhere. The big interval up to E5 signalises a shift of energy level and helps to make the place stand out.²⁷² Leeuwen states that wide pitch ranges, oppositely to the constraint expression of narrow pitch intervals, communicate strong feelings.²⁷³ This is consistent with the protagonist’s love for “You” and with the impression of Franklin’s vocal delivery, which will be analysed below. The distinctiveness of the chorus also stems from the change of rhythm in the melody. While in most of the song the melody is based on sixteenth notes, the chorus is built primarily of eighth notes, i.e. the melody rests mainly on the pulse. This causes the pitches to receive more weight. Furthermore, it gives the singer more time to articulate the words and the listeners more time to notice them. The relatively slow movement in the tail seems to have the effect of pointing to “natural woman” and enhance the sense of gravity on the low pitches. Machin suggests that descending melodic lines can represent not just income emotions but “a simple slide to bleaker thoughts and self-absorption”.²⁷⁴ This reflects that the line is about how the woman feels about herself, not someone else. However, a wide range of pitch is often interpreted as an emotionally expressive melody.²⁷⁵ Again, this points to the bipartition of the message: “You”

²⁷¹ van Leeuwen: *Speech, Music, Sound*, p. 106.

²⁷² Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 102.

²⁷³ van Leeuwen: op. cit., p. 106.

²⁷⁴ Machin: op. cit., p. 102.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 131.

represents something outer towards whom “I” carries outward going emotions. But the actual change has taken place inside of the woman, which adds an inner aspect to the song.

The pitches in the melody correspond to the general Western understanding of high pitches as representing positive feelings and low pitches as reflecting negative emotions.²⁷⁶ The melody in the verse and chorus illustrates this as the pitches are low in the former and high in most of the latter. In the different form sections, the melody underlines the degree of importance that the lyrics hold regarding the message of the song. In the verse, the melody circles around a few tones in sort of a trivial way, quickly releasing the little tension that is built up. As seen, the content of the verses is mostly about the time before “I” met “You”. In the pre-choruses, which are focused on the meeting with “You” and what it has meant for “I”, the content carries more significance. This is reflected in the tension built in the melody and by musical elements. The main point of the lyrics is stated in the chorus, where the climax is reached, and it is elaborated in the bridge. In both form sections, high pitches emphasise the significance of the woman’s relationship to the man as well as to herself.

7.4. Aretha Franklin’s Vocal Delivery

The voice communicates the singer’s ostensible attitude towards the lyrical content, and it has a great impact on our perception of the female character. Franklin performs “A Natural Woman” with a lot of emotionality expressed in her voice. This makes the theme of the song seem like a personal matter to her and it appears as if Franklin sings about herself. Additionally, her voice confirms the female gender affiliation expressed in the lyrics.

Regarding Moore’s first positional aspect of the singer’s voice, Franklin’s *register* in the verses of “A Natural Woman” can be called “normal”,²⁷⁷ which sounds comfortable and seems relaxed. It helps create the feeling of something being told to the listener, which corresponds to the impression of the protagonist as a narrator telling us about her life. The relatively relaxed voice connotes thoughtfulness and emotional lingering,²⁷⁸ which fits with the lyrical content of the protagonist thinking back. This effect is enhanced by the long delays of the phrases. The soft use of the voice creates a feeling of intimacy and confidentiality, matching the theme of relationship and personal feelings, but it also illustrates the weakness that seems to have marked the protagonist in the past.²⁷⁹ Even though Franklin’s voice generally sounds relaxed, a little bit of tension is sensed at the beginning of the phrases, connoting that something is wrong and illustrating the performer’s assumable emotional involvement.

²⁷⁶ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 100.

²⁷⁷ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 102.

²⁷⁸ Machin: op. cit., p. 122.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 124–125.

The pre-chorus is within the “normal” register, too, but as pointed out earlier, Franklin delivers it with a lighter timbre and the phrases end with an ascending movement, making the passage seem higher in pitch than the verse.²⁸⁰ The voice is tenser, creating the impression of being more to the point, thus, the words are of more importance than in the verse. They are also more separated, creating variation in the vocal delivery and diminishing the sense of emotional lingering. The lighter feeling of the pre-chorus seems consistent with the less heavy lyrical content presented in this section (after all, this is where we hear about “You” for the first) and it foreshadows the positive message of the chorus.

The chorus and the bridge are sung in a high register, making them very emotionally expressive.²⁸¹ The atmosphere in the chorus appears almost ecstatic because of the high pitches, not least due to the contrast in pitch height compared to verse and pre-chorus, and it intensifies for every chorus. Here, the voice is at its tensest and least airy level in the song. The words are clearly articulated, sung with security and no lingering. These aspects, among other things, produce the sense of a climax. The use of the vocal expresses the happiness felt by the protagonist. However, the musical character changes dramatically in the end of a chorus, as already accounted for earlier in the analysis. The register of the vocal changes to a low one and the degree of airiness gradually grows to its maximum on the word “woman”. Franklin leans into and enhances the gravity already existing in this passage with her voice, emphasising the stability and groundedness with which the new, natural version of the protagonist is perceived. Franklin illustrates, so to say, the security in the protagonist’s positive self-feeling through her vocal delivery.

The voice in the bridge is primarily tense, heightening the intensity but also the seemingly emotional involvement. The whole song is delivered with chest voice, also the highest pitches performed with a mixed upper chest and head voice, like in “Respect”. It creates the effects of presence, care (for herself and “You”) in the verse, and power in the chorus and bridge.²⁸² Franklin’s strong belting in the high register produces a powerful expression supporting the confidence, which the lyrics imply that the protagonist has reached. The effect of it is indeed that of a “full-throttle sound”.²⁸³ Additionally, Franklin’s singing style is characterised by being a little nasal. As this is already addressed in the analysis of “Respect”, I will not go further into that here, only repeat that it has a boosting effect on the volume of the voice in the middle register which, among other things, gives her voice its power in the pre-chorus of the song. The main difference between the voice in the verse and the chorus is the level of energy, which is connoted by the low and high register, respectively.²⁸⁴ This can be associated with the protagonist’s unhappiness and

²⁸⁰ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 32.

²⁸¹ Ibid., p. 102.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Jungr, Barb: *Vocal expression*, p. 107.

²⁸⁴ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 124.

vulnerability in the past against the happiness and confidence expressed in the present. The overall effect of the song rests heavily on this contrast, which both the musical arrangement and Franklin's vocal delivery emphasise.

Generally, Franklin's voice contains a certain degree of raspiness throughout the song. In the chorus, primarily, it enhances the eagerness and excitement as well as straightforwardness implied in the voice. But it is also a part of her overall style of singing, making her seem unpolished and authentic²⁸⁵ as well as connecting her to southern soul and the roots of the genre in gospel, R&B, and blues. The authentic and unpolished effect seems to support the idea of a natural person, i.e. someone who present oneself as he/she really is. It, among other things, enables that the listener can experience the performance as sincere.

In "A Natural Woman", Franklin sings directly on the rhythm established by the accompaniment. The *heard attitude towards the rhythm*, Moore's third aspect regarding analysis of the voice, is thereby different from the one in "Respect".²⁸⁶ Thus, Franklin conforms to the rhythm established by the instruments. There is a fair amount of rapprochement toward a normal, but relatively slow, rhythm of speech, but no resistance against the established measure of time. She does not use sanctified speech,²⁸⁷ which makes the song more singable. Following Machin's idea that not conforming to the rhythm expresses a challenge of the order of the social world,²⁸⁸ the protagonist does not engage in such a challenge. She seems to observe an inner, positive, and personal change, which has happened within the prevailing social order. This conformity to norms will be considered further in the discussion.

The heard attitude towards pitch is similar to the one towards rhythm. Franklin sings fairly precisely the pitches of the melody, compared to her general as well as other soul artists' singing styles. The sung notes are not always a hundred percent in tune, they sometimes lie a little under or glides into the pitch. But in this case, there are no difficulties in writing down the melody because of pitches laying in between the western tone system. Again, this can be associated with staying within the given social frames as well as satisfaction with things as they are, which can be applied to the protagonist's feelings about herself after the transformation.

Franklin's approach to rhythm and pitch varies a bit throughout the song. However, the emotional expression delivered does not come forth as ambiguous because of these varieties. On the contrary, the effect of Franklin's vocal delivery is of honesty and sincerity – she appears authentic, which corresponds to her description of feeling natural. The raspiness and her laying a bit beside the rhythm and pitches produce

²⁸⁵ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 123.

²⁸⁶ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 103.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 107.

²⁸⁸ Machin: op. cit., p. 130.

balance in the sound image. It works as a good countermeasure to the pure timbres of the other instruments, especially the horns and strings, which make the recording seem a bit polished and very romantic.

The gospel-derived style of singing connotes religiosity and spirituality due to gospel's origin in the African American church. This is what Machin calls provenance: when a specific sound represents, symbolises, or associates with a specific place, culture, or time.²⁸⁹ These connotations are applied to the impression of the song. The theme of self-accept and inner balance is almost elevated to something religious which points to the importance seemingly ascribed to the message and correlates with the spiritual aspect associated with the soul, the inner of a person. This is enhanced by the reverb added to the voices, especially the backing vocals, which can be associated with church, too. Additionally, reverb can create a sense of isolation and loneliness.²⁹⁰ In this case, it seems to further emphasise that the song is about the female herself, but it could also point to the loneliness felt by the protagonist in the past.

The use of melisma is limited, but when they come forth, they are an expression of emotionality as well as virtuosity. This is most obvious on the word “feel” in the chorus sung on a triplet. Likewise, vibrato is not extensively propagated, however, it is present on delays of words in the verse, signifying emotionality and maybe the insecurity felt in the past. The restricted use of vibrato and melisma can be interpreted as symbolising the naturalness of the woman – she does not present herself through decorative, superficial artefacts. According to Machin, the lack of vibrato in the pre-chorus, chorus, and bridge can symbolise stability and forward movement.²⁹¹ Stability applies to the protagonist's new state of mind. Nevertheless, she seems figuratively to stand firm in her newly achieved state of mind rather than to be moving further forward.

Tagg points out that to scream or shout in a high pitch can express a wish to be understood and to express oneself as an individual.²⁹² Even though “You” play a significant role and is placed on the highest pitch of the melody, the effect of the powerful belting bordering on shouting is the expression of the performer herself, showing that she is an individual. The loudness of the voice is associated with importance because of its dominating and indiscrete character. Despite the self-expressing connotations, these aspects illustrate the high value with which “You” is regarded in the text, too.

²⁸⁹ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 121.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 125–126.

²⁹¹ Ibid., p. 125.

²⁹² Philip Tagg: *Reading sounds*.

Moore states that the central point of the use of the voice in a song is its appropriateness in expressing the wanted expression.²⁹³ Franklin's vocal delivery emphasises the lyrics and the potential message. It expresses vulnerability and affection in the verse as well as power and self-confidence in the chorus, which end with a secure groundedness on "natural woman". The use of the voice colours the overall impression of the song resting on the interplay between the vulnerable and the powerful. In the pre-chorus, eagerness and emotions are held back a little until the chorus, where they are let loose, so to say. In the bridge, slightly more wondering aspects are presented in the voice, too, corresponding to the lyrics.

As mentioned earlier, the voice makes the performer appear authentic and trustworthy. The seeming emotional involvement heard in the voice makes Franklin appear honest and engaged in the story, and the raspiness signalises unpolishedness and non-artificiality. All these aspects support the impression of a natural person, thus, a person who presents him-/herself as he/she really is. This notion is enhanced by the little use of melisma, vibrato, and other forms of ornamentation. It appears as if the female protagonist talks freely without embellishing or obscuring her statement. Furthermore, raspiness makes her seem imperfect and thereby common – she is like every other person. Thereby, it is implied that other females (or males) could achieve the same positive state of mind as her.

7.5. Backing Vocals as Extension of the Protagonist

The backing vocals are applied to the arrangement in three different ways: first, as marking the first beat between the phrases in the first verse; second, as parallel voices to the melody in the chorus; and third, as call and response in the bridge. It is typical for the arrangements made by Franklin that the backing vocals change between different functions.²⁹⁴ In "A Natural Woman", they possess a significant role in making the top of the arrangement more varied and spirited, which has an essential effect on the overall impression that otherwise could have been heavy and homogenous. The singers primarily sing with chest voice and in close position. In the first verse, the backing vocals almost function as a part of the rhythm section. Besides marking the separations of the phrases with an "a-ooh", they create a balance between the light and the heavy, as pointed out before, even though they appear on the first beat. The lightness derives from the register higher than the rest of the accompaniment in this section as well as the airy quality in their timbre. It is further enhanced by the ascending movement of a minor third and a minor second, depending on the chord, and that they are placed in the front of the mix. This all together creates a dynamic lift.

In the chorus, the backing vocals' sing parallel to the melody, which serves the bombastic and insisting effect of the section and enhances the focus on the vocals as well as the lyrics. This accentuates the hook.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 107.

²⁹⁴ Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 83–84.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

The backing vocals' repetition of "woman" at the end of the chorus stresses the topic of the song, confirming the announcement of the newfound self. It also leads the melody down to its lowest pitch, A3, which reaffirms the groundedness, gravity, and seriousness applied to the statement.

The effect of the call and response in the bridge is of echo, due to the fact that the backing vocals repeat the lyrics and melody sung by the lead with only small variations, making them seem less like an independent unity. They do not comment on the topic, like in "Respect", they simply repeat what has already been said. The interaction between lead and backing vocals does not create a pronounced ping-pong effect, even though this is one of the characteristics of call and response. Rather, the choir produces an echo filling in the gaps between the phrases. Yet, it comes forth as a countermeasure to the lead vocals, even though the effect is weaker than in "Respect". There is, however, no technical echo effect added to the voices of the backing or lead vocals. In general, the backing vocals are less imaginative and prominent but more standardised in comparison with "Respect". They are located in the front of the sound image, but not as far in the front as Franklin's voice. This makes them seem further away from the listener than the lead vocals, which enhances the echo effect. So does the reverb added to the backing vocals, which carries *experiential meaning potential* as it awakens associations to a phenomenon from the real world, i.e. echo.²⁹⁶

Thereby, the backing vocals are not offered as an identification possibility for the listener, as they mostly imitate the lead. Instead, they seem to function as an extension of the protagonist, whereas in "Respect" they suggest a crowd of people supporting the main character. Their role in "A Natural Woman" is stressed by the fact that the backing vocals never sing their own lyrics or melody, they always inherit their lines from the lead (I do not consider the "a-ooh"s in the first verse to be text or melody but rather a part of the accompaniment). The melody lines sung by the backing vocals are sometimes slightly different from the one performed by the lead singer, but this does not undermine the imitating effect as their lines always clearly derive from the lead's melody. Thus, the backing vocals largely serve as an intensification of the protagonist's achieved self-confidence and well-balance. She does not need a crowd of people to support her, she has got an inner strength which she can rely on.

²⁹⁶ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 121.

8. Discussion

“Respect” and “A Natural Woman” present two different female figures. In both cases, the woman is primarily portrayed through the lyrics and the vocal deliveries, but the overall arrangement and the musical performance of the song have an impact on how we perceive the characters, too. This supports Moore’s theory that the music influences our interpretation of persona.²⁹⁷ In the following chapter, the femininities in the two songs and Franklin’s musical persona will be discussed in relation to construction of gender, intersectionality, as political acts, prejudices against Black women, and validation of African American lives through autobiography.

8.1. The Female Characters

The woman in “Respect” is portrayed as a strong, powerful woman who reacts to her own situation. She is a round character with many facets. The lyrics describe a person who is loyal to and loves her partner but also a woman who is not afraid of demanding what she feels that she deserves and expects her partner to live up to this. Contrary to many female characters in popular culture, especially at the time where the song was released, the woman is presented as the active one while the man is passive.²⁹⁸ She is the person with the power of agency in the situation described in the song. This is an inversion of the normative gender roles, which will be discussed later on. Additionally, the protagonist is economically independent, and she seems to value this highly. This, too, is atypical for the image drawn of women in the 1960s. The protagonist appears emotionally involved in the message of the song – it is a personal matter to her. The sense of this is enhanced by Franklin’s vocal performance. The impression of a woman who has had enough is created. Her frustration has brought her to the point where she feels that she has to demand change to be able to stay in the relationship.

“A Natural Woman” portrays a woman who has undergone a change from being unhappy to feeling good about herself and her personal situation. She has attained a positive self-feeling. The woman and her inner condition are the main themes of the song. She is characterised by the contrast between the vulnerability felt in her past and the power, self-confidence, and groundedness expressed in the present. The protagonist cherishes her partner and the relationship between them is described as intimate and rewarding. The woman seems dependent on it, but this dependency is presented as positive. The connection to the man has changed her life to the better, she has realised things about herself which she apparently did not have access to earlier. Besides, when being in a relationship, you would normally be dependent on each other in some way, at least to a certain degree, whether it is economically, emotionally, or in other ways. However, it

²⁹⁷ Moore: *Song Means*, p. 180.

²⁹⁸ Machin and Thornborrow: *Branding and discourse*, p. 455.

seems as if the protagonist has gained a new inner strength through her new self-feeling suggesting that she may be able to maintain the healthy mental state even if the relationship should not last. At least, she appears stable in the sense that she seems able to bring her newfound confidence with her into other contexts than the relationship. This contrasts the weak impression of her and it suggests that she may be less dependent on another person in the future. This is supported by the weight on the word “woman” in the chorus creating a feeling of groundedness and stability. The grounded feeling also helps present the topic as a serious matter.

Thus, the two protagonists are very different and may even seem as each other’s opposites. First of all, the woman in “Respect” is presented as active. She acts and reacts to her own situation and seems able to change it by herself. She is not dependent on the man to create the life that she wants, just as she is not dependent on him economically. On the contrary, the female in “A Natural Woman” comes forth as passive. She needs someone else, i.e. her partner, to make the situation better for her, which expresses a high degree of dependency. The contrast between dependence and independence is illustrated in the way the two figures think about themselves. In “Respect”, the woman’s attitude is that she already has what the man wants and needs – a quite self-confident self-image. She does not need him to know her own worth. Oppositely, the personal narrative of the protagonist in “A Natural Woman” is that her partner has changed her into being what she needs to be for herself. Despite the differences, they are both presented as round characters, i.e. as complex individuals, as human beings are in reality. Furthermore, both lyrics are set within the private sphere of the home. Additionally, they are about relationships, which is normative for soul recordings and typical for popular songs in general.

In contrast to “Respect”, the situation of being single is evaluated negatively in “A Natural Woman”. She seems, at least at first glance, only happy in the relationship with her partner. The protagonist in the former does not appear afraid of leaving her partner if the situation does not change. In fact, she finds it better to be alone than to stay in a relationship where she does not feel like she is respected, which supports the image of an independent woman. This attitude towards being single was new at the time, at least within popular love songs.²⁹⁹ The woman in “A Natural Woman” fits the older description of women in love songs because of the passivity with which she comes forth as well as the negative view on single life. However, the figure differs from the earlier representation of women in the complexity with which she is described. She is a round character whereas those in old popular songs would be flat.

²⁹⁹ Machin: *Analysing Popular Music*, p. 79.

8.2. Aretha Franklin's Musical Persona

My use of the concept of musical persona rests on Moore's model, as pointed out earlier. This is the version consisting of performer, musical persona, and protagonist. As Moore writes, the performer and the protagonist are often easy to identify. We know that the singer performing in these recordings of "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" is Aretha Franklin, and the female protagonists have been summarised above. But what about the musical persona? How can we identify that? To do this I take Moore's three questions as my starting point: 1) Is the musical persona presented as realistic or fictional? 2) Do the lyrics describe a realistic or fictional situation and/or story? 3) Is the singer personally involved in the song or does he/she function more as an observer?

Franklin's persona comes forth as realistic. The voice, the story, and the message in both "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" are presented as coming directly from the performer, which is why it makes sense for listeners to interpret it like that, too. There is nothing in the performances which indicates that Franklin should not be the addresser. Likewise, in both cases, the situation is described realistically. This also applies if the situations are not something that most people would experience directly in their lives, which may be the case in, especially, "Respect". However, it is realistic that it has happened in the performer's life. Thus, the situations do not count as fictional even if the singer has not experienced them in reality. Both of the songs present everyday-like scenarios. Even though it does not happen every day or week, the situations emerge as something happening within and concerning the everyday life because the narratives are placed in the domain of the home and the songs concern partnership, among other things. Furthermore, this is supported by the description of the females as ordinary women living ordinary lives.

In both recordings, the singer seems to be personally involved, i.e. Franklin does not appear as a narrator telling us about something in which she is not engaged. Firstly, it is implied by the I-perspective with which the lyrics are written. This makes the protagonists seem as if they are Franklin herself. Secondly, Franklin's vocal delivery suggests a high degree of emotional involvement. She presents what Goffman calls "instant affect",³⁰⁰ hence, she is very emotionally expressive. This seems to be a part of Franklin's manner, i.e. a part of the way she acts when she is performing her musical persona. It has thereby become something we expect from Franklin when hearing her singing.

Viewing the answers to these three questions together – realistic persona, realistic situation, and personal involvement – the musical persona as well as the protagonists in the songs seem to reflect Franklin. She seems to attempt to merge the three levels together into one, whether this is done consciously or automatically, and it is difficult to distinguish between them. Franklin appears to present and sing about

³⁰⁰ Goffman: *Frame Analysis*, p. 571–572.

herself when performing “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”. It could even be suggested that the persona reflects Franklin’s personality. At least, this is the created impression. In this way, the performances seem to support Godlovitch’s concept of personalism, in which the performance is viewed as an expression of the artist’s personality.³⁰¹ However, I will not go into a discussion of whether and to what degree the protagonists and the presented persona reflect the way the “real” person Aretha Franklin lived her life and if the characters and the persona represent her private opinions on the themes introduced in the songs. If these aspects were different in reality than presented in the performances, this is not relevant to the impression given by the songs.

The two recordings illustrate what Moore calls the “bedrock” position for a musical persona. First of all, this means that the persona comes forth as realistic, the songs present everyday-like situations, and the performer seems personally involved. Additionally, the temporality of both songs is present, and they rather explore a moment than describe an actual narrative (even though both songs contain elements of story, too). The basis laid for the persona is, thus, normative for popular songs.

Through her musical persona, Franklin accommodates at least one of the major expectations for soul musicians, which is that the performers are “themselves” on stage and recordings. This was especially important within southern soul, which is perceived as more original and in contact with the musical roots than the Motown style.³⁰² Even though soul is one of the musical genres within which the artists have a relatively high degree of freedom to create and present their identities as they want, soul as a genre lamination does contain limitations and expectations for performers – as pointed out, one of them being to appear as themselves in their stage identity, i.e. their musical persona.

An interesting aspect of Franklin’s musical persona is that it contains both the female character of “Respect” and the one of “A Natural Woman”. Even though the two may seem very different, they come together and merge with our perception of Franklin in her persona, creating an even more complex figure than we meet in the individual songs. This may help to make Franklin seem human – she contains more sides, in this case, the strong and the vulnerable. This makes the persona more nuanced than the femininities constructed in the individual recordings.

The high degree of convergence between performer, musical persona, and protagonist opens up to the interpretation of the music as authentic. When the audience feel that the person they hear is singing about him-/herself, and that this is done without façades or artificiality, there is a chance that the listeners will

³⁰¹ Godlovitch: *Musical Performance*, p. 139–140.

³⁰² Christensen and Bach: *Soul*, p. 3.

perceive the song as coming directly from the performer. In the cases of “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”, the musical persona comes forth as authentic because of the fusion of the three identity levels.

The created impression that the protagonists are the same person as Franklin means that the “relatively fixed” signs³⁰³ influence our perception of the femininities constructed in the recordings. In the further discussion, I will focus on the fixed signs race and gender which I argue play an important role in understanding the potential effects and meanings of the femininities presented in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”. Gender and race have an impact on the way we perceive the performances.

8.3. The Construction of Gender

Gender is implied as a fundamental premise in “A Natural Woman”. It is clearly and repeatedly expressed in the song that the protagonist is a woman. This is confirmed by Franklin’s voice as well as knowledge about her being a female, just as these same aspects strongly suggest that the protagonist in “Respect” is a woman. The premise for this thesis is to think of gender as constructed, if not in reality then at least in the context of musical expressions like these two songs. The analyses were about unravelling what kind of femininities that are represented in the songs and how they are constructed. With that I mean what pictures of the female protagonists are drawn through lyrics, voice, and music. The two figures have been summed up and seen in relation to the concept of musical persona in the first parts of the chapter. In the next section, Butler’s gender theory will be used to discuss “Respect”, “A Natural Woman”, and the results of the analyses. Is it possible to get a deeper understanding of the songs, the characters, the musical persona, and what they represent through gender theory?

Shoemaker describes femininity as “a historically and culturally shifting heteronormative construct, typically but not exclusively applied to women, to reinforce and perpetuate dominant discourses of gender”.³⁰⁴ In many ways, the female construction in “Respect” represents a character which breaks with the traditional, western understanding of femininity. Not only is she economically independent, she breaks with the expectation of a woman as quiet, indulging, sweet, and never causing trouble. Furthermore, she threatens to end the relationship which “should” be the ideal constellation for a “real” woman – a heterosexual partnership which could foster a family. This femininity construction of a strong, independent woman might not seem feminine at all, according to traditional views. In this way, the woman constructed in “Respect” does not “live up” to the norms for women. When she denies conforming to the normative gender roles in a relationship, which at the time of the song’s release were even more dominant than they may be today, she breaks with the expectations for women developed through repetitions of acts over a

³⁰³ Goffman: *The Presentation of Self*, p. 34.

³⁰⁴ Shoemaker, Deanna Beth: *Queers, Monsters, Drag Queens, and Whiteness: Unruly Femininities in Women’s Staged Performances*, dissertation University of Texas at Austin 2004, p. 7.

long period of time. She challenges the hierarchy between man and woman, which is incorporated in the traditional gender roles and thereby, the dominant gender discourse. This can be viewed in relation to two specific points in Butler's theory: First of all, that the hierarchy between genders is not natural and, therefore, can be challenged. If it was biologically settled there would be no point in challenging it. Second, it can be related to Butler's notion of livable life. Butler explains that "[w]hen we ask what makes a life livable, we are asking about certain normative conditions that must be fulfilled for life to become life".³⁰⁵ This, inevitably, includes the normative conditions for gender. As it is now, to be intelligible as a person, basically, sex, gender, and desire must align in the normative way. However, in this exists a conflict for the individual who does not fit into the norms. For the single individual, the ideal life would probably include that he/she can express the gender and have the sexuality that he/she identifies with no matter what the biological sex is. However, when a person is "unusual" in the alignment of the three aspects, he/she is not perceived as intelligible. The lack of intelligibility makes the life less livable because the normative conditions do not comprise a human with different combinations of sex, gender, and desire. At the same time, to live a life performing acts against your own gender, sex, or desire does not seem like a satisfying way to live. Thus, when what makes a human intelligible is determined by the norms, and the female in "Respect" breaks with these norms, she risks becoming unintelligible. According to Butler's notion, "gender requires and institutes its own distinctive regulatory and disciplinary regime". When the female character acts unladylike and demands a change of norms she acts against this regime and risks receiving other people's scrutiny because their minds are shaped by the regulatory and disciplinary aspects of the norms. The conflict that the protagonist faces is, therefore, that she needs a change in her life, a change of norms, to make her life satisfying but by realising this change she risks becoming unintelligible in the eyes of others because she does not accommodate the normative conditions in life. Thus, by trying to make her life livable for her as an individual, she risks making it less livable by breaking the norms.

Whether she leaves her partner and becomes single or not, she has already stepped outside the norms by challenging the dynamics and the gender positionings in the relationship. Butler writes about the process of changing norms, that it

"means precisely to disrupt what has become settled knowledge and knowable reality, and to use [...] one's unreality to make an otherwise impossible or illegible claim. I think that when the unreal lays claim to reality, or enters into its domain, something other than a simple assimilation into prevailing norms can and does take place. The norms themselves can become rattled, display their instability, and become open to resignification."³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 39.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 27–28.

By disputing the gender hierarchy between herself and her partner, the protagonist in “Respect” challenges what we regard as common knowledge which has become reality through the repetition of acts performed by males and females over a long period of time. These acts are, consequently, not just performed by the protagonist and her partner but by the majority of people within western society. Her challenge of the unequal positioning between genders in her own relationship can, therefore, be perceived as a challenge of the whole idea of the patriarchy, thus, that men are positioned higher and have more power than women. By presenting the unreality, in this case that women want to be respected by men, she illustrates that the norms concerning gender hierarchies are instable and, thereby, not eternal truths or indisputable facts. This can seem provocative and the challenge of this basic system, the patriarchy, can create the impression that the utterances of the protagonist is a political act. This idea will be treated further below.

Although the feminine construction in “Respect” can be interpreted as a figure challenging the gender norms and hierarchies, the whole affair is operating within the frames of heteronormativity. The aim of the proclamation is, after all, to maintain the relationship. This is connected to the context in which the song was written and released. Even though the female character comes forth as one who breaks with norms and expectations, I suggest that she does not challenge heterofemininity per se. At first glance, the concept of heterofemininity seems only to refer to sexuality, but it covers more than that. Raquel Moreira defines the term as follows: “Heterofemininity traditionally pertains to White, heterosexual, middle-class Western women [...] it is the bourgeois performance of femininity that defines boundaries and norms for all women regarding what is appropriate and what is ‘excessive’”.³⁰⁷ The general ideal within soul was heteronormativity and, as a performer within this genre and a young woman in the 1960s, Franklin was raised within the frames of the heteronormative ideal in society and expected to generally display heterofeminine behaviour – like all other women. Prejudices against Black people had long been that they were more primitive than white people and that they were sexually obscene. African American men were perceived as being crazy after white women and, therefore, always potentially dangerous. Black women were thought of as sexually insatiable which morally “approved” sexual assaults and rape of them as it was commonly “known” that they deep down liked it. This stereotype of Black women is known as the Jezebel.³⁰⁸ Thus, a need had arisen within the African American community to present themselves as decent citizens by living up to the norms of the white America. This included heteronormativity and heterofemininity. Soul as a genre can in some ways be viewed as part of this process, especially Motown soul which intentionally produced music meant to cross over to the white audience. To fulfil this wish, the artists and musicians were trained in appropriate behaviour and clothing. Southern soul is less clear in this

³⁰⁷ Moreira: *Now That I'm a Whore*, p. 175.

³⁰⁸ Simms, Rupe: “Controlling Images and the Gender Construction of Enslaved African Women”, in *Gender & Society*, Vol. 15, No. 6, 2001, p. 882–883.

sense, as none of these artists had remarkable crossover success until Franklin's cooperation with Atlantic Records. However, the heteronormative relationship was still the ideal within the style. Often, soul singers would act like love guides during concerts, advising people how to establish and maintain a healthy relationship. In "Respect", the woman also expresses this ideal. She loves her partner and is loyal to him. To mention it once again, the aim in the song is to keep the relationship. What is challenged is thereby not the overall form of the relationship – the ideal that a man and a woman should live together and love each other. The challenge takes place *within* this frame. She wants to rearrange the positions within the framework, make the engaged more equal. Hence, heteronormativity is the ideal in "Respect", but the protagonist only wants to preserve the ideal to the extent that she feels comfortable within it. She wishes to stay in the relationship provided that the man changes his behaviour. In this way, it is not a challenge of heteronormativity as idea, but a challenge of how it is practiced – a challenge of the hierarchy acted out within the frames of a heterosexual relationship.

Heterofemininity, the white, middle-class norm for females, was the ideal within soul, too (though this changed partly with the rise of Black Power which made African inspired looks and culture as the roots of African Americans fashionable within the Black community). Even though the economically independent woman, the autonomous female protagonist does appear to go against the traditional form of heterofemininity, it still seems like it is more the details within it than the overall idea of it that is challenged. It may be interpreted as an empowerment of women within the frames of heterofemininity. Another dilemma is that Franklin, like all other Black women, could never fully live up to the image of heterofemininity because of her skin colour.

The lyrics in "A Natural Woman" do to a greater extent than "Respect" confirm normative gender roles – the norms are not challenged. The female protagonist is presented as passive in the material world. She does not appear able to act on and change her own situation which makes her come forth as somewhat weak. The man is the active and the acting character in the song, who has made a difference in the woman's life. Nevertheless, "A Natural Woman" illustrates a complex understanding of gender as a phenomenon. First of all, what does a natural woman mean? It points to gender being natural, something we are born with. However, this is contrasted in the same sentence as the expression is sung: "You make me *feel* like a natural woman". That is, the woman does not say that she *is* a natural woman, but that she *feels* like one, i.e. she has the experience of being a woman and this is presented as an achievement. This may point to the idea that gender is constructed. Thus, the line may suggest that we have an idea about what a natural woman is, but that this idea, like other notions of gender, is not an innate fact but a mental, emotional, and social construction. This is supported by Butler's utterance that "[g]ender is the mechanism by which

notions of masculine and feminine are produced and naturalised”.³⁰⁹ This means that, from a culturalist point of view, the feeling of feeling like a natural gender is actually a naturalised understanding of gender which is culturally produced and, therefore, is not *natural* in the sense that it stems from a biological, innate source.

As mentioned earlier, a premise in “A Natural Woman” is the existence of gender. If gender did not exist, or if we did not believe that it existed, it would not make sense that the character repeatedly announces herself as a woman. As Butler notes after quoting the line “You make me feel like a natural woman” in *Gender Trouble*, this identification is only possible when assuming the existence of the other gender. Thus, we identify ourselves as a gender by differentiating us from the other gender. This implicates the limits that the binary understanding of gender contains because categorising yourself as a woman implies what you are not, namely, what characterises a man.³¹⁰ Additionally, “A Natural Woman” can be interpreted as supporting Beauvoir’s idea that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”,³¹¹ i.e. that gender is a process.³¹² In the song, this idea can be understood as represented through the way the character does not feel like a woman, or at least a natural or “real” woman, until a change has taken place in her life. It is, thereby, something she has become.

“A Natural Woman” can be interpreted as illustrating how gender is socially constructed. We need the other as reflection to create our identity, including the perception of our gender affiliation. This means that our context and the people around us influence the formation of our gender. In the lyrics, the woman defines herself through contact with the other. Apparently, her partner’s view and treatment of her have changed her perception of herself. Not until after she got to know him, did she come to feel like a natural woman, i.e. the gender she identifies herself with. Through the kind of social contact that the man offers she feels like her “real” self. To borrow Butler’s terminology, after the protagonist has got a male partner, her sex, gender, and desire have been aligned normatively and she has become intelligible, also for herself. For Butler, this is explained as “[t]he norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain kinds of practices and action to become recognizable as such, imposing a grid of legibility on the social”.³¹³ Now, when the protagonist’s sex as woman and female gender are met by a fulfilled desire for a man, she can perform the practices which the norm allows as recognisably intelligible. Put differently: “one is a woman, according to this framework, to the extent that one functions as one within the dominant heterosexual frame”.³¹⁴ In this

³⁰⁹ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 42.

³¹⁰ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 29–30.

³¹¹ Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*, p. 295.

³¹² Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 43.

³¹³ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 42.

³¹⁴ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. xi.

way, the reason for the unhappiness felt in the past could be interpreted as unintelligibility. Not until it was socially confirmed that her sex, gender, and desire were normatively connected, did the protagonist understand herself as a human being and could feel happiness. Now she can perform her gender fully and properly.

According to Butler, the notion that gender is constructed in the social world means that we become gendered *for others*,³¹⁵ i.e. to feel understood by others so that we can be a part of and live in a social community. However, in this song it seems like she primarily becomes gendered for herself. Her relation to herself is presented as the most important one. The man has only been the vehicle to make her realise her own potential. However, if it was not society's expectations of people to be and perform a certain gender, then maybe the protagonist would not have felt depressed before she was able to fully prove her desire for men socially by finding a partner. This reflects the context which is, like in "Respect", heteronormative. Thus, this set of norms has influenced the construction of the femininity in "A Natural Woman" as, according to Butler, gender cannot be separated from its political and cultural context in which it is produced.³¹⁶ In this case, a natural woman seems not only to be a woman who feels like herself but one who feels that she lives up to the norms and expectations for females.

"A Natural Woman" illustrates that we depend on others. We cannot escape the social world even after we have grown old enough to take physical care of ourselves. This is what Butler calls the "primary vulnerability to the other". The female character exemplifies this as she clearly needs the social contact in her life. This is not to imply that she did not have social relations before she met the man, but rather to point out that she lacked a certain social intimacy that could confirm her identity as a woman.

The femininity constructed in "A Natural Woman" does, thereby, confirm gender norms and roles to a greater extent than "Respect". She is conforming to the social arrangement as it already is. Rather than changing it so that she, for example, could feel good and like a natural woman even without having a partner, she follows the existing norm set and feels good when conforming to them in the social realm. This comes fourth even though the lyrics express that the idea of feeling like a gender is constructed rather than an intrinsic fact.

8.4. Intersectionality and African American Women

In a discussion of Franklin's music and the femininities represented in her songs it should not be ignored that Franklin is of African American origin. As seen in the section about her musical persona, this is a part of her performer identity. Even if a listener heard "Respect" or "A Natural Woman" without knowing who

³¹⁵ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 25.

³¹⁶ Butler: *Gender Trouble*, p. 6.

Franklin was, a little bit of understanding of western music could link the songs to African American culture through the vocal style, the laid-back feeling, and other musical aspects. Thereby, Franklin comes to represent a marginalised group in the American society, namely, Women of Colour. This group generally exists in the intersection point between at least two marginalising aspects, race and gender, but often other aspects like class come into play, too, because African American women are more likely to be poor than any other population group in the US.³¹⁷ An intersectional approach focuses on the intersecting ways that people can be marginalised because of several aspects at the same time. From this perspective, the focus on femininities can be combined with race. This makes sense to do as for many Black women these two aspects are inseparable, and they often identify as strongly with their race as with their gender.³¹⁸

Race as well as gender connote natural, unalterable, and even necessary differences.³¹⁹ These beliefs justify inequalities in society as they seem inborn and unchangeable. Black women have been at the bottom of the social hierarchy since the slavery. In that period, Black women were seen as different from white women because of their race, but a division between Black men and Black women existed, too, because of gender conceptions making the males stand socially higher than the females.³²⁰ As this had become the norm, and as the hierarchies were perceived as naturally founded, the social status of African American women did not change with the abolition of slavery. These norms and the prejudices and biases following, supporting, and reproducing them still have effects today. They have become the hegemonial matrix within which social life forms.³²¹ African American women often experience generalisation and homogenisation within the groups 'women' and 'Blacks'. This entails that the differences between Black and white women as well as Black men and Black women are obliterated in the public sphere.³²² At the same time, they do not count as representatives of neither African Americans nor women because of othering through prejudices against them which makes them perceived as 'the other' and, thus, different from a starting point. Therefore, Black women are largely invisible within the public domain (even though there are exceptions).³²³

Butler used intersectional theories, among others, to develop her gender theories, and in some intersectional analyses her concept of a matrix has been incorporated. Butler's theory is, as explained, that

³¹⁷ Harris-Perry, Melissa V.: *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America*, New Haven / London: Yale University Press 2011, p. 106.

³¹⁸ Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahatta: *How We Get Free. Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective*, Chicago: Haymarket Books 2017, p. 2.

³¹⁹ Meyer, Katrin: *Theorien der Intersektionalität zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius 2017, p. 100.

³²⁰ King, Wilma: "'Suffer with Them Till Death'. Slave Women and Their Children in Nineteenth-Century America", in Darlene Clark Hine, John McCluskey, Jr., and David Berry Gaspar (eds.): *More Than Chattel: Black Women and Slavery in the Americas*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1996, p. 58.

³²¹ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 42.

³²² Meyer: *Intersektionalität*, p. 77–78.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 73–77.

individuals subjectivise themselves within the intersectional norms which constitute the social grid termed matrix. The intersectional theories contain the idea that people often submit to normalisation to avoid disregard from others.³²⁴ This can be linked to Butler's concept of livable life and conformity to norms to achieve intelligibility, a process mostly conducted unknowingly. The felt necessity among African Americans to submit to middleclass, often Eurocentric norms developed by white people,³²⁵ exemplifies the process of conforming to normalisation to be viewed more positively by the majority and thereby, avoid contempt by not showing yourself as different. Again, the decent image of soul can be interpreted as an effect of this as, for instance, Motown owner Berry Gordy incorporated the "refining" schooling of the musicians to get positive attention from the white music audience and produce cross-over hits.³²⁶

But the two theoretical standpoints, intersectionality theories and Butler's gender theory, do contain a conflict when compared. Much of the intersectional research (but not all) is based on categorising concepts like gender, sexuality, or race to point out inequalities in society. Butler argues that gender is only a socially constructed phenomenon and suggests reducing discrimination by eliminating, or at least extending, the category itself. However, both standpoints have as one of their aims to identify inequality and discrimination and contain a transformative potential.

In neither "Respect" nor "A Natural Woman" are Black and white women explicitly divided as groups. No words in the lyrics link the recordings directly to one of the two. Rather, women as an overall category is used. This suggests that Franklin does not wish to make this differentiation or to emphasise her own racial origin. It may also have seemed a bit odd, maybe even inappropriate, if the authors Carole King and Gerry Goffin had weighted African American aspects when they are not a part of the community themselves. However, as already accounted for, Franklin's identity as an African American woman and the arrangement of the music create a connection to the Black community and Women of Colour. Therefore, in discussing the femininities constructed in the songs and the meaning of them, race is an important aspect to consider in relation to gender, even when Franklin does not mention race or colour explicitly in her songs. This is supported by Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins who writes about "Respect" that

"Even though the lyrics can be sung by anyone, they take on special meaning when sung by Aretha in the way that she sings them. On one level the song functions as a metaphor for the condition of African-Americans in a racist society. But Aretha's being a Black *woman* enables the song to tap a deeper meaning. Within the blues tradition, the listening audience of African-American women assumes 'we' Black women, even though Aretha as the blues singer sings 'I'."³²⁷

³²⁴ Meyer: *Intersektionalität*, p. 65.

³²⁵ Harris-Perry: *Sister Citizen*, p. 106–107.

³²⁶ Sykes, Charles: "Profiles of Record Labels: Motown", in Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby (eds.): *African American Music: An Introduction*, New York / London: Routledge 2006, p. 441.

³²⁷ Collins, Patricia Hill: *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, 2nd edition, London / New York: Routledge 2000 / 1990, p. 115.

Thus, according to Collins, race and gender together have a significant meaning for the perception of “Respect”, which underlines the intersectional notion that the two aspects intertwine. It also supports the argument that Franklin as performer influences the way we interpret the song.

8.5. Songs as Political Acts

As seen in the analysis, many aspects of “Respect” make the song seem like a proclamation: the form of the melody, the high volume of the voice, the attention claiming vocal style, and other musical and lyrical elements. The protagonist comes forth as a woman with a message. This way of acting can seem provocative if it does not come from an expected source, which often is determined on the basis of a person’s power and status.³²⁸ Here the demand comes from a very unexpected position: the one of Black women. The musical style as well as knowledge of the performer confirm the racial affiliation. As mentioned above, African American women represent in different ways the bottom of society. A loud, attention seeking act made by a member of this social group – a group which is simultaneously invisible in the public sphere and perceived as ‘the other’ – is provoking, especially when the act is a proclamation meant to change the existing norms and hierarchies. Changing these norms would not just mean that the position of African American women would change, but that those placed higher in the hierarchy would have to give up some of their power. This makes the song a political act, at least at some level, even if it was not the original intention. To understand this better it is necessary to view the relationship described in the song as symbolising a larger social context. In this way, the message becomes relevant for a larger group of people. This is supported by the sense of community which the backing vocals foster. The woman is presented as part of a unity, a front-runner as well as a team player. The felt endorsement from the backing vocals to the project makes it seem as if the woman pleads a collective cause in society. The backing vocals’ suggested support also connote solidarity. Furthermore, the sense of the political aspect is strengthened by the fact that Franklin rewrote the lyrics, changing the perspective from being that of a man to being of a woman.³²⁹ This must be assumed as a conscious act. Franklin did not just write about her own situation as she felt it in the moment, she chose to convert the perspective and point of an already existing and popular song, in which the man demands respect from his wife when he comes home from work, to the complete opposite and thereby, point out what she considers as false in the first one, presumably. In short, Franklin’s claim of respect turns into a provocative act which becomes political because of the position she represents in society.

As already pointed out, the demand for respect uttered by the female character in “Respect” expresses a wish for change. She calls for a reorganisation of the usual, a break with that which is perceived as natural.

³²⁸ van Leeuwen: *Speech, Music, Sound*, p. 133.

³²⁹ Malaway: *Find Out What It Means to Me*, p. 199.

By that, she indirectly articulates a critique of the dominating, hegemonial structures governing gender roles and social behaviour, i.e. an indirect critique of the gender hierarchy. These kinds of critiques open up for the possibility of a change of the interpretation of what normativity is.³³⁰ This suggests that the transformative potential existing in intersectional research and analysis can be found in some cultural expressions, too, for example, in “Respect”. Or maybe, it is rather the analysis and interpretation of the song that can bring attention to specific power structures in society, just as a fundamental idea within intersectional approaches is that the analysis of oppressive situations can bring implicit or explicit inequalities into focus.³³¹ This is not to say that cultural expressions are similar to oppressive situations, but to note that the studying of a cultural phenomenon may lead to the uncovering of social points which might otherwise be overseen. Franklin could not have known about intersectionality as the term and the scientific practice were not developed at the time “Respect” was released.³³² Furthermore, Franklin claims not to make political songs intentionally: “I’m not a politician or political theorist. I don’t make it a practice to put my politics into my music or social commentary.”³³³ However, with the rewriting of the original lyrics into one from a woman’s perspective, she brings focus to an injustice which she apparently experiences. This injustice can be explained as a sort of oppression as the lack of respect illustrates a perception of the other person as not worthy of it, thus, less worthy. If we once again view the description of the relationship as symbolising society, the inequality that the protagonist experiences in her personal relationship with her partner is an image of a general inequality in society. Thereby, it is assumed that the protagonist represented by Franklin articulates a problem felt by African American women in general.

No matter how many or few theoretical reflections Franklin made before recording “Respect”, the song contains an emancipatory element. On the individual level, she wants a higher status through respect in the relationship. With higher status follows more social freedom. The wish for repositionings within the social realm implicitly contains a critique of the power structure, as already mentioned. The goal seems to be a higher degree of social justice as she, apparently, experiences unfair effects of the current distribution of power, which is shaped by the norms which she breaks by acting unladylike and demanding change.

“Respect” can be interpreted as a political act in its way of demanding change and bringing unjustified power structures into focus. The proclaiming manner with which the song is arranged and sung supports

³³⁰ Meyer: *Intersektionalität*, p. 72.

³³¹ Ibid., p. 30.

³³² Kimberly W. Crenshaw termed the scientific approach ‘intersectionality’ in 1989 from the idea of a road accident victim standing in an intersection as a symbol of how people can be discriminated in several ways by being hit from different sides at the same time, the roads connoting categories like gender, race, class, sexuality, and diagnoses. Crenshaw, Kimberly W.: “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics”, in Anne Phillips (ed.): *Feminism and Politics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1998, p. 314–343.

³³³ Franklin and Ritz: *Aretha*, p. 155.

the idea of a political act which may be the reason why it often has been interpreted politically within many different contexts, even though politics is not an explicit theme mentioned in the lyrics. However, this may be the reason why it has been used in so many different political contexts from Black freedom movements over white feminism and Black womanism to queer organisations as well as Black Pride.³³⁴ The lyrics do not shut out possibilities of addresser interpretations, even though women of colour are implied through Franklin's persona. What the song does, on a general level, is to point attention to the position of the marginalised. Who this marginalised person or group is, is ultimately up to the listener's interpretation.

8.6. Prejudices: The Sapphire and The Strong Black Woman

Three negative stereotypes have dominated the portrayal of African American women through most of their history in America. These are the Mammy, the Jezebel, and the Sapphire.³³⁵ The Mammy is described as the good and faithful household slave or servant.³³⁶ This image vindicates and reproduces white men's dominance – after all, the Mammy “enjoys” her position.³³⁷ The Jezebel is a stark contrast to this figure. She is presented as promiscuous, sexually insatiable, and full of sexual passions – a “manipulating seductress”.³³⁸ As already mentioned, this stereotype was used to justify rape and sexual assaults committed mainly by white men against Black women because it was perceived as fulfilling the women's own sexuality.³³⁹ The third stereotype, the Sapphire, is a hot-tempered, masculine, and dominating woman. This, especially, is directed towards her husband.³⁴⁰ She is an “angry, loud, and aggressive matriarch”.³⁴¹ This has functioned as explanation for a degrading attitude towards Black families.

The two former stereotypes, the Mammy and the Jezebel, both do not encounter the femininities constructed in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman”. In fact, if anyone is a helping caretaker in “A Natural Woman”, it is the man who helps her get over her troubles. The Sapphire is not represented in that song, but the relation to this stereotype is more unclear in “Respect”. The protagonist is not afraid of demanding things from her partner, but does this make her dominating? Does the song confirm the stereotype through the woman's act? There is no physical description of her, so we do not know if she looks manly. However, Franklin, who's body through the musical persona comes to represent the protagonist's, is not coming

³³⁴ Werner: *Higher Ground*, p. 129, 213.

³³⁵ Walker-Barnes, Chaney: “The Burden of the Strong Black Woman”, in *Journal of Pastoral Theology*, Vol. 19, No. 1, 2009, p. 1.

³³⁶ Eck, Christine E.: “Three Books, Three Stereotypes: Mothers and the Ghosts of Mammy, Jezebel, and Sapphire in contemporary African American Literature”, in *Criterion: A Journal of Literary Criticism*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 2018, p. 11.

³³⁷ Simms: *Controlling Images*, p. 882.

³³⁸ Walker-Barnes: op. cit., p. 1.

³³⁹ Simms: op. cit., p. 882–883.

³⁴⁰ Eck: op. cit., p. 12.

³⁴¹ Walker-Barnes: op. cit., p. 1.

forth as masculine. Despite that, the acts and the way of the acts can, as already discussed, be perceived as masculine. To demand and to be loud are characteristics included by the norms for males, not for females. The protagonist does not seem angry, rather frustrated and serene. The performance of the song, vocally and musically, contains some elements that could be interpreted as aggressive, for instance, the way the guitar is played in the intro and the raspiness in the voice. Thus, it can be said that the female figure in “Respect” does not fully conform to the stereotype of the Sapphire, but she implies aspects of it. However, it would probably in most cases be difficult for a Black woman to demand her right in any sort of situation without being characterised as, or at least compared to, this stereotype, even when the demand is fair.

In the period of the Civil Rights Movement, a new stereotype about African American women emerged. This was the self-imposed archetype of the strong Black woman. It is characterised by strength, independence (also financially), caregiving, as well as emotional stability and robustness idealised to an extreme degree making the woman able to stand and overcome all the sufferings of her family, losses, traumas, and suppression. However, this idealised stereotype imposes a great deal of self-neglect and role strain on the African American women, which they may not recognise themselves because pain among these women is viewed as weakness. There is a pressure and a felt necessity to put the needs of others before one’s own, which applies to the norms for all women. However, for Black females this pressure is intensified because of traditional African American values and the fight against racism. A Black woman’s acts reflect back on the whole community, whereas a white woman’s may only reflect back on herself or, perhaps, her family.³⁴² Despite that the stereotype emphasises positive sides of Black women, it is generalising and keeps the women in a position where they are perceived as not needing help. With this stereotype dominating, the sufferings of African American women can go unrecognised or even be glorified.³⁴³ As early as 1978 did Black feminist Michele Wallace describe how the stereotype in this way can cover up patriarchy within the African American community.³⁴⁴

The idea of the strong Black woman is interesting in relation to the songs, which were recorded and released about the time that the stereotype developed. This means that the recordings, especially “Respect”, may have played a role in forming the stereotype at the same time as the stereotype may have been imposed on the songs because of their social context. There is also the possibility that the songs only have incorporated parts of the stereotype as it may not have been as fundamentally grounded in the mentality of people yet.

³⁴² Walker-Barnes: *The Burden of The Strong Black Woman*, p. 1–5.

³⁴³ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁴⁴ Wallace, Michele: *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, New York: The Dial Press 1978.

In some ways, the strong Black woman is confirmed by the female figure in “Respect” while other elements of the song as well as “A Natural Woman” disconfirm the stereotype. In “Respect”, the female is presented as powerful and stable. However, she does not express any ambitions of quietly staying in a situation where she suffers or is suppressed, i.e. where she does not feel respected. Thus, she contains the characteristic of being strong and she is presented as in relative control with her feelings which both are aspects that fits into the stereotype. However, she contradicts the idea of being willing or, maybe, able to neglect her own needs for others to stay socially approved.

The protagonist in “A Natural Woman” can be said to represent the opposite of the strong Black woman, at least in the impression of her in the past. She is portrayed weaker and emotionally unstable, but with the help from another person she overcomes her troubles. In the construction of her, she does not seem as if she “suffered with grace” or stood strong and robustly through her sufferings. However, she develops into appearing strong, or at any rate, grounded and stable, through her new self-confidence in the present time. In both of the songs, it is not presented as a virtue to bear your sufferings, big or small, with pride or ignore them for the sake of others. The wellbeing of the women is thematised as something important and the songs do not produce any sense of self-neglect. This contradicts the stereotype of the strong Black woman and rejects the negative effects of it. Walker-Barnes defines the strong Black woman as “an identity that is defined by suffering but which offers no hope or means for transcendence above this suffering”.³⁴⁵ But in both songs, this is contradicted. The woman in “A Natural Woman” *does* transcend her sufferings, and the female in “Respect” illustrates her means for doing so. Even though self-sacrifice is somewhat expected by Black, and all other, women do neither the protagonist in “Respect” nor in “A Natural Woman” sacrifice themselves. In “Respect”, the female fights for herself, thus, she refuses to be in a situation where she is suppressed. In “A Natural Woman”, the protagonist gets help to overcome her situation. The fact that someone helps *her* rather than the other way around, that she helps others, contradicts the stereotype, too. The strong Black woman, like the Mammy, is expected to be an inexhaustible resource for care and help for others, but because of her strength she does not need help herself. As a consequence of the perceived power, suffering has become a normative part of African American women. Black women’s physical and emotional distress is, therefore, often not recognised by society.³⁴⁶ In “A Natural Woman”, this is not the case. The earlier unhappiness of the protagonist is acknowledged, at least by herself and, assumably, her partner, and it is not glorified. On the contrary, her happiness is emphasised positively as something of worth. Women of all races, but especially Black women, are brought up to think that their worth lies in their ability to help, nurse, and be needed by others.³⁴⁷ But here the protagonist finds worth in her own wellbeing

³⁴⁵ Walker-Barnes: *The Burden of The Strong Black Woman*, p. 12.

³⁴⁶ Harris-Perry: *Sister Citizen*, p. 217–218.

³⁴⁷ Walker-Barnes: op. cit., p. 3.

and does not only value herself according to how good she handles the role of the caretaker. Additionally, by telling the listeners about the pain felt in the past, she exposes her vulnerability to others. This is something that the strong Black woman-stereotype often prevent African American females from doing because of the expectation of strength and the fear of failing to be strong.³⁴⁸ Furthermore, the façade of being in control with everything in their lives cracks when a woman shows her vulnerability and inefficiencies. The unattainable ideal of a superwoman is moderated to a more realistic and humanised figure. The same can be argued about the woman in “Respect”. She appears as strong, but we sense her emotions through, mainly, the vocal delivery and she is presented as a normal woman rather than an unreachable ideal.

As mentioned, neither of the two female protagonists neglect themselves. In “A Natural Woman”, the female character may have “suffered in silence”, but in “Respect”, she is loud and demands attention to her problem. As already argued, by doing this she brings focus to a general problem and the musical persona seems to be dedicated to a cause benefitting other people, though, maybe only indirect. The aim to help others is a part of the stereotype of the strong Black woman, however, in “Respect” this aim is approached without the expense of the female character. As the female characters come together in Franklin’s musical persona, the persona simultaneously confirms and denies the prejudices of the Sapphire and the strong Black woman. This supports the complexity of Franklin’s persona which, further, backs the perception of Franklin as an ordinary human being.

8.7. Autobiography and Validation of African American Lives

The aspect that the wellbeing of the female protagonist is valued in the songs is of interest to this thesis. Her general inner state is presented as something of worth in “A Natural Woman”. This points unusual attention to the mental and psychological health of African American women. As intersectional theories point out, they are largely invisible in the public realm and their voices are, therefore, seldom heard in debates, even when they concern things relevant to their living. Thus, their lives and wellbeing are less in focus than those of white people or Black men.³⁴⁹

Since the slave narratives, autobiography has been used as a means for African Americans to tell their life stories and document “their own personal truths” as well as to motivate social change and justice.³⁵⁰ By writing and publishing their stories and, thereby, telling the (white) public about personal experiences, individuals could claim and state their individualities. This has been important for the Black population

³⁴⁸ Walker-Barnes: *The Burden of The Strong Black Woman*, p. 5.

³⁴⁹ Harris-Perry: *Sister Citizen*, p. 201.

³⁵⁰ Pough, Gwendolyn: *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Boston: Northeastern University Press 2015/2004, p. 103.

throughout their history in America as they have lived in a society that generally “denied the existence of their realities”.³⁵¹ Autobiography became a way to acquire a voice in the public sphere and to make the self recognised. According to Joanna Braxton, especially for Black women, the autobiography has been connected to the claim for a space in society.³⁵² In this way, the story about one’s own life became a way to validate the life of the author and, thereby, the lives of people in the same situation: “Slave narratives and later autobiographies granted African Americans the space to validate their own lives and in turn to validate the lives of other African Americans with similar experiences”.³⁵³ These stories documented the status of the Blacks in the US. Through this, emancipation and change were aimed for and the autobiographies, thus, were political. Women’s narratives contain, according to Maria Pia Lara, illocutionary force because of the transformative goal of justice. It is brought forward in the stories of their lives which are told with the aim and hopes for change in the future.³⁵⁴ Gwendolyn D. Pough describes illocutionary force in the following way: “Illocutionary force redraws understandings of justice and the good life and deconstructs the liberal understanding of the public/private split. In short, illocutionary force flips the script and brings wreck using personal narrative and life stories to effect change.”³⁵⁵ An effect of illocutionary force is that it can make us acknowledge different ways to be in the world and, thereby, make us realise the prejudices and biases which affect lives. This realisation is what can lead to transformation. Often, autobiographies with illocutionary force have been linked to specific causes or fights, like the recognition of the negative effects of the slavery, the Civil Rights Movement, or Black Power.

Pough argues that rap and the hip hop culture is today’s catalyst for the telling of African Americans’ life stories. Through rap young Blacks, who generally have less opportunities in life, have a platform from which they can report the bad side of society and, thus, provide themselves with a public voice.³⁵⁶ I suggest that other musical styles can and have been used to tell the stories of African Americans and function as a mouth piece for that part of the population, too. Thereby, not said that all musical expressions by African Americans have functioned or have been attended to function like that. However, in 1967, when “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” were released, rap and the hip hop culture did not exist. Thus, these were not possible ways to express injustices experienced by Black people yet. But soul was in some cases used to point attention to social problems in the 1960s. Obviously, the image of and conditions under which soul developed were very different from rap. Rap developed in the 1970s in the New York area the Bronx at a

³⁵¹ Pough: *Check It While I Wreck It*, p. 103.

³⁵² Braxton, Joanne: *Black Women Writing Autobiography: A Tradition Within a Tradition*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1989, p. 2.

³⁵³ Pough: op. cit., p. 103.

³⁵⁴ Lara, Maria Pia: *Moral Textures: Feminist Narratives in the Public Sphere*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1998, p. 71.

³⁵⁵ Pough: op. cit., p. 104.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

time where the conditions for the Black population were even worse than in the 1960s, and it represented the poor urban youth. Oppositely, soul generally presents a middleclass-world conform to white norms, especially Motown which made it an important part of their business strategy to reflect decency and white ideals. Despite this, some political songs were released within the genre, among others, by Curtis Mayfield who already in 1964 recorded “Keep On Pushing” with the Impressions. Furthermore, soul was linked to the Civil Rights Movement and Black Power and was perceived as the soundtrack for the African American protests.³⁵⁷ The teenage love songs performed by artists like The Supremes, of course, rarely can be said to have an emancipatory content. And political recordings are, of course, not necessarily equal to autobiographic songs. However, a song like “Respect” that points to a problem of inequality not just in the single relationship but in society, which was relevant at the time it was released and, in many cases, still is today, I would argue can contain illocutionary force. A song like this does not present the full autobiography of the performer, it may not even present a situation which has taken place in reality. However, the story is presented as experienced by the singer and the authenticity with which Franklin’s musical persona can be perceived creates the impression that she is telling us about something from her own life. Put differently, because of her perceived authentic musical persona, Franklin appears as presenting her subjective experience. Through this, complex connections between power structures at individual and group level can be thematised.³⁵⁸ This combined with her racial identity connects the song to the African American tradition of using autobiography to bring injustices into focus and aim at change. Just like the autobiographies have documented the lower status of African Americans in society, “Respect” draws attention to the status of the Black woman, and women in general, being under the status of men.

I suggest that the above explained argument of “Respect” applies to “A Natural Woman”, too, even though its emancipatory aim is not as clearly expressed as in “Respect”. But as observed, “A Natural Woman” constitutes a rare description of a Black woman because of the valuing of the protagonist’s inner state. The song validates the life of the female character, which reflects on the performer and her life. It points to the worth of a Black woman in her being a human and not because of her normative role as a caretaker. Through this validation of a Black woman’s life, it can be said that the lives of African American women in general are validated. I argue this despite that the lyrics were written by two white authors. The song is performed by a Black woman and normally, this is what is perceived by the audience, not who actually wrote the lyrics. That African American women have presented a wish for validation of their own lives at specific points in the American history makes sense as they have always been positioned at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Generally, no one else used to document their lives, why the need for doing it

³⁵⁷ Werner: *Higher Ground*, s. 66–67.

³⁵⁸ Meyer: *Intersektionalität*, p. 111.

themselves through cultural expressions emerged. The validation of life through reporting one's own story can be seen in relation to Butler's remark that to utter or express oneself can open up for being human, i.e. for being intelligible and visible in society, as the idea of what it means to be human is historically changing and often excludes minorities.³⁵⁹ Thus, cultural expressions with perceived autobiographic aspects like "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" carry the potential of making a group of people recognised as human beings. The aim of most intersectional analyses can be compared to the emancipatory goal of validating African American lives through autobiography. According to Meyer, intersectional research attempt to create recognition of differences and solidarity in society, among other things. The validation of the lives of a minority through autobiography would, I suppose, necessarily imply recognition by the majority as well as solidarity towards the minority to bring it out of the marginalised position.

The physical aspect in "A Natural Woman" is important as the protagonist's feeling-good about herself and her look is an accept as well as a validation of not just the existence but, also, the body of the musical persona, hence the body of a woman of colour. It suggests the worth of herself as a person and a Black woman which states that to be white is not the only way to be or look right. This is stated through the narrative of a Black woman who feels good about her natural self, including her natural look, which indicates that she does not strive to fit into the norms promoting the look of white females. According to journalist and editor Toyin Owoseje, this aspect of the song has meant a lot for Black women and Women of Colour since its release.³⁶⁰

In the ways explained above, "A Natural Woman" can be seen as promoting a social and political opinion which comes forth through the combination of the lyrics with Franklin's identity as a Black woman. This adds a subtle layer to the song which might not be agreed upon or perceived by many listeners.

Furthermore, as the song was written by two white people this is very likely not to have been an intentional possible interpretation of the song. Even though Franklin has stated that "Respect" was not intentionally made as a political song, it has been perceived and used like that on many occasions. The discussion above supports the political perception of the song as they point to social injustice between genders and can be understood as validating the lives of Black women.

³⁵⁹ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 13.

³⁶⁰ Taylor and Youngs: *Aretha Franklin's A Natural Woman*.

9. Conclusion

The femininities in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” are constructed and multimodally communicated through lyrics and sounds, hence, vocals and musical elements in the arrangement. We associate different sounds with different moods and phenomena in the world, and through these connotations is the communication of discourses possible. Combined with the lyrical descriptions of the two protagonists and their situations, potential meanings emerge. In my analyses and interpretations, I have attempted to uncover the meanings regarding femininity based on the specific musical and lyrical components in the songs combined with Franklin as the performer. It has been a prerequisite for the thesis that the recordings communicate constructed female representations. The gender affiliation in “A Natural Woman” is made clear through the lyrics as well as the title of the song. It is further confirmed by Franklin’s female voice as well as knowledge about her gender. In “Respect”, Franklin as performer is the only aspect which explicitly connects the protagonist to the female gender, as it is not written directly in the lyrics.

“Respect” and “A Natural Woman” portray two different femininities, however, they do contain similarities and seem to express some of the same values. In “Respect”, the woman is presented as strong, self-confident, and independent. Opposite to the mainstream portrayal of women, she is an active character, while the man in the song is passive. Through her demand directed towards her male partner, she demonstrates an inner power – a power, which does not match her social status as a woman. All these aspects work against the gender norms moderating expectations for women and female behaviour. Despite the strong and powerful features, she is presented as a normal human being through the emotional involvement expressed in Franklin’s vocal delivery. Thereby, she does not come forth as an unreachable ideal, which contradicts the stereotype of the strong, Black woman.

The female in “A Natural Woman” is characterised by the contrast between the weakness, vulnerability, and unhappiness in the past, and the inner strength, as well as self-confidence, with which she is presented in the present time. Contrary to the woman in “Respect”, the protagonist in “A Natural Woman” comes forth as dependent on the relationship with her partner, but the dependency is presented as a positive aspect of life – after all, the relationship has helped her realise her own self. Despite this, the groundedness and stability, with which the new state of mind is presented, suggest that she may be able to maintain her new strength in the future, independently of the relationship.

At first glance, the two femininities come forth as opposites, but after looking deeper into it, they seem to lean towards each other. The weak and dependent female in “A Natural Woman” overcomes her troubles and becomes a confident woman grounded in herself. This new figure contains similarities to the strong female character in “Respect”. Additionally, the independent woman in “Respect” is portrayed as a normal

and, thereby, imperfect person, and the emotional involvement sensed in the vocal delivery indicates vulnerability. These are traits characterising the protagonist in “A Natural Woman”, too. The representations of femininities are nuanced and extend beyond the common flat characterisation of women as well as pure idealisation.

The two male roles represented in “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” contrast each other. However, they are both undescribed, anonymous participants who merely function as the other part of the relationship. Against common gender norms, the man in the former is presented as passive – it is the woman in the relationship who has the power of agency, at least in the described situation. On the contrary, the male in the latter is active, handling the woman’s troubles and acting in the material world. This corresponds to normative ideas about men. In both recordings, the men are loved and appreciated by their partner, illustrating the heterosexual ideal for relationships.

Generally seen, the two recordings are about change. “Respect” portrays the wish and fight for an outer reorganisation of norms, while “A Natural Woman” describes a personal transformation on an inner mental and emotional level. This illustrates the overall themes of the songs. “Respect” claims respect in the outer, social world. It is about changing norms to make the life better for the woman in the song, which can be interpreted as symbolising women in general or other discriminated groups. This understanding of the song corresponds with the general perception of it. I have argued that the main theme in “A Natural Woman” is the female’s relationship to herself rather than to her partner. The inner change from unhappy and vulnerable to confident and satisfied is presented as significant and valuable. The man appears as a mean, not a goal, which contrasts the common content of love songs and the general impression of “A Natural Woman”.

The music supports the lyrical descriptions of the female characters in many ways and enhances the moods in the individual songs. By describing, analysing, and interpreting individual elements of the sound, the meaning potentials concerning femininity communicated in combination with the lyrics have been uncovered. One example of how musical aspects can affect a song’s meaning is the descending melody lines in “Respect”, which start on a high pitch and create the sense of a proclamation. Another example is the guitar lick in the intro. Through the blue notes, the gliding movements, and the small third leaps, it indicates that something is wrong, while the hard picking on the guitar connotes aggression, and the muted sound implies restriction. The saxophone solo can be seen as connoting frustration or conflict because of the fast change of tones, the hard attacks, the gliding in on pitches, and the rough, raspy sound with which the instrument is played. It all adds to the listener’s impression of the song and the female protagonist in it. In “A Natural Woman”, the soft, “classical” play of the horns and the use of strings are significant for the creation of the romantic atmosphere. The melody seems to form a pedestal for “You” of the highest pitch

sung, *ES*, connoting the female's appreciation of her partner. Oppositely, the low pitches with which "woman" is sung appear as emphasising the groundedness, stability, and self-confidence that she has achieved. The call and response between the lead and the backing vocals creates an echo effect, making the backing vocals appear as an extension of the protagonist, which supports the idea that the song is primarily about the woman herself.

In both cases, Franklin's vocal delivery has a significant impact on the perception of the femininities and the moods expressed in the songs. In "Respect", it creates the impression of emotional involvement through the raspy sound quality and the sensed energy level. Furthermore, her perceived attitude towards pitch and rhythm suggests non-conformity towards the established rhythm and the western tone system, which connotes unwillingness to bend to norms. In "A Natural Woman", the attitude is much more conform and does not challenge what has already been established. Thus, the performer does not seem to wish to challenge norms, which correlates with the interpretation of the lyrics. Franklin's powerful singing style supports the impression of stability in the protagonist's new mental and emotional state, and the delivery makes the performer appear emotionally involved. These are just a few of the ways that the aural elements support the lyrics and affect our experience of the songs and, thereby, our perception of the potential meanings and femininities.

Following Moore's concept of musical persona, Franklin's persona is realistic. The stories seem to be about Franklin, and both the voice that we hear and the messages of the songs appear as coming directly from her. The narratives in the lyrics are realistic too, hence, they could have happened in real life. Through the emotionally expressive vocal delivery, Franklin comes forth as personally involved in the songs. In this way, the musical persona and the protagonists appear to reflect Franklin's personality. This can make the listener interpret Franklin as an authentic performer. Because of the fusion of the levels protagonist, musical persona, and performer, the protagonists from "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" merge with Franklin in her musical persona. Thus, the persona consists of the features which we connect with Franklin as well as our perception of the femininities in the songs. In this way, the persona seems multi-faceted as the vulnerable and dependent as well as the strong and independent evolve into different sides of the same performer identity. Through the musical persona, Franklin's gender and race come to affect our understanding of the femininities in the recordings.

Applying gender theory to "Respect" and "A Natural Woman" has enabled a deeper examination of the represented femininities in the songs. I argue that it makes sense to do this, because it is a premise in both songs, and the general perception of them, that gender exists. Furthermore, as songs are not naturally "born" with a gender, I claim that the perceived gender affiliation in music is constructed. The female figure in "Respect" breaks with the traditional gender norms for femininity through her behaviour. She is loud,

demanding, economically independent, and possesses power. By demanding respect and to be treated equally, she challenges the gender hierarchy and, by that, it is illustrated that it is unstable, not biologically based, thus, a social construction. This corresponds with Butler's culturalist understanding of gender. If gender roles and hierarchy have emerged through repetitions of acts, they can be challenged and changed by performing other acts and making other people act differently, in this case, the man in the relationship. However, I have argued that the challenge in "Respect" happens within the frames of heteronormativity, as the maintenance of the relationship is the ideal and the goal of the change. Thus, the challenge is less a challenge of heteronormativity as idea, but of the way it is practiced and the hierarchy existing within it. Likewise, I do not view the female character as challenging the overall concept of heterofemininity, rather, she expresses an empowerment of women within heterofemininity.

The femininity constructed in "A Natural Woman" is conform to gender norms – she is passive and weak (at least a first). The line "You make me feel like a natural woman" presents a nuanced approach to gender. The word 'natural' suggests that gender is biological and that it is a consequence of our sex. However, 'feel' points to gender as construction because it does not say that the protagonist *is* a woman. Thus, the line can be interpreted as expressing the notion that we have an idea about what it means to be a natural woman, however, this idea and the feeling of it are constructed. This correlates with Butler's general concept of gender.³⁶¹ Furthermore, the lyrics describe gender as a process, as the partnership with a man has brought her to feel naturally gendered – a feeling, she apparently did not possess before. Thus, the song expresses Beauvoir's understanding of womanhood. It also points to gender as socially constructed because the protagonist feels like a woman through her relationship to another person. Thus, 'natural' in this context seems to mean that the woman feels like her true self as well as that she feels like a woman matching the norms for females. Thus, by conforming to the norms and confirming it socially through the heteronormative relationship, she feels satisfied, comfortable, and confident.

As pointed out, through the musical persona, Franklin's African American origin influences our perception of the protagonists and the meaning of the songs. Franklin represents Black women, which are a marginalised group often experiencing intersected discrimination because of race, gender, and often class. Intersectional theory offers an opening to consider race and gender in connection with each other and in connection with African American women's cultural expressions. Furthermore, it lays the ground for a discussion of the songs as political acts because of the notion of race and gender as having social and political meanings and effects.

³⁶¹ Butler: *Undoing Gender*, p. 42.

Even though Franklin did not intend to write a political song, the performance of “Respect” comes forth as a political act. First of all, it points to the uneven status between men and women created by gender norms. Secondly, the song appears as a proclamation through aspects like the demand in the lyrics, the form of the high-pitched melody, the partly aggressive and attention seeking vocal delivery, and the shouting quality in the voice. The proclamation comes from an unexpected source, a Black woman, who, according to norms, is at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Thus, the gender represented in the songs as well as Franklin’s race, and the position she represents in society, are a significant part of the reason why “Respect” can seem provocative. The relationship between the partners in the song can be viewed as symbolising society. In this way, the provocation becomes a challenge of the patriarchal system, and the message becomes relevant for a much larger group of people. By demanding respect, the protagonist expresses a wish for equal social status and implicitly criticises the current power structures. With higher status comes more power and freedom, both highly politicised themes in society. All in all, “Respect” contains and expresses political meaning. “A Natural Woman” is not political in the same obvious way as “Respect”. However, through that it generates focus on African American women’s wellbeing, its non-conformity to Black stereotypes, and its validation of African American women’s lives it implicitly contains political aspects, too.

Thus, in addition to gender theory, intersectionality, and cultural expression as political acts, I have found it relevant to examine if “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” confirm stereotypes of Black women as well as to look at the songs in relation to the tradition of validating African American lives through autobiography. Both of these phenomena are related to social and political aspects of society, intersectionality as well as gender perceptions. The two stereotypes, the Sapphire and the strong Black woman, were relevant in connection with the songs. The Sapphire covers the notion of a dominating, aggressive, masculine matriarch with a fiery temper, which often affect her husband. The woman in “Respect” does not completely embody the Sapphire, but some aspects of the stereotype are present in the song. First of all, because the protagonist’s acts and behaviour are better described as normative for men than women. Second of all, some aspects of the recording can be perceived as aggressive, for instance, the raspy vocal delivery and the proclamatory melody. The idealised strong Black woman characterised by independence, emotional stability, and caretaking can be viewed in relation to both recordings. The female in “Respect” partly confirms this stereotype, as she is presented as strong and stable. However, the emotional involvement sensed in the vocal delivery as well as the unwillingness to ignore her own needs contradict the stereotypical image of a strong Black woman. Thus, she contains traits which confirms the ideas of the Sapphire and the strong Black woman and traits which do not, like the case is for most people in reality, no matter what stereotypes they are represented with. The protagonist in “A Natural Woman” seems like the opposite of the strong Black woman, at least at first. However, she evolves into a stable and grounded, if not

strong, woman. Like in “Respect”, suffering is not glorified, and self-sacrifice is not presented as positive. Oppositely, the wellbeing of the woman is presented as valuable, and it is worth receiving help from others to reach this state. Thus, the worth of the woman lies in herself, not in her ability to help others. All this is in contrast to the stereotype of the strong Black woman. Furthermore, in both songs, the women are portrayed as normal human beings, hence, they do not give the impression of being the unreachable ideal, which this stereotype is.

“Respect” and “A Natural Woman” can be viewed as validating the lives of African American women, comparable to the way it is done in the African American autobiographical tradition. Because of Franklin’s realistic musical persona merging the protagonists of the songs with Franklin as a performer, Franklin’s race comes to have a meaning for the perception of the songs, linking them to the African American culture and community. Additionally, the songs appear as if they are about Franklin’s personal life, thus, even though they might not actually be autobiographical, the performances are perceived as that. The validation of the protagonists’ wellbeing is applied to Franklin because they appear to be her. Thereby, the life of Franklin is validated, and through the approval of one Black woman, the validation of other Black women’s lives take place, too. This is the same mechanism characterising the tradition of African American autobiography. “Respect” and “A Natural Woman” become rare expressions of and about Black women in the public realm, further linking the songs to political acts because of the potential motivation for social change.

In summary, the two songs portray two different women, but in both cases the wellbeing of the individual woman is in focus. “Respect” is about changing norms, i.e. changing the outer conditions to make the life of the woman better. In “A Natural Woman”, the protagonist has experienced a transformation and developed into being confident, grounded, and having a positive view of herself. Thus, an inner change has happened. The focus on women’s wellbeing, the advocacy for norm change in “Respect”, the meaning conveyed by Franklin’s race, and the neglect of simple stereotypes, are all aspects pointing to political meanings communicated through the constructed femininities. If we are to make a short, summarising conclusion, the overall meaning seems to be that no matter the woman, and no matter her situation, Black and other women’s wellbeing and, thereby, their lives are valuable. The songs come to validate this through the cultural and political expressions that they represent.

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Appendix 1: Transcription of “Respect”

♩ = 116

C F C F

guitar

5 G lead vocal What you want F ba - by I got G What you need F do you know I got it?

backing vocals ooh ooh ooh ooh

9 G All I'm ask-ing F is for a lit-tle re-spect when you come home hey

ooh ooh just a lit - tle bit

12 F ba - by when you come home C mis - ter F

just a lit - tle bit just a lit - tle bit just a lit - tle bit —

“Respect”. Transcribed by Victoria Malaway: *“Find Out What It Means to Me’: Aretha Franklin’s Gendered Re-Authoring of Otis Redding’s ‘Respect’*”, in: *Popular Music*, Vol. 33, No. 2, 2014, p. 188.

Appendix 2: Transcription of “(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman”

(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman

As recorded by Aretha Franklin

Gerry Goffin, Carole King
and Jerry Wexler

Slow, $\text{♩} = \text{♩}^3$

Piano F Gm⁷ F/A C Lead vocal G/B B^b

Look-in' out on the mor-ning rain, I used to feel so

5 F C/E Dm⁷ C G/B

un-in - spir - ed. And when I knew I had to face an-oth-er day, —

8 B^b F C/E Dm⁷ Dm¹¹ Em⁷

Lord, it made me feel so — tir - ed. Be-fore the day I met you, —

11 Dm¹¹ Em⁷ Dm¹¹ Em⁷ Dm⁷(add4) F/G

life was so un-kind. But you're the key to — my peace of mind. 'Cause you make me

14 C F C F C Dm G⁹

feel, — you make me feel, — you make me feel like a na-tu - ral wo-man. (Wo-man.) —

18 C G/B B^b F C/E Dm⁷

When my soul was in the lost and found, you came a-long to claim it.

22 C G/B B^b F C/E Dm⁷

I did-n't know just what was wrong with me till your kiss helped me name it.

26 Dm¹¹ Em⁷ Dm¹¹ Em⁷

Now I'm no lon - ger doubt - ful of what I'm li - vin' for. — And

28 Dm¹¹ Em⁷ Dm⁷(add4) F/G C F

if I make you hap-py I don't need to do — more. 'Cause you make me feel, — you make me feel,

31 C F C Dm G⁷(sus4) C

you make me feel like a na - tu - ral wo - man. (Wo - man.) Oh ba - by, what you've

35 Gm⁷ C Gm⁷

done to me. (What you've done to me.) You make me feel so good in - side. (Good in - side.)

38 Fmaj⁹ Cm⁹ Fmaj⁹ F/E

And I just wan - na be (Wan - na be) close to you, you make me feel so a

41 Dm⁷ F/G C F C F

live. You make me feel, you make me feel, you make me

44 C 1. Dm F/G 2. Dm F/G D.S. and fade

feel like a na - tu - ral wo - man. you make me wo - man. You make me

"(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman". This transcription is the author's interpretation of the version that appeared on Lady Soul, Atlantic Records 1968.

Abstract

In dieser Masterarbeit wird die Repräsentation von Weiblichkeit in Aretha Franklins Songs „Respect“ und „(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman“ untersucht. Beide Songs wurden 1967 von der Soulsängerin aufgenommen. Ich untersuche, wie Weiblichkeit durch die Songtexte, die musikalischen Elemente und Franklins vokale Gestaltung im jeweiligen Lied konstruiert wird, und inwiefern Franklin als Performerin der beiden Songs eine Bedeutung für die Interpretation von Weiblichkeit generiert. Um die Darstellung und die Konstruktion von Weiblichkeit in den Songs herauszufinden, wird auf die Methodik der Songanalyse zurückgegriffen. Zwei Analyseformen sind dabei maßgeblich: Zum einen David Machins Modell der Populärmusikanalyse, das auf einer Diskursanalyse basiert, zum anderen Allan F. Moores Songanalyse, um Bedeutungen (von Moore im Englischen als „meaning“ bezeichnet) in Popliedern aufzuzeigen. Weiters wird Moores Version vom Konzept der Musical Persona verwendet, um Franklins Beitrag zur Weiblichkeitsdarstellung in ihrer Rolle als Performerin zu untersuchen. Die durch die Analyse herausgestellte Repräsentation von Weiblichkeit wird in Relation zur Geschlechtertheorie (nach Judith Butler) und Theorien der Intersektionalität diskutiert, da sowohl das Geschlecht als auch die Hautfarbe (im Englischen als „race“ bezeichnet) eine Bedeutung für die Weiblichkeitsrepräsentationen haben. Darüber hinaus wird diskutiert, ob die Songs als politische Handlungen angesehen werden können, und ob sie Vorurteile gegenüber afroamerikanischen Frauen bestätigen. Schließlich werden die Songs in den Kontext der Tradition einer Validierung von afroamerikanischem Leben durch Autobiographien eingeordnet.