

## **The Voice as Trauma Recovery: Vocal Timbre in Kesha’s “Praying”**

Kesha wrote her 2017 album *Rainbow* as self-therapy responding to traumatic abuse from her producer, Dr. Luke. In the lyrics of her first ballad, “Praying,” she discusses her experience through trauma and recovery, and I argue that her voice reinforces this story. More specifically, my analysis demonstrates how Kesha’s voice—through register, laryngeal position, timbre, and position within the musical environment—portrays symptoms of trauma and recovery, including improving thought patterns, increasing ability to connect with others, and a growing sense of emotional strength and control.

I also discuss the impact “Praying” had on listeners, especially trauma survivors, and the ways that the voice can showcase emotional expression. In examining Kesha’s vocal journey through trauma recovery, my analysis provides a deeper understanding of vocal expression in popular songs and provides insight into trauma’s effects and how they can be embodied in the voice.

