FUGITIVE PHRASES: ARCADE FIRE, MUSIC, AND THE AMOROUS SUBJECT

STACY ALLISON

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN HUMANITIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

OCTOBER 2020

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Abstract

This dissertation asserts that passionate love is not a feeling, but a process of acculturation to a complete system of information. Niklas Luhmann's work on love as a system of communication is put in dialogue with the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek to demonstrate that music plays a vital role in the construction of amorous subjectivity in Western culture. The music of Canadian rock band Arcade Fire, with its concern with ideas of emotion and authenticity, provides a vehicle for revealing the process of becoming an amorous subject, such as the courtly lover; the relationship between music, love and memory, forgetting and time; the uncanny musical revenant, and the complications of sexuality. Luhmann's theory of passionate love as a system of communication and psychoanalytic analysis as developed by Lacan and Žižek are used to demonstrate the ways popular music forms an amorous semantic communication network. This system of communication works to resolve and enable the paradox that is passionate love. In this dissertation I develop Luhmann's theory of passionate love as a communication system alongside the theories of Lacan and Žižek to develop a form a theory of "affective mapping," which is used in an analysis of several Arcade Fire songs. The first section of the dissertation sets out the area of study, defining and discussing ideas of love, indie rock music, and the overall methodological approach. Chapter two takes up the areas of psychoanalysis, and systems theory, leading the development of a theoretical framework that is deployed later the study. Chapters three and four focus on indie rock music, music scenes and Montreal, and Arcade Fire. Chapters five, six, and seven are comprised of case studies, each focusing on a different song and theoretical concern.

Acknowledgements

I first wish to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor Prof. Steve Bailey for his support, encouragement, and guidance. I am grateful to Prof. Bailey's openness to my desire to tackle a study of music and love and for the many conversations over the years on music, critical theory, and life in general. I especially want to credit his unwavering belief in my ability to finish as having a significant role in bringing this project to fruition.

Despite joining my dissertation committee at a later stage, Prof. Victor Shea made significant contributions to my dissertation. His thorough examination of my work for weaknesses in my arguments and grammar has made me a better writer and scholar. I am appreciative of his care and attention to my work.

I am appreciative of the support of committee member Prof. Kevin Dowler for his knowledge of Luhmann, communication theory, and strong questions regarding the relationship between this work and the posthuman. I would also like to thank early members of my supervisory committee Prof. John Dwyer and Prof. Rob Bowman, for engaging with nascent versions of this project.

This work would not have been possible without access to sabbatical leaves, as well as York University Faculty Association education leaves. I would like to recognize the support of Cynthia Archer, University Librarian (2001-2014), for encouraging my pursuit a doctoral degree, for recognizing the importance of research and scholarship to the practice of librarianship, and for valuing interdisciplinary research.

I must recognize Dr David Montgomery, my colleague at York University Libraries and fellow pop music scholar, for conversations on the nature and meaning of music sustained through numerous coffee breaks. I truly value the time he took to travel with me down multiple theoretical pathways, his critical feedback on drafts of this dissertation, guidance on the genre dissertations, and for his friendship.

Last but not least, I wish to acknowledge the support of my husband, Brendan Cassin. Without his willingness to take on extra childcare, patience as I spent vacations writing, and numerous other supports both small and big, I would not have had the time or space to complete this project.

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Chapter 1.0 Preface

The book of love has music in it
In fact, that's where music comes from
Some of it is just transcendental
Some of it is just really dumb, but
I, I love it when you sing to me, and
You, you can sing me anything
(Magnetic Fields, "The Book of Love")

In 2007, I heard an audio recording of Australian musician and author Nick Cave's 1998 Vienna Poetry Festival lecture, "The Secret Life of the Love Song." I was intrigued by Cave's ideas on the specific role and characteristics of the love song. While music has formed an integral part of my life as a practicing musician, in my work in libraries and as a listener, I had never given much thought to its particular role or meaning in relation to amorous relationships, except that "it was."

Like many things we encounter in our everyday interactions with human culture, the ubiquitous love song hardly bears notice. There appears to be nothing remarkable about it. Love songs wash over us, we give them little attention, we might even sing along without really paying attention—until we hear a song that seem to address[1] us. Encounters with these songs call us out of the everyday and force our attention on the music. We encounter "something." It may be that a song or album does, at least for a while, take on some kind of function within the context of an amorous relationship. But why and how?

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[1] Theorists such as Theodor Adorno, Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, and Kaja Silverman have taken up the subject of the ways media such as music and films can address us as subjects. When addressed in this way an addressee feels compelled to answer and this act is particularly powerful in situations where the message is not necessarily directly intended for the addressee. This idea has been taken up by music scholars such as Lawrence Kramer.

Cave conjectures that love songs have a secret life and suggests that they are full of magic, more than other kind of song:

> The peculiar magic of the Love Song, if it has the heart to do it, is that it endures where the object of the song does not. It attaches itself to you and together you move through time. . . . the Love Song holds within it an eerie intelligence all of its own—to reinvent the past and to lay it at the feet of the present. (2000)

What is this "secret life" of the love song that Nick Cave talks about? What is this "eerie intelligence" that we attach to certain songs? Why do many people seem to have a favourite love song, one that they can easily name, but have no equivalent for any other kind of song (sad song or work song, for example)? People seem to turn to love songs in times of romantic crisis, and couples often have a song that they deem to be mutually meaningful. In pondering these questions, I discovered a curious dearth of writing on the subject of love and music.

Music and love have qualities of the ineffable, the "impossible to pin down" and neither, as opposed to the study of sexual arousal or acoustics for example, lend themselves to empirical study. Like Cave's conjecture that love songs have a secret life, the "thing itself," the very objects of study, are hidden, inaccessible, and inscrutable. We are left only with the symptom, the trace, the edges, and though we are certain of its existence, the true love song, to borrow from Cave, shifts, changes, moves, and follows us through our love relationships and beyond. These songs seem to hover at the borders waiting until they are pressed into service, and while they can change hands rather quickly, easily declaring loyalty to a different sovereign, they remain connected to that earlier love. Thus, a song that might be strongly connected to a particular beloved or event may be "banished" after the relationship has ended, or perhaps forgotten, or may cause memories to rise again, like the ghost of the relationship, when the song is heard again.

"Indie rock", a music genre term short for "Independent rock music." And its concern with authenticity, emotion, and artistic integrity seem to make expressions of love and sexuality challenging, and the question "is indie rock music sexy?" is surprisingly difficult to answer. When one thinks of indie love songs, the Canadian indie rock group Arcade Fire is not an obvious choice. The band is not known for writing songs or records about love or heartbreak or constructing albums around specific, real-life, romantic relationships in the way of indie artists such as Bon Iver, and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. Arcade Fire's music seems to be perpetually stuck in the teenage years. However, it is Arcade Fire's fraught relations to romantic love and sexual expression which point to intriguing tensions. Tensions such as the relationship between the romantic and the sexual, or between the long-term relationship and the fling, are present in their music.

Arcade Fire is a challenging band to study. Curiously, even more than fifteen years after the 2004 release of their hugely popular first album, *Funeral,* little scholarly writing about their music exists, and band members are evasive in interviews with the mainstream press. The band is a tightly interwoven group made up of a married couple, two brothers, and close friends. Their music-making focuses on topics related to ideas of authentic feeling and action; the experiences of youth; contemporary relationships with technology; and critiques of capitalism. As of this writing they have released five chart-topping albums; three of their albums have debuted at number one in the charts, have received numerous awards, including a Grammy Award in 2011, and their live shows continue to sell out stadiums. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, love songs are ubiquitous, yet less so in an indie context. It seems even more challenging to declare any Arcade Fire song an all-out love song as none of their songs joyfully declare anything about love. However, for Arcade Fire the most intimate of expressions—those of romantic love and

erotic love, expressions in which we are both metaphorically and physically naked—are shrouded. What follows is an investigation into the territory of the love song through the music of Arcade Fire.

Chapter 1.1 Introduction: Music and Love

In his complex work *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, German sociologist Niklas Luhmann repeatedly points to love's impossibility. Passionate love is a paradox. For love to exist, subjects must seem to breach what is unbreachable, to know the unknowable—the core of another's being. Communication creates the experience of passionate love. The paradox lies in that this is an impossibility, for we can never know what the "other" is thinking or feeling but must believe we do for love to exist. There must be an agreement that two "souls" have communicated. For Luhmann, the development and use of a specialized communication system for passionate love solve this paradox. He writes: "Love as a medium is not itself a feeling, but rather a code of communication, according to the rules of which one can express, form and simulate feelings, deny them, impute them to others, and be prepared to face up to all the consequences which enacting such a communication may bring with it" (*Love as Passion* 20). As such, this code of communication forms a hermeneutic network of meaning.

The specialized communication code of passionate love is activated by amorous subjects as required. It is a system of communication that is at hand and only called upon as needed when a desire to open a communication channel of passionate love exists. The intended recipient of the amorous message must decide to ignore, sever, or pursue the exchange of further messages. Though the idea of a "language of love" is old, Luhmann's suggestion that passionate love only exists through a closed system of communication in which media are used as a vehicle to transmit the codes of passionate love is unique. Love, therefore, is not a feeling but a communication system.

Luhmann cites the media of novels and poetry as necessary conductors of amorous messages in the communication system of passionate love. Jacques Lacan and Slavoj Žižek, working in the field of psychoanalysis, also theorize on an interrelationship between symbolically charged cultural objects, such as writing and film, and the formation of subjectivity. Music, like other media, animates the amorous feedback loop in the communication network, informing, reflecting, and performing within the system. Music maps the affects of passionate love through the use of lyrics and musical forms and content. Music both enacts and reflects contemporary systems of passionate love. In this dissertation, I use Luhmann's theory of passionate love as communication system along with the theories of Lacan and Žižek to develop a method of music analysis. This frame will be used to analyze several Arcade Fire songs.

How is one to begin a study of music and love? How is so impossible a thing to be attempted when these two "things," music and love, are both slippery concepts and almost impossible to get a hold on? Both music and love have elements that seem to be beyond communication,[2] and yet both are fundamental phenomena of human culture. Music and love are essential to the idea of the self and the self in relation to others.[3] Because of their ineffable

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[2] The ideas that music can express things that cannot be expressed through words and that love is impossible to put into words are not new, and there are far too many instances to cite them all here. I will cite two contrasting figures to demonstrate the breadth and complexity of this area of thought. Plato's development of the idea of love in *Phaedrus* and ideas on music and society in the *Republic* both give insight into the relationship between both love and music to the development of an ideal society. Men were to strive to love in a "'right"' way and only listen to specific kinds of music to ensure protection from corruption. Julia Kristeva takes a psychoanalytic and feminist view on the ways human sound production can transmit the ineffable, in particular as it relates to the "mother's voice." Examples of relevant work from Kristeva include *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* and *Tales of Love*.

[3] This study will not discuss this theory in detail; however, there are studies in the area of ethnomusicology and anthropology which claim an important role of music in human cultures around the world. Researchers such as Daniel Levitin claim music is found in every society in

nature, their description is challenging. For example: What gives the love song the seeming ability, apart from words, to express something unknown? Unknowable? Unfamiliar? The sensation of something delightful? Is it the melody or harmony? There is joy in the discovery of music that feels both new and familiar. Once the contours and the architecture of a piece of music become familiar, the enjoyment shifts to one of familiarity. But how does this work when music is often, or even always, a commodity to be bought and sold? And most importantly, for this study, what is the "work" of the love song? In other words, how does music work within the context of passionate love?

As briefly stated previously, the music of Arcade Fire is the landscape through which we will be travelling to work through these questions. It is landscape shot through with its challenges of emotion, communication, aesthetics, taste, commodification, and what it means to be human in the current age of digital technologies. In an interview with Paul Morley in 2007, band member Win Butler explained their work this way:

> The thing that interests me is singing about the things that you are not supposed to sing about in rock, finding simple ways to articulate difficult, complicated feelings. You get so tired of music and film and culture when ideas are not expressed, and if you care about things, and your part of pop culture, it's important that you have ideas in your music, about something not to do with how you are bought and sold, otherwise you're just joining in with all the rubbish.

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the world and that this music can be categorized into six fundamental categories. Levitin's work is in the area of neurobiology and he suggests that humans developed music out a neurological need based around a way of understanding the world. The six categories are friendship/war, joy, comfort, knowledge, religion, and love.

Arcade Fire creates music about complicated feelings meant to comment about society on a large scale. Furthermore, Butler's concern with the commodification of music and as well as the integrity of emotion makes Arcade Fire a fascinating object of study in a discussion of indie rock and love.

Definitions

Given the ontological difficulties posed by the ideas of love and music, the concepts of *love song*, *passionate love*, and *indie rock music* require attention. This section sets out a brief discussion of these terms in order to establish the working definitions that will be used and further explicated in the course of this study.

Descriptions and definitions of kinds and classes of love can be found across multiple genres of literature and disciplines, though primarily centred in philosophy, psychology, and religion. Despite the ubiquity of the term, *love* seems to defy concrete definitions and is challenging to charge with particular attributes. In the context of this study, I will be discussing passionate love as occurs between a lover and a beloved. Excluded from this study are discussions of different kinds of non-passionate love such as familial love, love between a parent and child, agape love, and love of nation or ethnic group. Companionate love and that commonly understood as "Platonic" love will figure into the discussion as it relates to ideas of passionate love. Erotic or sexual desire will also come into play. Philosopher Irving Singer constructs a conceptualization of passionate love along the lines of a system of appraisals and bestowals. Here, a subject forms an attachment to another through an appraisal of admired qualities and bestowal of love. Singer's use of appraisal and bestowal does not require the action to be reciprocal. Understanding passionate love in this way allows one to talk of unrequited love in the same way as consummated or reciprocated love. Passionate love is also sometimes described as

Romantic love; however, the use of *passionate* is in keeping with the terminology used by Luhmann. The use of the term *passionate* versus *romantic* establishes distance from *Romantic* as is understood as a particular period in the history of Western culture. Explication of the idea of passionate love will form a large part of the discussion in this dissertation.

Indie rock, short for *independent rock music*, is a term that has changed throughout its brief history. The term has generated debate around its use and possible misuse and, indeed, whether it is even a valid genre term for music at this point. It is telling that in his 2005 article “What Is Indie Rock?”, Ryan Hibbett declines to give a single or precise definition of indie rock and instead organizes his discussion around four different areas, pointing to the various milieus in which it operates and the way the term acts as a “portal” through which one enters the indie scene (59). The term indie was initially used solely as a label for punk rock music produced via independent record labels in the late 70s.[4] Later the term came also to be used for what could also be categorized as *college rock* or *alternative rock*, defining music produced or distributed by mainstream labels as well as independent labels. Indie rock also began to include music that adheres to specific aesthetic lines.

Indie defines itself primarily by what it is not: it is neither pop nor mainstream commercial rock. This oppositional status has its origins in its production through DIY (do-it-yourself) small labels and punk scene aesthetics. Further, indie has often been deemed unsuitable for mainstream radio consumption due to factors such as long track durations, poor production, and a sound that falls outside the appeal of mainstream rock audiences. Hesmondhalgh and Meier, Fonarow, and Hibbett, to name a few, have sought to untangle the specifics of the term’s

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[4] David Hesmondhalgh has written a number of very fine discussions of the early period of indie rock music and its attendant scenes (in particular “Indie” and “Post-Punk”).

usage, especially concerning theories of cultural production and culture industries. They understand the term differently according to their positions within a field or discipline. For example, Hesmondhalgh and Meier, and Hibbett work through a Marxist framework and heavily rely on theorists such as Bordieau and Adorno to understand the genre though a flow of industrial capital. As such, they emphasize indie's post-punk roots, its mode of industrial production, and its circulation within specific consumption-based music scenes. In her analysis of indie, Fonarow places greater emphasis on aesthetic sensibilities and meaning and concerned with the relationships between British Protestantism and indie aesthetics.

Despite these theoretical differences, Hesmondhalgh and Meier, Hibbett, and Fonarow all concede that indie is a complicated and nebulous genre term. While the mainstream music press is less nuanced in its approach to defining what is and what is not indie music, they are equally challenged to define the term as strictly as other genres such as metal, hip-hop, or pop. This lack of clarity means a definition of the usage of the term in this dissertation is necessary. In this dissertation, indie rock is used in a generous sense to refer to music that meets aesthetic criteria, as well as music which retains an element of the indie ethos, without a need to be produced, released, or distributed by an independent record label.[5]

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[5] Independently owned labels are difficult to determine in the current environment of commercial music production. Many multinational corporations have absorbed smaller labels. For example, the Universal Music Group currently owns hundreds of labels and their sub-labels, such as Interscope, EMI, Capitol, and Island Records. Many multinational corporations also make it a practice to release music on boutique sub-labels and use marketing techniques to obscure these ownership lines. Furthermore, labels may produce music independent of multinational corporations, but take advantage of mainstream corporate systems of distribution. Alternative delivery methods for DIY music via commercial platforms such as YouTube, SoundCloud and other streaming services further complicate conceptualizations of what is meant by *independent music production*. Thus, the conceptualization of indie music as truly independent is bound up with ideas of artistic purity, but this definition is false and not a useful delineation.

The term *love song* provokes conceptual difficulty. Broadly, love songs can be defined through lyrical content or stylistic elements, such as lyrics that describe a love relationship. In Western popular music, stylistic elements such as the use of lush string accompaniments are used to signal a love song. At the same time, a song without lyrical or stylistic references to passionate love can also become a love song through use. For example, a song that has nothing to do with love in its lyrical or musical content may become tightly bound to amorous situations as is the case with many well-known classical works frequently performed at weddings. Songs can also become connected to a particular amorous relationship in the manner of "our song." Thus the identification of love songs can be a simple matter of categorization based on a count of the number of times the term love appears in song lyrics, or an incredibly tangled and complex exercise.[6] In this dissertation, I will examine songs that combine lyrical and aesthetic conventions to evoke amorous content without being explicitly identified as such. A love song elements of amorous content and addresses the beloved, communicating elements of the code of passionate love.

Conclusion

Love songs, to borrow a line from a song by the indie band Magnetic Fields, often hang in the balance between the transcendental and the dumb. The performers of music and love work close to borders, walking a line where at any time they may tumble into difficult and unintended

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[6] A number of early studies of popular music and courtship were enumerations of the number of songs taking courtship as the subject matter, for example Horton's 1957 "The Dialogue of Courtship in Popular Songs" and Carey's 1969 "Changing Courtship Patterns in Popular Song." These studies based on content analysis of lyrics are neither particularly nuanced nor useful in trying to place the love song with any kind of contextual framework because they fail to take the musical content into account, meaning any perceived "message" in the lyrical content is potentially misread given this lyrical content can always be undermined by the music itself.

territory. The erotic can all too easily become the comical. The sentimental become bathos. The passionate, rage. These shifts have everything to do with timing and communication, for to be out of time can have serious consequences in music and in love. To be out of step with one's partner, or one's hoped-for partner, can have consequences. A mistake in timing can cause the piece of music to fall apart and similarly a mistake in timing can cause the amorous relationship to fall apart or never to develop at all. Thus, timing and communication are paramount to the success of the lover and the musician.

The musicologist Alfred Schutz, writing on music, meaning, and time, suggests music creates a "vivid present shared by the partners in a genuine face-to-face relation such as prevails between speaker and listener" (qtd. in Frith *Performing Rites* 146). Music and love share a dialogic time-based means of communication. The idea of shared time becomes heightened in the case of love songs as the need for a means to breach the impregnable walls surrounding the solitary and isolated subject requires a force that is stronger than everyday speech alone. For as Luhmann writes: "It is precisely in matters of love that non-verbal modes of communication are important and indispensable" (*Love: A Sketch* 5). Kramer argues that the study of music is a valid mechanism for helping to think through questions related to wider human culture and moving beyond tightly focused music-related issues such as musical structures and reception/fan studies. He writes: "One corollary, and to me an important one, is a demonstration that thinking about and through musical questions is not just a specialist interest, but a way of thinking about and through fundamental questions of knowledge, culture, and value" (*Musical Meaning* 260). If, as David Cecchetto suggests in the opening of *Humanesis: Sound and Technological Posthumanism,* "it is in the character of sound to be semiotically parasitic, to take on—and usually intensify—the systems of meaning to which it attaches" (1), then love songs, as sound,

occupy a particularly significant space within the amorous communication system. It is the hypothesis of this dissertation that love songs function as means of affective mapping, grounding the amorous subject in the fantasy of passionate and erotic love through the use of musical, cultural, and biological codes—in effect forming the lover's discourse. Accordingly, Arcade Fire draws on the well-worn code book of the love song to engage in this discourse for a contemporary indie audience.

Chapter 1.2 The Signs of Love: Proust and Cave and Barthes

"Love, technically employed, is a shellac disc with the eternal title *Parlez-moi d'amour*" (Kittler, *Discourse Networks* 54).

In this section, I will bring together brief vignettes concerning love and music from writer Marcel Proust and musician Nick Cave. These passages begin to open the pathways for the discussion to follow in the main body of the dissertation. Both Proust and Cave use the communicative structures of music within their artistic practice to call attention to the architecture of passionate love, illustrating the ways lovers require semantic structural forms found in media such as novels and music to become amorous subjects. Furthermore, Proust and Cave use the formant of passionate love and desire as a vehicle for their artistic practice. I begin this section by discussing Proust's use of a piece of music to illustrate and reflect on the course of the love relationship between the characters of Swann and Odette. I then move to a discussion of Nick Cave's elucidation on the nature and work of love songs. I underpin this discussion of music and love within Proust and Cave with theoretical perspectives from Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, and Luhmann. These theorists posit communicative acts that construct passionate love through a series of semantic devices or codes, disrupting the idea that passionate love is found in a single, unique beloved, a "soulmate" found through an act of fate or God. Finally, I end this section with a reflection on the relationship between the band Arcade Fire and these theoretical beginnings.

Elements from Proust's massive novel, *La Recherche Pour Temps Perdu* or the *Search for Lost Time* will form an interesting corollary to the course of this dissertation. Reflecting on Proust's work aids in the explication of ideas around the amorous subject as he writes on art, music, and passionate love through the course of the narrative. Elements related to love and

music from Proust's novel will serve as a thread that will be woven in throughout this study. Proust's work represents an essential conceptual shift in the history of love. For example, Singer devotes an entire chapter to Proust and suggests Proust's work is a vital breakage point between epochs in the history of the idea of love (162). Proust's work moves beyond a Romanticism that was invested in ideals of the "ecstatic interpenetration of souls" and into a post-Romantic idealism that does not wholly disavow passionate love, but tempers it with a subjective distancing. Thus, the impossibility of breaching the distance between subjects, except through (shared) experience is made clear (Singer 162). I include Proust in this discussion because, within the course of his narrative, music plays a particularly prominent role in the formation of the amorous subject. The intermingling of the structures of passionate love and the structures of music is especially notable in the case with the character of Swann in the first volume *Swann's Way*. Proust's attention to relating musical composition concerning passionate love makes it evident that encounters with speech, novels, and music entrain subjects to the codes of love.

Proust uses music as a metaphor to illustrate his belief that passionate love is not unique to a single individual, but repeats. In one striking passage, Proust describes love as a familiar melody whose music is engraved on the heart. Lovers engage in love in the way dancers follow a familiar musical score. This short passage suggests that as subjects move through the time of love, they gain more and more information about the practice of love. Thus, passionate love isn't a unique intermingling of souls, but is an experience of communication and more like mass media than a unique piece of art. Love is experienced in a series of communicative encounters. Once subjects have received and incorporated these operating instructions, once the contours of the melody, rhythm, and groove are learned, only a snippet of the song of love is needed for the

subject to be able to join in. Thus, passionate love is a process of becoming rather than a tie to a particular person.

In another scene in *Swann's Way*, the character Swann becomes enchanted with a sonata composed by a fictional composer named Vinteuil. This piece of music, "the Vinteuil Sonata," becomes tangled up with Swann's affair with the courtesan Odette, and Swann's feelings for Odette are bound up with his affective experience of the music. One of the most striking examples of this is found in the description of the playing at the evening salons held by the Verdurins: ". . . the pianist would play to them—for their two selves—the little phrase by Vinteuil which was, so to speak, the national anthem of their love" (308). Thus, the Sonata and, in particular, the "little phrase" from the Sonata, declare the allegiance Swann and Odette hold for each other and also declare them a sovereign nation. The Sonata becomes coupled with Swann and Odette as a public declaration of their coupling. In a further example of the way Proust links music and passionate love, he uses another sonata to call this allegiance into question. In this passage, Swann is left out of a party hosted by the Verdurins, and at this gathering, the pianist performs Beethoven's "Moonlight" Sonata, op. 27, no. 2, in the dark outdoors. Swann is left to imagine Odette's infidelity. There is a strong suggestion the music itself has agency in this infidelity as it is encouraged or procured as in the way of a madame, by the music itself (Holden 27).[7] In these scenes, the music does not cause passionate love but comes to its aid and in *La Recherche,* the interplay between music and passionate love is a way for Proust to articulate his ideas around passionate love.

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[7] An important nuance that is missed in English translations of the novel is the fact that in French the word "*musique*" (music) is feminine, not only giving music a greater sense of agency, but one inherently coded as feminine.

For Proust passionate love is not a bolt from the blue, or an occurrence of fate, or even dependent on unique qualities of the beloved, but the result of repeated encounters with the signs of love. Far from being unique, the beloved is one within the series of these experiences. Falling in love is not an act of fate or the result of divine intervention. Singer describes Proust's ideas this way:

> While the Romantics thought that love satisfies the need to feel, all of Proust may be read as an attempt to deny this, to argue that love cannot fulfill this need except in a temporary and ultimately unsatisfying way. What Proust inherits from the Romantics, and from the idealist tradition in general, is the condition that one must search for (*research*, as in the title of his masterpiece) a means of experience of reality that will put one's feelings in direct communication with the being of the persons, things, and the world as a whole. (162)

Love for Proust is less an act of imagination, and more an agent of the intellect and passionate love is experienced as a formative process. Proust integrates the excitement and anguish, coupling, and decoupling, and the sensations involved in the practice of love into artistic practice.

Like Proust, Luhmann does not consider love a unique joining of soulmates, but as a process of formation within a set of social relations. Every relationship always already has within it the kernel of loss—even before a relationship begins, the inevitable end is already there. The process of amorous formation is always deferred and frustrated. The goal of passionate love, that is, an unbreakable bond between amorous subjects, is perpetually frustrated and impossible. However, for love to function as a social system, the idea that the achievement of this goal is possible must exist. Music, as is shown by Proust, demonstrates the ways the co-creation of love

and involves direct communication with the being of persons. We can never join with the soul of the other, but music allows for a kind of joining. Proust uses music in his novel to demonstrate the way the experience of media impacts the creation of the amorous self. He also elides the form and structure of music with the form of structure of passionate love to demonstrate that love is constructed of conventions, codes, and signs rather than only emotion.

Despite differences of chronology, cultural context, and source, Cave's lecture "The Secret Life" and Proust's novel are closely allied. Both texts assert music can forge a link between the lover and the beloved. This connection creates the impression of shared experience and the music itself; that is, the sonic quality of the music creates an ordering structure for what might otherwise seem to be a bewildering mass of feelings. The love song, with its particular action, exposes at least some of the scaffolding around the construction of our amorous activities. Putting Cave into conversation with Proust adds further focus to how music can create an amorous semantic language.

As discussed in the previous section, Cave claims "true" love songs have a "secret life" beyond the surface meaning of the lyrics. He charges them with power and agency. What's more, Cave asserts every love song is not really about or directed to the beloved, but is instead a call to God.[8] Love songs are a cry from a wounded, broken, and fractured body seeking some wholeness through reunification with God.[9] Love songs function as a call for unity of spirit as

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[8] Cave's identification as a Christian and the Christian themes of his music have been well documented in works such as Baker, and Welberry and Dalziell. While Cave's music can be called Christian, it is not affiliated with a particular denomination or ideology. Cave has cited the Bible as a favourite inspiration for his writing in the lecture "The Flesh Made Word" and he cites the Psalms in particular as an influential source for his music.

[9] In the language of psychoanalysis, this "call to God" is allied to the idea of "the big Other," a concept that will be taken up in later chapters.

much, or even more than, a vehicle for communicating passionate love. Cave discusses how a song might be written for or about a specific person, as in the case of "West Country Girl," but the resulting song has meaning and intent well beyond one particular person or relationship. For Cave, the core operation of every successful love song is a twofold motion: an expression of a sense of loss that comes with the acknowledgement of the fractured nature of human subjectivity; and the resulting quest for reconciliation and unification of the self with God. McCredden puts it thus: "Cave's sacred is deeply enmeshed in the human dimensions of flesh, erotics and violence. . . . What we find stamped across his songs, over and over, is the dark, lonely figure of a man caught up in desire for a divine source of balm" (167). The "over and over" movement of desire and the acknowledgement of an inability to truly know another link Cave and Proust in their ideas of passionate love. They also link to ideas of love as expressed in the music of Arcade Fire. There is no respite, no "true love," that will satisfy this desire. The true love does not exist, and instead, as McCredden later suggests, the sexual joining of the fleshed lover and the spiritual joining of the divine impossibility exist on the same plane. Both the fleshed lover and the divine being are always already out of reach (170). This mission of an eternal connection is never successful, and an endless feedback loop of search and loss results, a motion that drives the creation of art itself.

Given very few rock musicians have published writing of this nature, particularly outside the typical interview form, Cave's cogent discussion of his approach to writing love songs is unique. Cave sets himself apart from most artists by dint of the fact that he also writes prose, films, and other textual works, perhaps indicating that he is more comfortable with the medium of text than other musicians. Though fascinating in and of itself, his writing process is not allied with that of every artist, and it would be incorrect to draw firm conclusions regarding the

compositional process of writing of love songs from this one document. However, Cave's suggestion that love songs involve the recognition of lack, and that he expresses this as a necessary internal kernel of every love song, bears an uncanny resemblance to the expression of similar ideas regarding subjectivity in critical writing, such as psychoanalytic methods employed by Lacan and Žižek. *The Secret Life of the Love Song* can be fruitfully used as a means of relating these theoretical concepts with the practical ideas of an artist. Cave might call this an exposition of the endless longing and melancholy in our person.

The work of the love song is to join the lover and the beloved, and together the lovers and the music move through time. However, it is essential to state that love songs do not compel specific actions or cause subjects to fall in love. Instead, the power of music is, as Proust asserts, one of apprenticeship. Music creates semantic structures that interact with the social structures and system of passionate love. Music lays the groundwork for amorous communication. Thus, the beloved, as both Cave and Proust suggest, is less tied to a specific person than to a functional role. Both texts serve as commentaries on the links between art, erotic love, and the self, and especially the crucial role of art in the formation of the amorous subject.

Understanding the music of Arcade Fire in this context of passionate love is frustrated by the fact that band members are not very open to the press and other forms of media documentation on any topic. Unlike Cave and his commentary on his artistic practice, no body of writing, interview, or lecture by any of the members of Arcade Fire is explicitly devoted to the topic of love or the composition of love songs. There are only glimpses of what band members may think or feel when it comes to composing music concerning passionate love. Despite the lack of detailed accounts of their writing, Arcade Fire makes for a fascinating object of study in the context of indie rock and love in part because of this distancing from overt discussions of

love. This gap is made especially evident given the inter-familial ties of the group. Win Butler and Régine Chassagne are married and have a child. Win Butler and Will Butler are siblings. One might assume that love, in a variety of forms, is key to the continued operation and success of the band, and yet it is curiously sublimated. Despite the temptation to link interpersonal relationships of the band members to their music, I will not be making assertions about the veracity of specific lyrics or attempting to determine if a piece of music is tied explicitly to a "real-life" experience. This study is not meant to attempt an enumeration of the number of times "love" appears in music as accounting exercises are limited in scope and usefulness. The question taken up in this study is how does the music of Arcade Fire, and indie music more broadly, illuminate and reflect on the meaning and the semantic information network created around passionate love?

Winthrop-Young summarizes Luhmann's approach to media accordingly: "In turn, symbolically generalized media evolve in order to supply motivational resources to communications across time and space: you will understand (in Luhmann's sense of the word) this letter, book, or broadcast and act accordingly because I can punish you, because I love you, because I will give you money, or because they contain the truth" (405). We understand media according to the systems they are centred within. Thus, different systems of communication inform us how we are to understand the information they contain and the information contained in the communication does not transfer between systems. What is information for one system, is unregistered by another system. For example, a letter from a lawyer operates within the system of law (and punishment), and the informational content of that letter is different from the informational content found in a letter from a lover. What is noticed and understood by the recipient is different in each case. Each circulates and operates within its own system with its

own language and metadata. Thus music, in the same way, can be read differently according to its informational intent.

Each Arcade Fire track communicates beyond a singular monolithic form of media and operates within a myriad of existing communication systems and social systems. Thus, the information in the music does not (en)force feeling, but performs a multipart action, hooking into existing structures of communication. In the case of the system of passionate love, it aids in allowing listeners, to quote Cave, "let love in." Music opens the possibility of communication channels between amorous subjects. Music, as both Proust and Cave suggest, communicates "something" of love, building in pathways exclusively for use by lovers. But to gain access to this system, we must be prepared, and we must learn the music of love to respond. It is the work of this dissertation to demonstrate the ways Arcade Fire participates in this process of entraining subjects to the amorous information system, enabling the communication and, therefore, the existence of passionate love.

Chapter 1.3 Methodology

This chapter briefly lays out the dissertation's main methodological anchor points. A more detailed discussion of the theoretical positioning of this study is located in Chapter Two. The construction of a methodological framework for the analysis of love songs is the main thrust of this dissertation. This framework's primary theoretical models are systems theory as interpreted by Luhmann and psychoanalysis as theorized by Lacan and then expanded by Žižek. Although these two modes of theoretical analysis do not share much common ground, they are bridged as a means to investigate and reflect upon the role of media such as music in the nature of passionate love as well as what it means to be an amorous subject. Both present intense challenges to what it means to be human and to the existence of the emotion of love itself, with Luhmann declaring there is no such thing as the feeling of love, and Lacan declaring there is no such thing as a sexual relationship.[10] This dissertation incorporates interdisciplinary methods missing from other related studies and brings together approaches from disparate areas to the question of passionate love and music. By leveraging a variety of methodologies, explicitly focusing on the systems theories of Luhmann and psychoanalytic theories of Lacan, this study broaches the thorny questions of the formation of the subject.

The dissertation divides into two sections. The first sets out the theoretical underpinnings of the study and presents an overview of indie rock music and the band Arcade Fire within that context. The second comprises four case studies in which specific Arcade Fire songs are analyzed thematically to show how they work into an overall idea of the amorous communication system as outlined in the first section. Psychoanalysis is concerned with the

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[10] This is, of course, a play on what are much larger arguments within the work of these theorists.

development of subjectivity and acts of "personhood" and the interaction between human subjects and cultural objects. The theories of Lacan (*On Feminine Sexuality*), and those later taken up by Žižek (*Sublime Object*, "From Courtly Love," *Plague of Fantasies*, and *Looking Awry*) deal with ideas around the formation of the subject and issues related to desire, emotion, and sexuality. Analytic methods drawn from psychoanalysis provide an effective means to study the relationship between music and the idea of the amorous subject. As Hesmondhalgh states: "the best versions of psychoanalysis still offer the most coherent accounts of human subjectivity and its constraints, especially when combined with insights drawn from philosophy and social science" (*Why Music Matters* 41); and, I would add, history. There are sharp critiques of the work of Lacan, in particular, some of his conceptions of women;[11] it nonetheless is a rich vehicle for thinking about how music functions about the construction of the self.

While psychoanalysis is criticized for its limited and limiting conception of desire and the regulation of those desires (for example, in his 2009 presentation at the Experience Pop Music conference Hesmondhalgh was critical of analysis which depended too much on psychoanalysis), it can be combined with other modes of analysis to provide a more expansive and complex view of the amorous self. Opening up dialogue between methodologies is challenging in that they do not always align perfectly, but it enables the ability to critique weaknesses in each. For example, analysis that is dependent only on psychoanalysis, with its tight concentration on the "self," is useful when it comes to a therapeutic situation with focus on an individual, but is less concerned

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[11] This is a bit of an understatement considering two of Lacan's most well-known quotations deny the existence of woman and of the sexual relationship. For the purposes of this paper I will neither engage in a critique of Lacan's theories or methods, nor draw on any feminist reading of Lacan. Suzanne Barnard (*Reading*) provides an effective criticism of the use of *Encore* as a "straw text" by feminists and gives a compelling argument against the branding of Lacan's theories as anti-feminist.

with a wider set of situations and contexts which impact the development and circulation of cultural objects. When using psychoanalysis as a means of analysis, it is important to ensure one is aware of its limitations and the tendency for interpretation to become a form of creative fiction by relying overly much on the text itself. Psychoanalytic methods figure prominently in the work of music scholars concerned with questions of the self in relation to music, such as Kramer (*Classical Music*, *Musical Meaning*, and *Interpreting Music*), McClary (*Feminine Endings*), and Middleton (*Voicing the Popular*). While none of these studies deal specifically with passionate love, they demonstrate the ways methods from psychoanalysis can be applied to musical contexts to good effect.

A more detailed account of psychoanalytic theory is located in later chapters. Briefly, psychoanalysis is a method of analysis which provides a framework for understanding forces that motivate the individual. In psychoanalysis, the term *subjectivity* is used to describe concepts related to the idea of selfhood, and it is the term that will be used throughout this study.[12] In psychoanalysis the self is not determined by external forces such as "fate," nor is it biologically driven, but the "self" is constructed through a constant interplay between cultural context and the self. Some theorists, such as Hesmondhalgh, prefer the term "self making" to subjectivity to more accurately reflect these ongoing negotiations as an active and ongoing process.[13] In this

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[12] Philosophical approaches to subjectivity deal with concepts of mental states and meaning.
[13] See Hesmondhalgh's "Toward a Critical Understanding" for a discussion of the concept of selfhood and emotion concerning music. This discussion is especially useful in placing music and the production of emotion within the context of a capitalist society. Hesmondhalgh takes a critical stance related to the conceptualization of music as a force for positive self-actualization and feelings of shared experience. Instead, Hesmondhalgh points to the role of music production and consumption as a commodity and the ways the "self" is created through manufactured market forces. While this dissertation does not take an explicitly Marxist approach to the production of music or emotions as a commodity, this does represent an important line of inquiry.

conceptualization of the self, we are who we are through the culture we encounter and experience. For example, we are impacted by not only the cultural objects such as movies and books, but also by the interactions of family, work, and the physical spaces we encounter. We understand who we are through our relations and contexts.

Psychoanalysis or "the talking cure," as developed by Sigmund Freud, was intended to help patients conquer problems through discussion where the analysand/patient is heard by the analyst to uncover and assist with behaviours and "blockages" which are impacting the patient. In psychoanalysis, the subject is assumed to have both a conscious and an unconscious mind (Pick 5). Freud encouraged patients to engage in "free association" in order to uncover or gain access to what was repressed for "The patient's speech, analysis proposes, can afford glimpses of ideas or fantasies beyond the subject's control" (Pick 5). To account for the role of the unconscious mind Freud developed a complex theory of psychological forces, divided among the conceptualization of a triad of forces or "masters": the id, ego, and superego, which govern areas of subjectivity (Pick 45). For example, the id aligns with the unconscious mind, that which we cannot ever know or access. Freud develops a clinical framework for analysis which focuses on the impacts of this triad and the ways the balanced triad creates stable subjects. Because the unconscious mind cannot be accessed as a matter of course, Freud looks to dreams, stories, and the dialogue between the patient and the analyst as a means to search out the source issues. His theories have had enormous impact on the world of clinical psychology, but also on other areas such as literature and popular culture (Pick 113). Specific aspects of Freud's theories will be picked up in more detail in each of the case studies.

Lacan expanded Freud's theories to reflect structuralist understandings of language and culture. Lacan's approach is neatly summed up in the aphorism that the unconscious is

"structured like a language" (Lacan, *Écrits* 44). In this way, the unconscious, and subjectivity itself, has structures and semantics in the same way as a language. The mapping of concepts such as "ego" and "id" to structuralist theories of language is Lacan's most significant contribution to psychoanalytic theory (Homer 33). Borrowing from structuralist and semiotic theory allows Lacan to incorporate analysis of cultural objects and phenomenon to draw conclusions about subjectivity, rather than about a direct relationship with a patient in a clinical setting. Understanding subjectivity in this way enables the analysis of textual documents. More recently, Žižek has refined psychoanalysis as a means to study a wide array of media and popular culture. Žižek uses psychoanalysis to analyze film, music, and television, to expose how such cultural artefacts reveal humanity's darkest secrets, finding fresh purchase on a method that was in some danger of falling out of fashion and use.

The use of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory is relevant in this dissertation as a way to examine the formal structures and performed utterances in popular music for what is repressed and sublimated, allowing for a multiplicity of interpretations and ways to consider how music impacts subjectivity. Approaching the issue of passionate love within popular music through the lens of psychoanalysis creates opportunities for the consideration of meaning in relation to "the human" in a richer way than using methods of musical analysis such as an examination of chord structures or the social context of the band members. I use the frameworks of psychoanalysis as a way to understand how music works to create meaning in the psychical lives of individual subjects. Psychoanalytic theories, such as the uncanny, the concept of the Real, and issues related desire are taken up and explicated in more detail in the case studies.

In this dissertation, I use psychoanalysis alongside Luhmann's theories of love as an information system to add a further dimension to the question of how music works to create

meaning the context of passionate love. Luhmann constructed a theory that human society is created from numerous social communication systems. He contends that his method of systems works equally well whether applied to political systems, systems of art, monetary systems, or a system of love. Like psychoanalysis, systems theory provides a framework for understanding the human and the self; however, a significant difference is that human subjects are not at the centre of this framework. Instead, as with other sociologists drawing upon cybernetic theory such as Bruno Latour, Luhmann places humans within a constellation of "actors." The actors within the systems include both humans and non-humans. Thus, social systems are a network of nodes and edges at work within an environment and allow for constant change within the system. I use systems theory within this dissertation to question the role of music as a mode of communication and to question meaning concerning passionate love.

For Luhmann scenes of passionate love played out in novels are not just reflections of culture, but integral to the reality of the thing at all. Without media, love would not exist. "Rather than dealing with love in isolation as a specific, unique phenomenon, this approach treats it as a solution to a problem that is dependent on systemic structures and is comparable to other solutions" (*Love: a Sketch* 2). Luhmann makes extensive use of textual documents and uses literature as an object of study as a means to support his theories regarding different epochs of passionate love. He references specific examples in novels and poetry as a means to surface the interplay of amorous actors within particular periods. According to Luhmann, each successive epoch comes into existence out of a communicative need when media can no longer handle the necessary complexity of the system. Thus, a mode of communication gradually fades away when it is no longer able to support the communicative needs of a system, and something else takes its place. For example, the poetry and music of the medieval practice of courtly love could not

continue after the breakdown of the feudal system, because other forms of literature and music took their place. The system of passionate love is dependent on symbolic media and are necessarily connected. Media are necessary for the existence of passionate love.

This study uses the music of Arcade Fire as a means to examine modes of communication unique to passionate love, to surface the vestiges of past epochs, and to draw conclusions about the state of passionate love in the twenty-first century. As a particular methodology, Luhmann's approach to passionate love calls us to examine the material nature of the media, not only its content, as a means to fitting it into a network of communication, one where the lover and beloved are working along with a series of messages sent, received, or rejected. For example, the popularity and circulation of epistolary novels or poetic forms are closely allied with the needs of the information system of the epoch of the eighteenth century. Music, as media complicit in this process, can also be analyzed for signs and structures for its alignment in this process and are similar to the ways Kittler uses the analysis of discourse.
In *Discourse Networks*, Kittler analyzes the use of primers for the instruction of reading to discuss the development of discourse networks related to textual documents. For Luhmann, it is not that media become an extension of our bodies or tools for use in amorous relationships, but that the media act back on us. The media we interact with shape us. Furthermore, media are so ubiquitous, so everyday, that we don't even notice their impacts. In writing on Luhmann and media, Pettman suggests: "In different epochs, such a speech act would oblige the speaker either to elope with, to pine for, or to sacrifice oneself for them, depending on the century and the locale. For someone like Niklas Luhmann, then, *all* sex is cybersex, since it is the result of pre-programmed communication sub-routines" (*Love and Other* 4). The communicative force of music, the content and the form, both music and lyrics, the music and its means of distribution

are hooked into the codes of passionate love. In this dissertation, I use Luhmann's work to look at the ways music amplifies and reifies passionate love as a communication system rather than an emotion.

Traditional methods of historical and formal musicology, including music analysis, are crucial to supporting a humanistic approach to the exploration of the musical discourse of the lover. It is also vital to include material from the popular music press. Situating this study in this framework recognizes a multiplicity of approaches. Each of which, as mentioned above, can be caught up in a "hermetic seal" overly focused on aligning with methodologies at the expense of providing cultural context. Furthermore, situating the discussion along a continuum rather than treating music as a disembodied entity or implying current musical ideas have sprung out of nowhere is intended to recognize a debt to previous studies and work. Key theorists working in this area will be those mentioned in the previous section, such as Singer, as well as those focusing on specific periods such as Hamm (*Yesterdays* and *Putting*), Pattison, and Gioia.

Although the study and analysis of popular music have moved from the category of a suspicious interloper in the realm of musicology to firmly within the mainstream, there remains unease around its presence. Most research continues to straddle the disciplines of sociology, ethnography, and musicology. The interdisciplinary aspects of popular music studies give it freedom of analysis that may be unavailable to more traditional, bounded disciplines such as musicology, especially in regards to the study of subjectivity. Shank asserts: "Popular music studies are uniquely situated to address these concerns of embodiment because music performance and its communities of practice require an examination of sensate experience and aesthetic ideological systems." (qtd. in Fonarow 5) While one might quibble with this placement of popular music in a higher echelon of sensate experience than other musics, there is no

question at this point that popular music, in its many forms, is highly connected to embodied experience and subjectivity. In an effort to advocate for analysis of the music itself, Middleton (*Voicing*) suggests the analysis of popular music proves popular songs reproduce "the broader structures of the symbolic economy" and that it is just as vital, or even more vital, to look at the symbolic level, as it is to examine the "relations of production." Middleton further refers to the "notorious banality of cultural studies" (92) in an attempt to set up the argument that studies too narrow in focus, for example, looking at the way people involved in the punk scene dress, are too simplistic if one does not also provide some reflection on the music itself. The discipline of musicology supports the use of different methodologies in the field of popular music studies, but as Middleton suggests, more work could be done to pair methods from cultural studies with musical analysis. This dissertation is, in part, an answer to that challenge.

In comparison to traditional analysis of Western art music, one of the more problematic areas in popular music studies continues to be sorting out the object of investigation.[14] In traditional musicology, the focus of the analysis is typically the score, the notated set of instructions used by musicians to realize a work. But in the study in popular music when there isn't necessarily a notated score, at least not in the same sense of art music, the object of study is less clear. The abstract concept of "the work" as is found in art music helps to ensure a stable instantiation for study and analysis. Because popular music lacks the fixedness of music dependent on notation, scholars must necessarily use recordings as the object of study. However, a recording is just one reading of a track or song. A song in performance may be quite different

[14] The object(s) of study of popular music in ethnography and sociology requires are different (i.e., people) and necessarily require different methodologies, including observation and interviews. These methods are not utilized in this study and therefore not covered under a discussion of methods.

from the version released on an album. Performances change over time. These shifts may affect the analysis and interpretation of the music. Lidov has pointed out that it is difficult to know what to "measure" when analyzing recordings. At the same time, most commercially available notated musical transcriptions of popular music are woefully inadequate for in-depth musical analysis because typically only a small number of voices are represented in notated music. These limitations could be due to the constraints of the scoring format. For example, piano scoring requires many instrumental and human voices to be modified, stripped down, or excised. The music itself can also present challenges to transcription. Sounds, such as guitar feedback, are impossible or very difficult to capture through graphical notation. Reliance on any method of fixity, be it paper, acrylic, or bytes is always problematic in relation to a sounding art. The study of music is a problem of temporality. Given the unsettled state of the object of research, it is essential to clarify that I examined an array of sources, including commercially released recordings, live recordings, and video of live performances, with a particular focus on studio recordings.[15]

The dissertation constructs a methodological framework rather than affirming, or attempting to affirm, the specific writing practices or experiences of individual members of Arcade Fire. Reductionism and positivism are twin spectres that haunt any study grappling with the complex subject of meaning and "the human" and a topic as large and amorphous as "music and love" is particularly challenging, thus rather than an attempt to reduce all phenomena to a

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[15] YouTube is an online commercial social media platform which hosts community contributions of video. It is an extraordinary source of musical performances. A huge number of varied performances are available, many of them live. Additionally, many artists and record labels release album previews and special events via YouTube.

single, unified theory, multiple methodologies are employed in this dissertation to reflect a plurality of viewpoints.[16]

Given the challenge and perhaps even impossibility of formulating a unified theory of "love" or "the love song" itself, I have chosen to approach the study of the love song and the amorous subject through a series of case studies. Each chapter takes up a different thematic area as outlined below, and uses the methodological framework set in the first section of the study to analyze one to two songs. Each case study demonstrates the ways music is part of the information system of passionate love. Roland Barthe's 1978 work *A Lover's Discourse*[17] is assembled through figures that are like ". . . the body's gesture caught in action" (4). Barthes documents a lover's discourse as a series of short, dictionary-like entries, rather than a cohesive narrative. Figures form short chapters on topics such as "waiting" and "agony," and comprise a mix of quotations from literature and music and autobiographical scenes. By staging a discussion of passionate love in this way, Barthes demonstrates the way our amorous selves are "written" in and through discourse. Discourse/media chart, code, and categorize our experiences of love.

Following the spirit of Barthes' approach, each case study chapter in this dissertation takes up a specific theme or scene in the experience of passionate love. The first of the case study chapters, Chapter Five, takes up the idea of the song of petition where Žižek's trope of courtly love is used to lay bare the sometimes hidden workings of desire. Chapter Six explores ideas of time, memory, forgetting, and repetition as necessary components of passionate love. Night, ghosts, and the uncanny form the basis of Chapter Seven, and Chapter Eight, the final

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[16] As with any study, choosing certain modes of analysis necessarily forecloses on other methods, and there are resulting gaps and holes. Issues related to gender, subjectivity, sex, and music lie outside the specific aims and scope of this study.
[17] Barthes organized his work on love alphabetically.

case study, deals with issues related to sexuality. The concluding chapter pulls together the common threads of each of the previous chapters and highlights areas where there are no easy conclusions. The songs fall into an affective matrix, in addition to possessing more seemingly subjective characteristics tied to the strength of melody, sonic presentation, and text concerning the idea of passionate love.

Chapter 1.4 Conclusion

The music of Arcade Fire provides a means to ask the following questions: What work is the work of love songs? And what might love songs tell us about contemporary love relationships and the operation of a musical semantics of love? Musical semantics create topics (in the semiotic sense) and tropes, which form an overall network which activates meaning. As Luhmann suggests, it is the systemization of love which makes love itself possible.

> Love can now be depicted as a sort of super passion which engages all else in its service, or simply as the quintessence of all passions. It becomes elevated to the principle of activity, and the fact that this principle is called passion now signifies only that no explanation, reason, or excuse can be provided for one's activity. In the case of love it can be shown how this passion press-gangs opposites into its service: presence and absence of the beloved, hope and despair, daring and fear, anger and respect now all serve solely to strengthen love. The unity of love becomes the framework in which paradox that has a practical function in love can be portrayed. (*Love As* 62)

Thus, what I offer here is not a "unified theory" in the usual sense, but rather this dissertation discusses the systemization of passionate love. The system of passionate love creates a unity or banner under which creates a specialized set of codes and operating instructions in which music plays a part. If, as Luhmann suggests, love is a "super passion," then the coupling of passionate love and music works to supercharge the system with particular intensity, one that recognizes the paradox of love, where every acquisition of love is always already bound together with its loss. It is the work of this study to examine the ways indie rock music in particular participates in the system of passionate love. Concepts from Luhmann's system theory into conversation with

psychoanalytic theory to interrogate concepts of passionate love and subjectivity, calling the existence of love as a human emotion into question.

Chapter 2.1 Becoming Amorous Subjects: Theories of Love, Music, and Subjectivity

"Everyday, everyday, everyday I write the book." (Costello)

"The unconscious, in love, is the separation of the two aspects of essence: difference and repetition." (Deleuze 68)

This chapter contends with issues related to theories of subjectivity and discusses the process of becoming an amorous subject. The communication system of passionate love creates amorous subjects who can send and receive amorous messages. The communication system of passionate love comprises codes, scripts, subroutines, and routine processes. Amorous subjects act as human relays within the system and are always at the ready to react to an incoming message. However, the process of becoming an amorous subject requires entraining. Entrainment, in this context, refers to shaping through exposure to the mechanisms of the system. We are formed to experience passionate love as an authentic experience of shared subjectivity in the same way a fruit tree is trained to follow a shape through pruning and binding to a fixed object. Artworks have always been implicated as agents in the realm of lovers. Well-known examples include King David's lyre; Romeo and Juliet; Don Giovanni's serenade; the dangers presented by poetry and the effects of reading of too many novels on impressionable young women; Elvis; the Beatles; and innumerable others. Music, poetry, novels, and movies are the training materials for passionate love and provide us with the necessary language and communication system to bring us into the legion of lovers, what Barthes describes as "united readers and lovers" (5). Amorous subjects are thus attuned to the frequencies of love and are at the ready to notice, accept, or reject messages of love. Music allows for the generation of shared instructions and codes for operating within the system of love. This chapter delves into the necessary mechanisms involved in the formation of the amorous subject and lays out a methodology for the analysis of music and love.

I use this methodological framework to analyze the music of Arcade Fire in the case study chapters.

In the slim volume *Why Music Matters*, Hesmondhalgh grapples with the question of the value of music to human life, and he works through this question by focusing on two particular vectors:

> The fact that music matters to so many people may derive from two contrasting yet complementary dimensions of musical experience in modern societies. The first is that *music often feels intensely and emotionally linked to the private self*. . . .The second is that *music is often the basis of collective, public experiences,* whether in live performance, mad dancing at a party, or simply by virtue of the fact that thousands and sometimes millions of people can come to know the same sounds and performers. (2)

Hesmondhalgh further explicates this concept in relation to how we think about ourselves in the world, what gives meaning to our lives and how we feel about others. He finds rich ground in utilizing the idea of flourishing concerning music and human purpose. This idea of flourishing recalls Aristotle's "eudaimonia,"[18] the concept of both living well and living rightly. Hesmondhalgh finds "We would flourish through music more . . . if music addressed a wider variety of emotional context and psychic dynamics. The ambivalence of music's ability to contribute to human flourishing is therefore re-emphasized." (*Why Music* 8)

[18] Eudaimonia is defined by Taylor as "the state of having an objectively desirable life, universally agreed by ancient philosophical theory and popular thought to be the supreme human good" ("Eudaimonia").

Hesmondhalgh draws extensively on philosopher Martha Nussbaum's approach to subjectivity to bolster his ideas on connections between subjectivity, music, and human flourishing. Nussbaum's work is a way to counter the "bizarrely non-feeling subject" he sees as being rife in the work of many post-structuralist theorists and in particular those of Lacan ("Body Politic"). Hesmondhalgh rejects the instrumental approaches to subjectivity used by theorists such as Finnegan and DeNora, finding they put too much emphasis on music as a determiner of human action (i.e., music can make you do something). These theorists fail to recognize that music is enjoyable and that engaging with music can make people better humans. On Finnegan, he writes, "The difficult relations of the self to affect, stressed by psychoanalysis and by other approaches to subjectivity, do not seem to be of interest here; nor are less positive aspects of aesthetic experience about a person's emotional life. Such questions raise a crucial issue for a critical social science: how to connect problems of the self with problems of the social?" (*Why Music* 37) For Hesmondhalgh, theorists must go further than discussions of how music is consumed, or that music has meaning, but rather how and why it means in the context of human relationships to themselves to those things external to the self. Hesmondhalgh's quest to work out the relationship between music, human meaning, and enjoyment stand at arm's-length from methods such as psychoanalysis, in part perhaps due to his sociological training, but it additionally recognizes their importance to a multi-faceted approach to the study of music.

Nussbaum's theories on the importance of artistic experiences and narrative play to the formation of the subject are relative to the work of the love song. Humans meet the world through stories, and music as perhaps a story form is a means to enjoy and experience the world of passionate love. Nussbaum suggests our responses to music are more complex than our reactions to narrative fiction in part because "Music "frequently has an affinity with the

amorphous, archaic, and extremely powerful emotional materials of childhood" (qtd. in Hesmondhalgh *Why Music* 16). Hesmondhalgh emphasizes this point, stating "Its semiotic indefiniteness gives it a superior power to engage with our emotions" (*Why Music* 16). Thus, connecting music to passionate love, memory, repetition, forgetting, and nostalgia, is a fruitful way ascribe the construction of meaning and subjectivity. Narrative fiction, such as Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, give us structure and pathways as we attempt to tread the ground of amorous relationships. If we accept that music has a narrative structure and has "superior power to engage with emotions" (*Why Music* 16), then it follows that love songs play a role in the development of an amorous self.

The process of becoming an amorous subject requires a specialized understanding of subjectivity, unique to passionate love. In the system of passionate love, subjects must see themselves as individuals irrevocably separate from others and yet, paradoxically, must aspire to the penetration of another's subjectivity. To engage in love, one must recognize and respond to another's subjectivity. According to Deleuze, "To fall in love is to individualize someone by the signs he bears or emits. It is to become sensitive to these signs, to undergo an apprenticeship to them" (7). Thus, love is a system of communication. Lovers are necessarily interpreters of signs. But to push Deleuze's suggestion of specialized signs, lovers must undergo an ongoing apprenticeship to the system of love. The language of love is not unique to individuals, and lovers must instead deploy the code to open an individualized communication pathway. However, along with the need to understand and interpret the signs of love, amorous subjects must also be able to attribute different symptoms to another. It is in becoming an object of love that a subject is "marked" as unique to another.

To support the theory that narrative media, such as music and novels, provide mechanisms for learning the structure of love, it is useful to again turn to the work of Proust. In *Swann's Way*, Proust often relates Swann's experiences of love through metaphors of entraining or "apprenticeship." For example, Proust uses music as a way to describe love as a serial experience. Partners may change, but the song stays the same. Like a piece of dance music, love has structure and a pattern of movement that is meant to be learned and repeated. The recycling of amorous feeling is a fundamental component of love. Proust's description of Swann falling in love with Odette in "Swann's Way" is fascinating.

> At this time of life one has already been wounded more than once by the darts of love; it no longer evolves by itself, obeying its own incomprehensible and fatal laws, before our passive and astonished hearts. We come to its aid, we falsify it by memory and by suggestion. Recognizing one of its symptoms, we remember and recreate the rest. Since we know its song, which is engraved on our hearts in its entirety, there is no need for a woman to repeat the opening strains—filled with the admiration which beauty inspires—for us to remember what follows. And if she begins in the middle—where hearts are joined and where it sings of our existing, henceforward, for one another only—we are well enough attuned to that music to be able to take it up and follow our partner without hesitation at the appropriate moment. (277)

Proust's remarkably describes the process of falling in love in terms of storage and retrieval. Moreover, he characterizes love as a piece of notated music, giving love a structure and a form.

Proust's description of the process of falling in love makes both Swann and Odette actors with an interplay of codes. While Swann's infatuation with the courtesan Odette marks her as a unique object of desire the path of their love, courtship follows a pattern of meetings and

flirtations, of messages sent, received, returned, and ignored. The code for love is stored in our hearts, ready to be activated when needed. Proust's use of music as a metaphor for the system of amorous communication calls attention to the need for lovers to be familiar with the mechanics and structures of love. As with notated musical practice and dance, one must be conversant with the formal structure to participate effectively. Furthermore, as with phonograph record, the needle of love can be placed anywhere on the record, and we can recognize the motion, remember the rhythm and the contours of the song enough to dance along. The ability to "falsify" love, or pick up anywhere the narrative arch of love, only comes with learning the system that is passionate love and practicing through repeated encounters. Thus, as Proust suggests, passionate love requires training of the body and mind as well as a master set of instructions.[19]

A conceptualization of the self, and in particular an amorous self, is fundamental to the contemporary Western practice of passionate love. To be in a relationship with another requires a concept of individual personhood. One must understand oneself to be a "subject" separate from other people and things in the world with an agency to act independently. At the same time, to enter into an amorous relationship with another requires that another subject must be individualized. In the *Search for Lost Time*, the narrator individualizes Albertine, selecting her from a group of young women in Balbec. This selection marks her as distinct from the rest. Numerous love songs focus on an individual. Even "list" songs such as the Beautiful South's

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[19] Singer suggests that Proust's analysis of love is much more negative than previous literature where generally lovers are thwarted by outside forces or by a character flaw: ". . . by its very nature love is suffering" and "Since the lover tries to overcome the insurmountable and relies upon imagination that creates cognitive distortions, he and his beloved perpetually misunderstand each other. Their love can only induce reverberating anguish in both of them" (192).

"Song for Whoever" or the "Catalogue Aria" in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* demonstrate the recognition of individual subjectivity amid the serial nature of love.

Amorous relationships are connected to the subjectivity of another. A passionate communication system concerns how we, as subjects, interpret the acts of personhood of another. Singer writes:

> In embracing Albertine, he hopes to touch more deeply than ever before the objective being which shows itself in this particular landscape. To experience love here, in the midst of Balbec and through intimacy with Albertine, is both to commune with nature as she embodies it and also to penetrate her independent selfhood by locating it in its natural environment." (183)

Thus, amorous relationships speak to the need to penetrate the subjectivity of another. It is through our links and connections with other subjectivities that we become amorous beings, and it is the patterns and mechanisms of cultural works that birth our amorous selves.

Barthes' *A Lover's Discourse* gives a poststructuralist reading of the idea of a system of communication for love, and he describes *A Lover's Discourse* not as a work of history, an encyclopedia, or even a dictionary, but as a thesaurus. This choice of format is significant because as a thesaurus, the *A Lover's Discourse* does not follow a narrative arch. It comprises, as indicated in the subtitle, "Fragments." Thus, the discourse of love is composed of patterns and codes which lovers use to form communicative acts. Like Proust's metaphor of love as a well-known song, lovers require only a fragment of discourse to recognize a scene in passionate love. Modelling the text of *A Lover's Discourse* after a thesaurus, a format which allows readers to lookup an entry anywhere within the text without reference to a single narrative pathway, makes the architecture of love as communication visible. Barthes describes each entry as a figure as part

of an established discourse or communication system. He writes, “A figure is established if at least someone can say: ‘That’s so true! I recognize that scene of language.’ For certain operations of their art, linguists make sure of a vague entity which they call linguistic feeling; in order to constitute figures, we require neither more nor less than this guide: amorous feeling” (4). The entries speak to experiences common to the lover, and each figure expresses moments such as the joy and excitement of passionate love; the unease of the possible missed communication; and the panic and despair of the potential loss of the beloved. Even as he documents the patterns of the lover’s discourse Barthes gestures to the paradoxes inherent in the practice of passionate love as a discourse with its internal structure where repetition and contradictions are a matter of course. In the introduction to *A Lover’s Discourse,* he writes

> But he who utters this discourse and shapes its episodes does not know that a book is to be made of them; he does not yet know that as a good cultural subject he should neither repeat nor contradict himself, nor take the whole for the part; all he knows is that what passes through his mind at a certain moment is *marked*, like the printout of a code (in other times, this would have been the code of courtly love, or the Carte du Tendre). (4)

Thus, the code of lovers is a *marked* discourse, one that is set apart from the discourse of the everyday. It is a system, with its own rules and logic.

Media as objects of cultural expression aid in our entraining and help to teach us the codes and patterns and communicative devices of love. Furthermore, media such as music enable amorous subjects to construct a compelling and cohesive narrative of what may be paradoxical and potentially false fragments of communication. Pettman suggests that it is our relationship to the *media* of passionate love which aids in the creation of a concept of a love relationship. “As

we know, one of the main functions of romantic narrative is to weave all the strands of coincidence and contingency together in such a way that the lovers feel compelled to believe in the benign intervention of the invisible hand of faith" (*Love and Other* 1). Thus, media such as music and fiction are aids to smoothing the way to love, to covering the uncomfortable knowledge that passionate love as the interpenetration of another's subjectivity is an impossibility.

The concept of the amorous subject is intimately tied to notions of subjectivity itself.[20] For writers on the history of love such as Singer, the development of the amorous subject is a linear historical construction, working within and through a long line of events and epochs grounded in the idea of appraisal and bestowal. For French theorist Michel Foucault, the amorous subject is a product of regulation through discourse. In theories of psychoanalysis, subjects are fractured beings controlled by drives, the hidden movers of our psyches. And for Luhmann, the subject is an organism which is the product of its environment where passionate love is a by-product of society as humans gain an ever greater sense of themselves as separate beings. Though these theorists and historians have different methods and approaches to the idea of subjectivity, communication is a fundamental vehicle in the creation and motion of sexuality and passionate love.

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[20] The birth of the modern concept of the subject can be understood as having its beginnings in the early period of Enlightenment as the idea of a person expressing free will and understanding themselves to be a freedom to express and feel themselves to be an individual. In the history of the idea of the subject a number of key thinkers such as Rousseau, Freud and Foucault. For Luhmann the development of the idea of the subject is entirely tied to the stratification of society. As the systems within society become increasingly complex (i.e. economic systems) then the more individuals will see themselves as unique. Contemporary theorists continue to attempt to untangle the development of the idea of the subject by applying different frameworks to looking at the problem of how humans create meaning and understand the world. For the structuralists one of the key themes was surfacing the ways in which language and other cultural signs work to assert subjectivity.

In Western culture, passionate love has long had a connection to the concept of an ideal self. Striving for a love which eschews baser motives of satisfying erotic desire is a means to achieve perfection of mind and body. Circling back to the beginning of this chapter this is, in part, the connection between love and "the good life." The ties between Platonic and Christian idealizations of "good" love and the self continue to have strong undercurrents in the idea of the amorous self in contemporary culture. Love, though not specifically passionate love in the sense we understand today, is a central tenant of Christianity.

> The Christian God, like the Aristotelian God, draws everything to him by being loved. But also he is a lover; indeed, all love originates with him, inasmuch as nothing could love unless he loved it first. Through this kind of idealization the Christians could see in the cosmos a meaning and a purposefulness that no one else had ever found. . . . He himself contains the highest Platonic form, the very essence of goodness or beauty. At the same time, he is infinitely powerful, authoritative, wise. (Singer 167)

Love was an expression of faith. Furthermore, the moralistic tone set by Plato, that is, that erotic love and desire is lesser than the valuing of a person as beautiful and good, continues to resonate in contemporary understandings of love. To satisfy one's desire for another is to thwart one's chances of achieving the highest level of self. The influence of Plato on Christianity meant that not only was sexual desire an activity in violation of church law, for example, sex outside of marriage, but that any act, thought, or feeling not connected to a striving for unification in love with God was also sinful. Platonic and early Christian thought continues to have implications and impacts on the history of music and love. Furthermore, currents related to Christian morality continue to run through contemporary music, often in covert ways. The connections between

indie music, morality, and love will be taken up in more detail later in this study, but it will be helpful to briefly lay out some groundwork in regard to these issues and the development of the amorous self in this section of the dissertation.

The Western concept of love has its beginnings with ancient Greek philosophy. Plato's *Symposium,* presented as an argument between the philosopher Socrates and other guests at a banquet, offers a clear articulation of his philosophy of love. Each guest presents an argument on the purpose and value of love, such as erotic love based on desire for a beautiful body, or love as a longing for the reunification of bodies that had been separated. The argument put forth by Socrates represents Plato's ideal of passionate love. In the *Symposium,* the figure of Socrates argues for a vision of idealized love where it is one of man's highest achievements. In Platonic love, the beloved is a mechanism for a striving toward all that is good, beautiful, and morally right. Plato makes it clear that desire on its own is ethically corrupt. Judeo-Christian theology incorporated concepts of "higher love" from Platonic thought. Within the Christian conceptualization of God the focus of love and fundamental force in Christianity becomes the striving for love, love of others, and love of God. This concept is the most pervasive and far-reaching in the cultural construction of love of all forms, including passionate love. For, as Singer writes, if ". . . what distinguishes Christianity, what gives it a unique place in man's intellectual life, is the fact that it alone has made love the dominant principle in all areas of dogma. Whatever Christians may have done to others or themselves, theirs is the only faith in which God and love are the same" (159). In Christian doctrine, instead of finding love in humans alone, the act loving God becomes a means of achieving goodness. Love, though not necessarily passionate love, is thus the fundamental force driving Western society.

Communicating one's appreciation of the merits of the beloved through prayer, praise, or other media is fundamental to love. A desire for a "worthy" object, love in the tradition of philosophy, also implies an implicit connection to eros in passionate love, which, as Singer suggests, is informed by the whole history of Western romantic love. According to Singer, the principal operation of passionate love involves a striving toward ideals as a bestowal of passion upon a "worthy" object, and the twinned concepts of appraisal and bestowal continue to be "the highest level to which man's thinking about the love of personas had thus far reached. In some respects, it is a level that has not yet been exceeded" (302). In this sense, Singer's lofty ideals for the goals of passionate love in Western society are tempered by Luhmann's darker take on the idea of striving and the search for an ideal union of lovers. According to Luhmann, the demands of modern society for a sense of achievement through the acquisition of passionate love and marriage[21] are frustrated by the increasingly complex construction of subjectivity. As marriage moves further and further away from its origins as a contract between families, bound by the church and state structures, and is now matter of personal choice, this search for an increasingly idealized partner as passionate love leads to dissatisfaction and depression when this ideal partner is elusive.

For the purposes of this study it is useful to examine love in relation to ideas of communication and the place of media, such as text and music as a means of understanding its legacy. As a mark of the importance of this legacy, John Durham Peters places a discussion of Platonic and Christian connections between acts of love and acts of communication as the

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[21] Luhmann uses the concept of marriage in his work and so I use it here, but the same ideas could be extended to the idea of long-term or common-law relationships. Though outside the purpose of this study, it would be interesting to extend Luhmann's work to current debates regarding marriage, cohabitation, and partnership.

opening paragraph in his history of the idea of communication, *Speaking into the Air*. In the chapter entitled "Dialogue and Dissemination," Peters suggests: "Socrates and Jesus are the central figures in the moral life of the Western world. . . . Both of them taught about love and the dispersion of seeds, but to different effects" (35). Socrates' (and Plato's) admonition against writing as the promiscuous spreading of seed in unworthy ground, and the indiscriminate broadcasting of seed promulgated by Jesus sets up a fundamental tension in Western conceptualization of communication, and one could say particularly in the case of love and communication.

The right kind of love is a pathway to righteous living, and the ascent can be helped or hindered by music. Both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible refer to music in relation to a means to praise God. In this context, music is not only a means of communication among people, but also between people and the divine. Music can move a subject to base or higher moral grounds and actions. In the *Republic*, Plato specifically refers to music as having an affective and moral impact. Because of this, Plato recommended the restriction of all music to only two specific modes. Taruskin quotes the following passage from the *Republic*:

> Socrates asks that just two modes be allowed for music in his ideal state: the one "that would fittingly imitate the utterances and the accents of a brave man who is engaged in warfare or in any enforced business, and who, when he has failed, either meeting wounds or death or having fallen into some other mishap, in all these conditions confronts fortune with steadfast endurance and repels her strokes"; and the one that imitates the speech of "a man engaged in works of peace, not enforced but voluntary, either trying to persuade somebody of something and imploring him—whether it be a god, through prayer, or a man, by teaching and admonition—or

> contrariwise yielding himself to another who is petitioning him or teaching him or trying to change his opinions, and in consequence faring according to his wish, and not bearing himself arrogantly, but in all this acting modestly and moderately and acquiescing in the outcome."

In this passage, Plato makes connections between music and the development of the self and explicitly ties this development to the formal structure of music, not only the words. Thus, as Naussbaum points out in the case of narrative fiction, media such music has long been tied to human feeling and a sense of subjectivity. (qtd. in Hesmondhalgh *Why Music* 16)

As much as Plato and Christian theologians might advocate for passionate love that is focused on higher ideals, desire as a drive for union with, and even possession of, another, remains a motivating force within the context of passionate love. For "There is no love without desire, and no love is good except as it conduces to someone's satisfaction. When the eros tradition says that love is desire for goodness in the object, the copula may be considered ambiguous" (Singer 148). Passionate love and erotic desire are thus closely linked. The inevitable connection between desire and sexuality and means passionate love sits dangerously close to moral corruption. "Love has been understood by many philosophers to be a source of great richness and energy in human life. But even those who praise its contribution have seen it as a potential threat to virtuous living" (Hesmondhalgh, *Why Music Matters* 26). Thus, music adds richness to human life but also has the potential to morally corrupt. This matters in the case of love songs, in particular, as the connection between passionate love and the idea of "goodness," adds a level of complication and ambiguity that may not be present in other kinds of music.

Many theorists (Kramer; Middleton; Hesmondhalgh) have suggested music is a particularly productive space in the formation of subjectivity. For example, Kristeva (*Desire)* has suggested that music without words has particular expressive power in relation to subjectivity, surpassing signs altogether. DeNora, following the work of Adorno, charges music with the agency to move humans to action, suggesting music is like a tool or resource that can be mastered and used by subjects to meet a goal. Other studies (A. Moore; Agawu; Cumming) have focused on using semiotic theory to demonstrate how emotions and physical gestures are encoded in music. Theorists such as Spitzer, Hatten, and Monelle have developed a rich analytic approach to music and semiotics, suggesting music is comprised of "topics", or short, musical fragments that are meant to be easily identifiable by the listener. However, while most of these theorists discuss concepts of subjectivity in relation to music, they do not reflect or speculate on how these gestures, topics, tropes, and figures play a role between subjects or within wider culture. Sociologically focused studies and studies related to ethnography (Cohen; Finnegan; A. Bennett) demonstrate that music is a vital component of everyday life, but only very rarely touch on the sonic content itself, instead focusing on outward, observable markers such as dress, social habits, and consumer practices. While these observations provide important context for the ways music manifests itself in culture, they do not address the ways music and its structures such as harmony, rhythm, and metre, impact subjectivity.

Kramer provides a useful definition of the idea of musical subjectivity.

> Modern musical subjectivity arises in a process of address and reply in which music acts as the ideal or authoritative subject in whose place I come to be, whose subjective character I reenact as my own. . . Music draws on the tendency of culture to reproduce itself through modelling, imitation, identification and interlocution,

> through, in short, the acts of personhood, which is one reason it is so common to treat music as emanating with special immediacy from some personal source even when it is hanging abstractly in the air. (*Interpreting* 48)

He charges music itself, rather than the cultural milieu in which it operates, with the ability to foster these "acts of personhood." For example, in writing on music, subjectivity and the myth of originality, Kramer notes: "In particular, melody has become the Western trope of self-expression par excellence. When played, or, especially sung 'with feeling,' a melody can seem to make another subjectivity nakedly present to the listener, who may respond with an equally immediate sense of involvement—absorbed, aroused, captivated, desirous" (*Musical* 278). Kramer makes a powerful argument for the importance of music as organized sound, the stuff of music, to hook into a symbolic network which allows us to respond and recognize ourselves. He gives melody a particular role in creating this response. However, Kramer's lack of attention to the culture in which music operates, coupled with his tight focus on classical music, gives the impression that scope in which he works is quite small.

This section of the chapter has laid out some ways that music has been considered in relation to the history of passionate love. In particular, Hesmondhalgh, drawing on Naussbaum, makes a compelling case for the role of media, and especially narrative media, as an active space for the engagement of subjectivity. The next sections will deal more specifically with theories of subjectivity promulgated by Lacan, Žižek, and Luhmann, as they relate to the idea of the amorous subject.

Chapter 2.2 Psychoanalytic Approaches to the Amorous Subject

"Love is giving something one doesn't have to someone who doesn't want it." —Jacques Lacan (qtd. in Žižek *How*)

"Your mind is made up but your mouth is undone." —Costello

This section of the dissertation will delve more deeply into Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Lacan placed methods of the structuralist school, such as those formulated by Saussure and Levi-Strauss, alongside the theories of philosophers, such as Hegel, to make direct links between the formation of subjectivity and the formal structures of language. Lacan mapped structuralist approaches to language and elements of contemporary philosophy onto Freud's psychoanalytic theory. Lacan's combination of psychoanalytic theory and theories of language has been particularly fruitful for the study of literature and other forms of cultural expression such as film and music. This shift in methodology makes it possible to use Freud's approach far from the analyst's couch. Lacan's work has found extensive usage within critical theory, the humanities, cultural studies, and beyond.[22] The application of methods of psychoanalysis to media enabled cultural theorists to examine the interplay between cultural objects and subjectivity.[23]

For if, as Lacan states, "The unconscious is structured like a language" (*Four* 20), it becomes possible to examine the grammar, form, and content of cultural objects for the symptoms and signs they emit. The way humans use language such as jokes, "slips of the

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[22] There are far too many examples to list, but a few works of note are Silverman's *Acoustic Mirror*, which interrogates the feminine subject and sound in cinema using psychoanalysis; Middleton's *Voicing the Popular* focuses on music and psychoanalysis. Works of cinema, opera, and literature appear in numerous works of Žižek. Sharpe has suggested Lacan has had a profound impact on the humanities, stating, "It would be fair to say that there are few twentieth century thinkers who have had such a far-reaching influence on subsequent intellectual life in the humanities as Jacques Lacan."

[23] Following on theorists such as Barthes, we might also read cultural objects as "texts" thus making them opening to reading in the way of texts.

tongue," double entendres, and other language games betray themselves as symptoms of the unconscious of the subject.[24] It follows these same symptoms in language are evident in music and film, as well as texts, and the layers of communication bring the subject into being. Encounters with cultural objects, language, and communication in its various forms integral to its operation are formative. Psychoanalysis is a means to expose the hidden mechanisms and machinery that make the amorous subject and thus love possible in the first place. Lacan's entire psychoanalytic methodology is far too extensive to be distilled here; therefore, only theories relevant to the amorous subject are described in this section.

Lacan suggests that human subjectivity is "decentered" and fragmented. We may conceptualize ourselves as a unified subject at the centre of our world, but this is false. In one of his best-known theories referred to as the "Mirror Stage," Lacan uses the example of the joy an infant experiences at recognizing themself in a mirror for the first time to suggest that before this moment the infant did not perceive themself as a subject (Johnston). The information obtained from the reflection in the mirror gives the infant its first sense of self, and this brings joy. This recognition of a "self" is not internal or natural to the infant, but is only formed at seeing the unified image in the mirror. Lacan contends that it is through the image in the mirror the infant recognizes itself as something separate from that of others. For Lacan "the important point is that this form situates the agency known as the ego, prior to its social determination, in a fictional direction that will forever remain irreducible for any single individual or, rather that will only asymptomatically approach the subject's becoming". (*Écrits 76)* As a whole, unified subject is not a function of nature but is created by visual and other cultural experiences. Text, language,

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[24] "The subject" is "the subject of the statement," that is the way we see ourselves as a unified whole as formed through language and culture and as addressed by culture (Sharpe).

film, and music all become ways our sense of self is reflected to us, and the mirror of culture gives us a sense of ourselves. We learn both our sense of self and how to operate in the world through cultural experiences. Like the mirror for Lacan's infant, cultural objects in the form of text, music, and film show us who we should be as amorous subjects and work to reinforce, fix, and affirm our sense of self within the system of passionate love.

The subject is not merely a reflection of culture. Multiple complimentary forces are at work to hold the idea of the subject together. The way we come to fall in love, who and what we desire, the terror of rejection, and the guilt felt when contravening moral codes are ordered and controlled by the three registers of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Lacan maps the Freudian concepts of id (ideal-ego), the ego, and superego onto the concepts of the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. These three registers are the fundamental framework of Lacan's psychoanalytic theory. Lacan uses the image of the Borromean knot of three interconnected or "knotted" rings taken from the Borromean family coat of arms and to illustrate the interdependence of the three registers. If one ring becomes separated from the other two, all will separate. All three rings are required to form the knot, just as human subjectivity requires all three registers (Johnston). Briefly, the Imaginary is the "ideal subject" and is the register in which we organize our desires. This is how we imagine ourselves to be. The ego-ideal has the agency to impress with idealized self-image and is the register of the Symbolic. The superego is the register of the Real, that which we cannot see or acknowledge, but is the threat of punishment. It is through these three registers—the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real—that Lacan frames how subjectivity is constructed and operates in the world.[25]

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[25] This very brief explanation is not intended to provide a comprehensive look at Lacan's theoretical framework; this information can be gleaned through volumes such as Žižek's *How to*

The Imaginary is our idealized self-image. Johnston defines it as "Who and what one 'imagines' other persons to be, what one thereby 'imagines' they mean when communicatively interacting, who and what one 'imagines' oneself to be, including from the imagined perspectives of others—all of the preceding is encompassed under the heading of this register." It is this register which has a connection to concepts such as ego and fantasy and is activated through consciousness and involves the way we perceive our everyday life and how we perceive others. Despite signalling the Imaginary as a fiction, Lacan does not suggest that subjects should free themselves of the Imaginary. Instead, the Imaginary is inescapable. Johnston suggests the Imaginary

> . . . is an intrinsic, unavoidable dimension of the existences of speaking psychical subjects; just as an analysis cannot (and should not try to) rid the analysand of his/her unconscious, so too is it neither possible nor desirable to liquidate the illusions of this register. Second, the fictional abstractions of the Imaginary, far from being merely "unreal" as ineffective, inconsequential epiphenomena, are integral to and have very concrete effects upon actual, factual human realities.

The Imaginary is a necessary part of Lacan's conceptualization of subjectivity. Subjects can see or imagine themselves and their others (the beloved) as amorous subjects. We can only become amorous subjects if we perceive an idealized version of what it means to be an amorous subject (Homer 31).

The Symbolic order is allied with the unconscious. According to Johnston, the symbolic order was the first of the three orders to be developed by Lacan and draws heavily on

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Read Lacan and other introductory texts. More detailed information will be discussed within the context of the case studies.

structuralist theory and the work of Levi-Strauss among others. The symbolic order is tied to the concept that cultural structures, such as language, law, or art shape our subjectivity without us being aware that this is the case. We are immersed in these structures from the moment of our birth. Johnston states:

> This non-natural universe is an elaborate set of inter-subjective and trans-subjective contexts into which individual human beings are thrown at birth (along the lines of Heideggerian *Geworfenheit*), a pre-existing order preparing places for them in advance and influencing the vicissitudes of their ensuing lives. . . .Individual subjects are what they are in and through the mediation of the socio-linguistic arrangements and constellations of the register of the Symbolic.

Cultural objects and language reinforce the codes and metaphors which structure society and are thus a force which creates an individual's subjectivity. Lacan stated the unconscious is structured "like a language," (*Four* 20) Johntson reminds us that Lacan, especially in later work, does not suggest that the unconscious is a language, but rather that it is has a semantic structure which mirrors that of language. Attention to the semantic structures of cultural objects gives psychoanalysis a more generous approach to study the creation meaning and subjectivity in human culture. Subjectivity is understood as productive:

> Lacan defines "the subject" as an effect of the anxiety that is generated by the assumption of an identity within what he calls the Symbolic Order. From this point of view the production of subjects with identities that particularize them is identical to the process of their shaping by ideology: this does not mean that there is no such thing as the enigma of personality but that persons find their form, their "selves," from within fantasy, which includes the projection of impossible desires onto love

> objects for a bearable and prior stability and the mediation of norms that make them socially intelligible. (Berlant 53)

The unconscious is scaffolded through the interrelationships of cultural objects. To this understanding of cultural structures shaping human subjectivity, Žižek suggests, "The main function of the symbolic order with its laws and obligations is to render our co-existence with others minimally bearable: a Third has to step between me and my neighbours so that our relations do not explode into violence" (*How* 46). This description of the function of the symbolic order may seem extreme, but it points to Lacan's theory of the big Other. The register of the Symbolic is all the cultural trappings of language, music, art, and other systems that work to fit subjects into the world. The formation of the amorous subject begins with the immersion in the symbolic systems of culture. To those familiar with structuralist and semiotic theory, the concepts of the Imaginary and the Symbolic do not seem entirely foreign, but to these two registers, Lacan adds a third, the Real.

Of the three registers, the Real is the most elusive and difficult to explain. Johnston suggests this difficulty is a result of the veiled status of the Real, writing

> . . . rather than being just a barrier to grasping the Real, this absence is itself revelatory of this register. To be more precise, as that which is foreign to Imaginary-Symbolic reality—this reality is the realm containing conscious apprehension, communicable significance, and the like—the Real is intrinsically elusive, resisting by nature capture in the comprehensibly meaningful formulations of concatenations of Imaginary-Symbolic signs. It is, as Lacan stresses again and again, an "impossibility" vis-à-vis reality.

The fundamental understanding for the Real for this study is that it is a “radical other,” one that is desired but never obtained. Lacan likens the Real to the figure of the mother. One who is close to the subject but is frustratingly separate. Lacan also linked the idea of the function of the Real to the figure of the “the Lady” of courtly love traditions. It is a figure that is complex in its associations—desired, yet unattainable, and also the source of prohibition in its frustration of jouissance. Silverman links the concept to pleasure, stating, “The viewing subject protects him or herself from the perception of lack by putting a surrogate in place of the absent real. That surrogate becomes the precondition for pleasure” (5). Žižek suggests the Real is “practical anti-humanism” (*Looking* 46) and the inhuman core of humanity. It is beyond symbolization and beyond seeing or understanding, acting as a black hole, only shaped by the overlaying of the Imaginary and Symbolic orders. This discussion of the three registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real is brief, but all three concepts will be taken up in more detail through the case studies later in the dissertation.

Amorous relationships are intimately entwined with the idea of desire. The coupling of passionate love and desire may seem obvious as we must first desire the object of our affection. However, Lacan states, “Man’s desire is the desire of the Other” (*Écrits* 431). Žižek elaborates on this, suggesting “. . . what I desire is predetermined by the big Other, the symbolic space within which I dwell” (*How* 42). These two short quotations are compelling and instructive. They reinforce the concept of the three registers and also make it clear that for Lacan, desire is neither biologically based nor born of rational, conscious thought. We do not desire outside of symbolic structures. Our desires are not ours at all. According to Lacan, building on Freud, we are not rational beings operating in the world making autonomous choices, but are motivated by desire, or hidden “drives.” We desire what is desired by others or by culture. Žižek writes:

> drives are by definition “partial,” they are always tied to specific parts of the body’s surface--the so-called “erogenous zones”—which, contrary to the superficial view, are not biologically determined but result instead from the signifying parcelling of the body. Certain parts of the body’s surface are erotically privileged not because of their anatomical position but because of the way the body is caught up in the symbolic network. This symbolic dimension is designated in the matheme as D, i.e., symbolic demand.” (*Looking* 21)

Thus, what and whom we desire is caught up within a network of symbolic representation. Our desires are answers to a force beyond our conscious knowledge. We want what is desired by the enigmatic figure of the big Other, and this desire can never fulfill. Johnston’s explanation of the workings of desire is lengthy, but useful in outlining the problem of desire.

> . . .an adult in a romantic relationship never is content with being told that he/she is loved by the beloved only once; he/she insists upon repetitions ad infinitum of the affirmation by the significant other that, “I love you” (as if no affirmation is ever quite enough). With both children and adults, margins of dissatisfaction, perpetually resurfacing itches that never can be scratched just right, are to be explained, according to Lacan, through a clarification of the essence of the “love” demanded in all demands in excessive addition to the gratification of corresponding needs. What is being requested is an impossibility impossible on the basis of the register-theoretic version of O/otherness à la Lacanianism. . . . the non-objectifiable negativity of the kinetic, slippery heart of Real Otherness (i.e., the always-on-the-move affection, focus, etc. of the Real Other’s desiring core both conscious and unconscious) being

> objectified as the positivity of a static, stable thing (i.e., a special object able to be gift-wrapped and handed over as part of the response to demand).

Fulfillment is impossible for amorous subjects. The lover/beloved relationship is a stand-in for the "object-cause" of desire. How do we, as amorous subjects, contend with this situation?

Fantasy, as developed by Lacan, functions as a kind of "screen" through which the symbolic, in the unconscious, operates. Žižek suggests fantasy aids in the development of desiring and desirable bodies. Amorous subjects must fit into to the desires of others, for "at its most fundamental fantasy tells me what I am for my others" (*How* 49). The connection between desire and the function of fantasy is tight and is the mechanism through which subjects are bound together. Without fantasy as a way to let us know how to be desirable, the world would become unhinged, and subjects would lose their place within it. It is a reality which allows us to escape from the terror of the Real, "the gap that separates the two, namely the fact that fantasy, at its most elementary, becomes inaccessible to the subject" (*How* 54). Fantasy is created and reinforced through symbolic media.

Conclusion

Psychoanalytic methods, as developed by Lacan, open up ways of seeing cultural objects as part of a more extensive network of interconnected forces. Furthermore, psychoanalytic techniques provide a more nuanced view of music than theories which centre on consumption, or "tool-based" approaches which only consider music as resources for use by humans for particular purposes. Writing on subjectivity, Kramer suggests music's impact goes beyond that of a mirror, reflecting back a single image, and likens music to a dormer mirror, reflecting a series of repeated and varied images, some broken, some whole.

> The subjectivity called forth musically in each of these figures stands as a simulacrum for an original subjectivity that appears only in the multiplication of simulacra. Unlike a fictional character, the musical subject does not present the appearance of a concrete individual identity; even in vocal music, dramatic character tends to become transparent to a musical character that envelops and exceeds it. Like the dormer of mirrors, but of course with immeasurable greater impact, music both gathers and scatter subjectivity in the same gesture. (*Musical Meaning* 259)

Kramer does not suggest that music is more potent than other modes of cultural expression, but that the way it operates in relation to subjectivity is unique. Unlike other media such as film, music does not ground subjects through a single "voice" or image; one can never be sure of who is speaking, and if they speak "truth." In this way, music is excessive in its ineffable quality. Subject position shifts and other voices, such as instruments, also take up roles as subjects.

Music cannot be trusted. Music reveals the things we might otherwise oppress. At the same time, it works to keep things in place, shielding us through the screen of fantasy. It teaches us what to desire and then prohibits these desires. Music displays our symptoms through the interplay of language, culture, and our bodies. Though this interplay the amorous subject is born. Thus, for Lacan, love is not a feeling but is a collection of drives demanded by the big Other. Psychoanalytic methods reveal the complexity of the human experience, even as they do not "solve" the mystery of the human subject. As much as psychoanalysis provides one pathway to understanding, there are valid criticisms of its methodology. Hesmondhalgh points out that locating love and desire as a force of drives and subjectivity is driven by "lack" creates an overly negative and dark take on human existence. He suggests that for psychoanalysis to be useful, it

needs to be tempered with methods that recognize human agency as well as the sense that people experience joy and pleasure with music and love. Considering music through a psychoanalytic lens allows us to hear the "secret chords," to seek out the fugitive phrases, and to hear not another "silly love song," but the rich landscape that even the most seemingly trite pop song is traversing.

Chapter 2.3 Luhmann and Systems Theory

Like Lacan, Luhmann is concerned with the ways subjectivity is shaped through cultural expression. Both Lacan and Luhmann question the notion that there is a unified "whole" human being, instead suggesting humans are assemblages. However, Luhmann, unlike Lacan, pulls humans out of the centre of a universe of meaning. For Luhmann, we are simply actors within a larger interdependent system or organisms within an environment. This theory functions differently than do the concerns of psychoanalysis, which are focused entirely on the human. Luhmann's major work on love, entitled *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy,* is considered by many (Fuchs, Lash, Bauman) to be one of the most important works on love produced in the twentieth century. It is little known in North America, perhaps due to a not undeserved reputation for being overly obtuse and to his de-centring of humans within passionate love. Luhmann's other works on social systems, such as law and art, have received more attention. *Love as Passion* was first published in German in 1982, with the English translation following in 1986. While Luhmann does not mention music specifically anywhere in this work, the methodology he employs for examining works of literature as evidence of an information system of passionate love offers fruitful possibilities for thinking about passionate love and music in the current age. This chapter will lay out Luhmann's theory of passionate love as an information system to set up the methodological framework that will be discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

Before delving into the specifics of Luhmann's approach to passionate love, it is useful to contextualize this work against his other writings and within the broader landscapes of systems theory, sociology, and communication theory. Systems theory is a form of analysis which suggests that society comprises various systems where no one element in this system is more

important than another, including humans. Deriving its methods from biology, the primary means of analysis is the observation of a selected or defined system and the environment in which the system exists and operates. As Luhmann observes, “In systems theory, the subject/object relationship is replaced by a system/environment one” (*Love* 2). As with the observation and analysis of biological systems, in systems theory, the focus is on a closed environment and all the activities contained within the system. Thus, the study of the system rests on the observation of “difference” within the environment. Analysists must observe where and when the system changes. In the context of sociology, the view of difference leads to observations regarding the functioning of social networks. Schwanitz suggests, “In systems theory, the concept of structure is of subordinate importance; systems theory is not a form of structuralism.” And further that it is a “difference oriented approach” with a focus on society and communication and is intended to make a break with traditional conceptualizations of human subjectivity and hermeneutical approaches to sociology (138). Luhmann’s strategy is to adopt what Moeller claims is a “functionalist model of society.” He states, “. . . Luhmann’s theory of social systems is discomforting to many and irritating to some. In a society that puts so much emphasis on the individual and defines itself as ‘civil,’ Luhmann’s basic claim that, in fact, society does not consist of human beings can be seen as shocking, as going against common sense, or as absurd” (ix). This move away from a human-centred idea of society, an idea that Luhmann found so compelling, had its beginnings with cybernetic theory.

Luhmann’s theory of systems draws heavily on the work of American social theorist Talcott Parsons. Parsons defined and analyzed society through its functions, developing a general theory based on ideas of social action and networks. Parsons, influenced by the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, was one of the first social theorists to adopt the idea and model of

the cybernetic network as a mode of analysis outside the realm of computing, resulting in what would be known as "social action theory" and "structural functionalism." His theories of society were generalizable, meaning they were meant to encompass all situations in society and were explicitly concerned with the interrelations of actors within structures. For example, how a subject's course of action within society is governed by the social and cultural systems, limiting the available actions, rather than a subject being motivated and free to choose any action. For Parsons, subjects form a reality through repeated encounters with this system. At the same time, this reality is objective and exists separately from human subjects. While Parson's work was very influential for a time, it was later criticized for its inability to account for meaning and emotion.

Luhmann was attracted to Parsons' ideas of social functions and in particular "reciprocity of perspective." In his work *Art as Social System,* Luhmann makes his connection to Parsons clear.

> Our theoretical proposition offers the following: a clear demarcation of external system boundaries of different domains and comparability between different systems. Talcott Parsons launched a similar experiment, taking the comparability of all subsystems of the general action system for granted. He believed that each action system, even in the position of subsystem or subsubsystem, needed to fulfill four functions to be complete, that is, if it were to exist as a system capable of maintaining its boundaries and orienting itself in relation to temporal differences. . . . What matters is that with Parsons, the comparability of subsystems began to occupy a pivotal theoretical position in sociology. (2)

For Luhmann, the attraction to systems theory is that it attempts to trace the interrelations between social bodies without reference to ideals, stripping away the trappings that might blind us to see things as they "really" are. Moeller describes it thus: "Social systems theory does not describe reality as it 'essentially' is, but as what it has actually become—and it could have come out otherwise. In fact, Luhmann points out again and again the contingency and even the unlikelihood of the present state of affairs" (*Luhmann* x). Thus, for Luhmann society is impacted by a wide array of actors. Humans not only impact their environment, but are also impacted by the conditions of the system they are within. Social systems change in response to all manner of actors within the system. Moeller goes on to suggest: "Systems theory recognizes that the world—or rather: society—can no longer be aptly understood as a human one. Unlike the cultural pessimists, it does not blame society—or any of its individual agents—for this. And, unlike the optimist, it is not willing to celebrate the dehumanization of the humane as the greatest human perfection" (*Luhmann* 5). All members of the system have equal bearing and Luhmann allows for change within this system. Luhmann's overarching project is to wrest the conceptualization of society from one focused entirely on humans to one that is understood as an "assembly of individual human beings" (Moeller, *Luhmann* 5). However, this does not mean that Luhmann's theories are without "humanity." While Luhmann based his work on that of Parsons there is a marked difference in how Parsons' ideas are deployed. Luhmann, unlike Parsons, demonstrates a capacity for empathy with human passions. Bauman writes:

> Perhaps nothing conveys more poignantly this unusual blend of scientific precision with the artistic sensibility than Luhmann's replacement of Parson's "reciprocity of perspective" with his own "interpersonal interpenetration." The first is cool, calculating, cognitive, and dispassionate; the second connotes a richness of

> relationship that leaves no human faculty unmoved and hints at the essentially tragic nature of an ideal that can neither be reached nor abandoned. (1241)

Luhmann has received some criticism and even dismissal for his association with the work of Parsons, but it is this "blend" of "scientific precision" and "artistic sensibility" that, as Bauman suggests, redeems the work of Luhmann from that of Parsons and lends it to further application and extension.

In an article comparing and contrasting the work of Luhmann and Friedrich Kittler, Winthop-Young pinpoints what he believes is the genesis of Luhmann's work—the use of second-order cybernetic theory. According to Winthrop-Young, Kittler remains deeply tied to first-order cybernetic theory, and this leaves Kittler bound to ideas of "command and control" and Claude Shannon's "sender-receiver" model. Kittler is unable to account for changes within the environment of the system—everything is locked in. But in second-order cybernetic theory systems are understood in an organic sense. Biological systems form the model for the construction of a network of actors and actions which can act and react with the system. Systems, therefore, are not simple models of sender and receiver, high command and coded actions, but always in the process of change as there is an ongoing relationship between the system and the environment, between the form of the system and the organisms within it. The organic nature of Luhmann's theories of systems has flexibility that is not present in Kittler's work.

This flexibility is most visible in Luhmann's use of the concept of autopoiesis. Maturana and Varela developed the term in their work on biological systems. It is constructed from the Greek concepts of "autos" or "self" and "poiesis" meaning "production" and captures the idea of "self-production." Moeller states Maturana and Varela used the term to refer to the "emergence and reproduction of cells and bodily systems such as the immune system" (*Luhmann* 215). For

Luhmann, the term became a way to think through the rise and reproduction of social systems, and it allowed him to move away from traditional concepts of society as being based on one particularly powerful element. “The concept of autopoiesis is about origin and proliferation and can be contrasted with concepts of creation or invention. In Luhmann’s sociology the concept makes it possible to conceive of society in terms of the reproduction of life rather than in terms of mechanical manufacturing” (Moeller, *Luhmann* 215). His concept of society as a series of systems is a clear shift away from a Marxist or Frankfurt school approach predicated on a system of market forces. It also makes a clear break with a concept that “society” is a result of the bestowal of power within one particular person or group external to that society. For Luhmann, there is no “outside” of the system. One is always in one system or another. This charting of change in systems as organic in nature recognizes that control is not concentrated in one place, or a particular class of humans, but is a result of the interactions between a system and its environment. This relationship is “structural coupling.” Withrop-Young writes: “structural coupling refers to the ongoing engagement between a structure-determined system and its environment or to the recurrent interactions between two (or more) structure-determined systems” (400). The concept of the autopoietic system is fundamental to Luhmann’s theory of social networks.

Luhmann, Communication and Systems

The core Luhmann’s theory of systems is communication. As Moeller succinctly states, “It consists, functionally speaking, not of you and me, but of the different communication systems, such as politics, the economy, and education. These are, to use a biological metaphor, the ‘organisms’ that constitute society” (*Luhmann* 225). He later he goes on to say: “Social systems consist of communication not people” (*Luhmann* 226). Communication makes the social system

function, and each system (for example, art, law, and love) has its own sets of semantics and meanings. Typically society is understood as being composed of communication between human beings; however, for systems theory "one of its most basic assumptions: human beings do not and cannot communicate—only communication can" (Moeller, *Luhmann* 226). Moeller writes: "Communication takes many forms, including ballots in the case of an election, or money. It's not just language that communicates. Systems theory is influenced by the linguistic turn and by semiotics (*Luhmann* 6). Furthermore, "individuals and their thoughts are not integral to communication" (*Luhmann* 6). Humans do not operate communication, as though using a tool, but rather they are the "external condition of communication" and "manifest communication." As Luhmann makes clear, "Humans cannot communicate; not even their brains can communicate; not even their conscious minds can communicate. Only communication can communicate" (qtd. in Moeller, *Luhmann* 8). Thus, one can observe communication to understand society.

For Luhmann, communication comes about when its constituent units—information, utterance, and understanding—have been related to each other. Briefly put, "information" involves the *What* "utterance" and the *How* of a given statement, while "understanding" refers to the fact that the difference between information and utterance has been perceived and understood by the communication partner who may, or may not, decide to take up the communicative offer (Winthrop-Young 400). Moeller uses the term "announcement" in the place of "utterance" to focus attention on the action of the communication. Relevant to Luhmann's conceptualization of communication is that it is dependent on being contained within a system. Communication cannot take place if nothing is "announced" and every communication must be understood. Thus,

if something is uttered but does not fit into a system that is recognized by the receivers, it is not communication.

Luhmann's communication theory is also not restricted to human communication as objects, such as money, also communicate. An utterance announces an intention to be understood. Luhmann writes: "One cannot speak without simultaneously communicating that one is speaking and that one wants to be heard and understood" (Luhmann, *Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft*, qtd. in Winthrop-Young 401). Systems develop out of a need for communication, and as the need for communication becomes greater, for example, some significant shift in the environment, then the need for differentiation takes place. This differentiation fine-tunes the communication system so that actors within the system can communicate with each other "the dismissal of communication as transmission or even consensus is related to two constituent elements of his theory: the notion of structural coupling and the break-down of communication into the triad of information (*Information*), utterance (*Mitteilung*), and understanding (*Verstehen*)" (Winthrop-Young 399). Thus, it is possible to view social systems as communication.

Each system cannot exist without the ability to encompass all three elements, whether we are talking about systems of law, biological systems, or passionate love. But, as Moeller points out, this is still an uncomfortable premise, for "Systematically speaking a theory that conceives of society as the system of communication has to locate minds and bodies—and, of course, 'human beings'—outside the operational realm of society. This is the 'scandal' of social systems theory when looked at from the perspective of traditional 'Old European' humanisms" (*Luhmann* 9). From this, Luhmann understands there to be three main kinds of systems: systems of communication (social systems), systems of life (bodies, brains), and systems of consciousness

(minds); however, "Luhmann claims that at rock bottom there are only two fundamental features of society—that is, two basic evolutionary achievements—that will allow observers to clearly distinguish historical stages from each other: social differentiation and media evolution" (Winthrop-Young 397). The need for information becomes a lynchpin on which social systems develop and change. As systems become increasingly complex, the need for communication is increased so the actors within the system can interoperate. For example, systems of law become increasingly complex as increased activities fall under observation and regulation. Once something is observed by the system, such as law, it requires a means to communicate. Again, this is the same with economic systems and, of interest to this study, passionate love. Through the development of his theory of social systems, Luhmann can not only radically rework traditional ideas of the human as centre of society but also, as stated above, remove the idea that individuals or groups are responsible for "making" society. As Winthrop-Young writes,

> The subject guarantees a certain amount of social cohesion and predictability of human intercourse, and it does so by paradoxically asserting that the features of self-reflexivity that make each of us a unique subject apply in equal measure to all. The figure of the subject, then, has the function to "justify the inclusion of all into society by appealing to the self-reference of every single person." To put it bluntly, social cohesion is based on the commonality of individual uniqueness: I am I and You are You, and that fundamentally separates us, but I relate to Myself in the same way as You relate to Yourself, and this identical feature of subjective self- reflexivity allows us to overcome the "dark inwardness" of our respective consciousnesses to form a social We. (9)

Luhmann's project was to develop theories for numerous social systems, including economic, judicial, and systems of artwork. It was not a great leap then for Luhmann to engage with what is to most a thorny issue—that of passionate love. For Luhmann, passionate love becomes another system amid many.

Chapter 2.4 Luhmann and the Codification of Passionate Love

If you're sitting all alone and hear a knocking at the door
The air's full of promises, but buddy, you've been warned
Far worse to be love's lover than the lover love has scorned.
"I Let Love In" Nick Cave

As stated in the opening paragraph of Chapter 2.3, Luhmann's work *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy* is part of his overarching project, moving from law to the economy to art, to demonstrate human development and society as the action of systems of communication. This section will lay out key aspects of this work in order to set up a framework of reference for this study, in particular Luhmann's emphasis on systematizing love. Like his other works on social systems, Luhmann ties the rise of a system of "passionate love" (as opposed to the love of family or God, etc.) in the early modern period to a move away from a stratified society toward a functional society. A stratified society is a social system based on one's role as a member of a particular class or status, such as peasant or nobleman or clergy. In a functional society, at least in theory, one understands one's position and oneself as an autonomous person within the system, unrestricted by status. Functional systems are tightly bound to the development and growth of modernity. In the case of passionate love, Luhmann cites the conceptualization of marriage as a contract drawn between individual lovers versus between an economic or political union of families as the chief expression of the system of passionate love. This shift can only be achieved alongside the development of the modern sense of the individual. The quest to find one's mate, a subject through whom one actualizes a sense of self, fulfillment and purpose, is one of the primary drivers of modern Western society. That individuals persist in matters of love although this quest inevitably fails, that the system rests on the massive improbability of finding another subject with whom one can share a "world," is one of the great paradoxes which characterizes the system of passionate love.

According to Luhmann's theory, passionate love developed through a process of differentiation in which "generalized symbolic media," otherwise known as semantic devices,[26] proliferate as the need for communication within this system increases. The greater autonomy of the subsystems, economy, love, or art, the higher the complexity required for their autopoietic reproduction. When older forms of social control based on social stratification broke down, and individuals became more autonomous, the need to operate within social systems increased. The advent of modernity increasingly impacted the conceptualization of subjectivity in Western society, that is humans began to understand themselves as separate beings from the state and the church, and a more elaborate system of communication for passionate love was required. The rise of the individual caused an increase in impersonal relationships, and at the same time, personal relationships and experiences became more intense, each person becoming more of an individual. The recognition of "personhood" as in that *I* am *I* and unique from *you*, leads to a transformative breakdown in a system of marriage based on class and family alliance, and to the development of an increasingly complex system of marriage based on passionate love and the unique coupling of individuals based on this love. It is only within this context, and at first just outside of marriage, that the idea of passionate love begins to form (Seigel 131). Critical to this system is the fact that the system itself evolved through the adaptation of previous systems. As with biological systems, passionate love grows through a process of adaptation and reproduction. According to Luhmann, marriage/passionate love increasingly becomes a problem of

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[26] Luhmann uses both the terms "generalized symbolic media" and "semantic devices" to indicate concepts or media that carry meaning. For example, it could be currency, art, or influence, or for the purposes of this study, music. Likewise "semantic devices" carry the same functionality and are things that carry their value based on their place within the system. Their value is agreed upon through a social system.

communication requiring the development of a communication system made of semantics entirely devoted to this system. Through these semantic devices, such as shared glances, expectations of courting behaviours, and even sexual activity, lovers find each other. In his analysis, Luhmann seeks to answer the question of how it came to be that subjects in society can overcome incredible barriers to breach the gulf between subjects. Thus, love is not a feeling, but the answer to a communication problem.

To analyze the development of passionate love a social system fundamental to modern society, Luhmann develops three meaning dimensions: the *fact* dimension, the *temporal* dimension, and the s*ocial dimension* (Borch 43). These dimensions allow for the analysis of communication, with fact action as the "what,"—that is, the this and not that—temporal as the "when," and social as "the distinction between the alter and ego. More specifically, it 'means that one can ask of every meaning whether another experiences it in the exactly the same way I do'" (Borch 43). Borch connects these three meaning dimensions to Luhmann's theory of society as being composed of differentiation, evolution and symbolically generalized media of communication (44). This distinction between alter and ego (that is, *you* and *me*) and its connection to symbolically generalized media of communication is a means of creating meaning. In *Love as Passion.* Luhmann explicitly ties the development of the system of passionate love to a communication problem of alter and ego. To engage in passionate love is to recognize another's personhood and uniqueness, as well as one's own, and at the same time to realize that we are of the world. That is to say, we are required to operate within the common social system in order to recognize and interpret the signs of love, yet at the same time we must think of ourselves as unique individuals, bestowing on our beloved the mantle of originality, and by doing so we mark ourselves also as original.

The environment of the system deems what is observed by the system and what lies outside the system and, therefore, unobserved. When communication enters the realm of passionate love, everything else is unnoticed by the lovers. As Dwyer suggests,

> The inherent tendency of a system, and this especially applied to the codified system of intimacy that is love, is to make the external environment conform to its own development. Thus, what goes on outside the world of the two lovers is only relevant to the extent that it impedes or supports love. In a functionally differentiated world characterized by self-referential systems, what is outside the system is typically regarded as *noise*. (3)

An observing system is a crucial tenant of Luhmann's theory. The concept of observation is most easily understood in the example of the system of law. For example, the system only observes smoking as information once it becomes regulated through legislation. The system of law does not observe smoking unless there is a law regarding tobacco. Thus, as in the above example from Dwyer, a system only sees what is in its purview. At the same time, what is relevant or what is considered information can change, such as a change in the regulation of smoking. These social systems regulate human activity. Humans learn and then interpret informational structures unique to each system. For example, if one wishes to smoke in public, myriad information sources are available to be read and understood, such as signage, street fixtures, and furniture arrangements, as well as social cues. In the case of passionate love, a semantic structure both regulates the communication of lovers and also makes lovers into not only interpreters of signs but also sources of information. Thus, lovers engage in a complex set of communicative relationships with current lovers, potential lovers, and, potentially, past lovers. One can be more or less skilled at understanding and working within the system of passionate love. At a

fundamental level, the evolving codification of the signs of passionate love provides a mechanism for the functioning of the system and a basis for the formation of relationships.

The idea of "generalized symbolic medium of communication" is a central idea in Luhmann's theory of passionate love. He writes:

> Generalized symbolic media of communication are primarily semantic devices which enable essentially improbable communications nevertheless to be made successfully. In this context 'successfully' means heightening receptivity to the communication in such a way that it can be attempted, rather than abandoned as hopeless from the outset. (*Love* 18)

Generalized symbolic media are unique semantic devices relevant to the particular system of information. These devices only work within a particular social system being observed and create a framework for communication. Participants attempt "Improbable" communications with the aid of generalized symbolic media. These semantic devices take many forms. For example, Luhmann theorized that in the eighteenth century, the idea of "truth" was of particular importance for lovers in identifying and verifying passionate love. For example, novels of this period, a form of generalized symbolic media, take the idea of "truth" as a particularly popular theme. The veracity of love is observed within these novels, and that veracity acted as a feedback loop for lovers of the period. The meaning of these semantic devices is contingent. As Borch writes,

> Semantics is the general term for the specific ways in which society produces meaning or how it makes sense of things. Intimate relationships, for instance, are nowadays usually made sense of terms of passion, love, trust, partnership, and so on. The notions constitute the semantics of love. This was not always the case. In other

> societies, intimate relationships were not so much based on love but on economic or other social considerations. (224)

Luhmann suggests information can only be communicated when a “threshold of improbability” is overcome. The receiver of the communication must be open to the message. It is like a switch is flipped on and meaningful information in the system of love can now be transmitted. Interpersonal interpenetration can take place. The threshold is tied to the evolution of social systems and “the demands placed on them increase in the course of social evolution.” (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 18) The more complex the system, the more choice is available and the more difficult it becomes to choose a means of communication and to “motivate receptivity.” It is at the point of complexity where “media of communication” come in. Social evolution takes place through an increase in the complexity of the communication media. Luhmann writes: “Differentiation adopted by society effects a sudden increase in the complexity of the social system” (*Love as Passion* 18). He proposed that love is an example of how complexity increases within systems through time writing: “Love is now declared . . . to be both unfathomable and personal” (*Love as Passion* 19). When the threshold can be deferred, systems grow, and a need arises for increasing topics to support an environment where improbable communications can take place. The system of passionate love is improbable and paradoxical. The communication is improbable because the core of a person’s being is impenetrable, and paradoxical because, despite this fact, lovers must believe the core can be breached in order for passionate love to exist. Luhmann’s concept of “interpersonal interpenetration” allows and accounts for the existence of the paradox.

A further paradox or challenge with the system of passionate love is the system requires a common set of semantic devices. Yet individuals involved in this relationship must feel that their

beloved and even their feelings of love are unique. Luhmann explains this through the concept of worlds. For example, information about the passionate love relationship must exist in the external world, but also in the internal world of the particular coupling. All information is duplicated in the two worlds, the one being the anonymously constituted world and the other the world of "us." Furthermore, this information must exist in both worlds for it to "stand the test." Drawing on an example from Proust's *Lost Time* is helpful. In the narrative, the Vinteuil Sonata exists in the world but also exists as a shared source of information for Swann and Odette. They listen to it along with other members of the salon, or in the case of Swann, in different contexts, but it also is drawn into their inner world as amorous subjects. The Sonata becomes part of their amorous communications, propping up the idea that they have a unique relationship. At the same time, Luhmann doesn't suggest that lovers give up or cede their independent systems when entering into a relationship. He writes: "Interpenetration should also be understood to mean lovers conceding each other the right to their own world and refraining from integrating everything into a totality" (*Love* 176). For Luhmann, souls of lovers do not meld, but instead the model is the opening of a specialized communication interface or channel—a channel reserved for highly "personal" amorous information.

In *Love as Passion,* Luhmann traces the differentiation of the system, that is, the action of codification through time. It is critical to understand that Luhmann connects an ever-increasing complexity in society to increasing complexity in passionate love and a necessary change in the form and content of symbolic media. All the actors in the system are sensitive to changes in the environment and must adapt. He describes how as human subjectivity became more complex, the operation of passionate love had to develop and modify. He marks epochs of passionate love based on "breakage" points. The environment becomes too complicated for the system to bear,

and change must take place. The systems act on each other to produce change within, to require differentiation. The recognition that changes in society impacts subjects and media is something both Kittler and Lacan fail to notice or account for in their methodologies.

Luhmann begins his survey of passionate love with the medieval practice of courtly love. He utilizes examples of literature from the period to demonstrate there was a set of semantic devices that were used to reinforce the code and regulate the practice of passionate love. For example, as discussed above, in the seventeenth century, the French novel and the need to verify the "truth" of love are the focus of the system. However, the idea of "truth" as a marker of passionate love fell away and in the English novel through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries one can chart the rise of Romanticism. Put very simply, "Semantics usually changes with a change in social structures such as the family and politics. When the family structure changed to the modern Western type of 'core family,' semantic changes in love were introduced. Structural changes often precede semantic changes" (Luhmann *Love* 224). Changes in the environment cause a reactive change in the system, leading not only to a proliferation of semantic devices but a shift of the form of these devices.

As the system of passionate love becomes increasingly complex, new forms of transmitting information within the communicative system are required. The proliferation of love songs, including shifts in the subject matter over time, is evidence of a communication need within the system of passionate love.[27] Luhmann writes:

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[27] This need is different from the music as use theory put forward by DeNora. Luhmann does not grant the development of semantic devices to human individuals or with a particular group. Therefore, it is not that a human individual creates a song because they see that they need to have it to use, or simply because they want to sell something, but that it is determined by all the actors

> One must therefore rely on empirical and historical analyses, on analyses of both the social structures and the history of ideas. Each of these is necessary in order not only to clarify the extent to which society can sustain its own evolution and is able to re-form its communications accordingly, but also to specify the degree to which certain deformations have to be taken into account. (*Love* 19)

Luhmann proposes that passionate love is not so much a feeling or affect, but a mode of communication: "Understood in terms of the above, love as a medium is not itself a feeling, but rather a code of communication, according to the rules of which one can express, form and simulate feelings, deny them, impute them to others, and be prepared to face up to all the consequences which enacting such a communication may bring with it" (Luhmann 19). Love, for Luhmann, cannot exist in the absence of this code. It is not the feelings which make love manifest, but rather the code and the system of love and it is only within this context, the context of communication, that love is possible at all.

As stated above, the "reality" of passionate love is constructed through communication based on symbolic media. Generalized symbolic media use a "semantic matrix" to aid in the selection and motivation of communication. There are particular terms linked to "reality" (truth, love, money, power), and these terms give the form and meaning to the symbolic media (sentences, feelings, etc.). They then are a form of orientation. These media are not "real," but rather they are "communicative instructions" independent of the circumstances. Luhmann states, "The functions and effects of the media can thus not be adequately comprehended if studied only at this level of factually localised qualities, feelings and causalities, for they are always already

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with the social system. DeNora and Luhmann understand society and social networks in fundamentally different ways; this is most in evidence in the way DeNora utilizes methodologies from Adorno and the Frankfurt school, theories that Luhmann rejects.

socially mediated: by virtue of the agreement reached on the communicative capacities to be adopted" (*Love* 19.) Love, therefore, is a system of information. But more than that, Luhmann suggests it is not merely or only communication, it is a particular communicative act he calls "interpersonal interpenetration." Interpersonal interpenetration is the ability to interact, to interface, with the system of another person. "Thus, even if this appears to the lovers to be the case at the outset, love can not centre on 'total communication,' on concentrating all possible acts of communication on the partner or the love affair" (Luhmann 21) resulting in a "universal frame of reference" where everything is centred on "for you." "Accordingly, it is not the *thematic* level of the communicative process that provides the point from which love can be understood and practised, but rather its *codification*" (Luhmann 22). On the interrelationship between difference and semantic codes, Luhmann writes:

> The difference functions as a unity to the extent that it generates information, but it does not determine which pieces of information are called for and which patterns of selection they trigger off. Differences, in other words, do not delimit a system; they specify and extend its capacity for self-delimitation. Semantic codes specify the differences which form the basis for something being comprehended as information. (84)

It is a system with stability such that it can be relied upon to function in society at large. Information only happens when we can do something with it—when it becomes meaningful. We take it into ourselves and do something, classify, store, sort, or have sex.

Luhmann's theories on love as a form of communication, and especially on the idea of codification, present an interesting approach to looking at cultural artefacts concerning the

modern subject. As Pilotta writes, “The application of Luhmann’s model can be difficult because of its level of abstraction, but it also can be extremely productive because it provides a way to look at social complexity from the view of communication” (3-4). Where Lacan focuses his attention on the subject and its relations, Luhmann shifts to the improbable and impossible relationships between subjects. While some have charged Luhmann with a theory of love stripped of humanity, even of viewing humans as nothing more than a collection of “communication grids,” (Dwyer 5), Bauman suggests this is nearly a surface appraisal. He feels “The task and its execution are set in the all-too-familiar esoteric code of detached academic concerns. And yet beneath the shell of the technical, studiously impersonal, occasionally turgid prose, one feels the heartbeat of an artist” (1241). Luhmann’s marriage of the code of love and the symbolic media of poetry, song, and literature and practice of love in social systems make an attractive method to enact within this study.

Chapter 2.5 Affective Mapping and the Immeasurable Keyboard

. . . what meaning the little phrase could have for him—that was what Swann wanted most to know. (Proust 300)

Symbolic media, such as music, are essential in both forming amorous subjectivity and enabling subjects to engage in passionate love. The learning, understanding, and interpretation of signs as information are critical for passionate love to exist. We learn the signs of passionate love through an apprenticeship in the reified use and understanding of its information system. At the same time, the interaction with the signs of love produces us as amorous subjects through our immersion in passionate love's symbolic network. The love song teaches its codes, its hermeneutics, and makes us interpreters of signs. "It is the enhancement of the meanings anchored in the code which enables love to be learned, tokens of it to be interpreted and small signs of it to convey deep feelings; and it is the code which allows difference to be experienced and makes unrequited love equally exalting" (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 20). The signs and the use of the code are the basis for the thrill and enjoyment of passionate love. This section of the dissertation will delve more deeply into the connections between Luhmann's work and music as symbolic media.

Our pleasure and desire in the context of passionate love are not based on the natural or inherent qualities of the person themself, but rather in the amorous information they produce. Thus, passionate love is based on an "affective matrix" of codes and signs, learned and established through symbolic media. Love songs work to solve the communication problem arising from the needs of the information system of passionate love. Analyzing music in this way enables us to see not just another silly love song, but the love song as a force in the shaping of amorous subjects. Ascribing specific meaning to music is difficult. Still, the interplay between

form and structure and its ability to retain a shifting and enigmatic nature is precisely what allows for a multiplicity of meanings. Meaning in music is not generated by only the sound or the words, nor does sense spring as an original artefact from the mind of composer or performer. Meaning isn't a matter of the mind as affect. Meaning cannot be pinned down to one specific element. It is because of this multiplicity that love songs are powerful. Love songs create pathways and mechanisms for subjects to break through the solitary existence of modern subjectivity and consider the possibility of joining the subjectivity of another.

Barthes theorizes that an image-repertoire is called into use in the lover's discourse; he uses the idea of a "thesaurus" of images as the basis for the concept of a series of "figures" in *A Lover's Discourse.*

> Throughout any love life, figures occur to the lover without any order, for on each occasion they depend on an (internal or external) accident. Confronting each of the incidents (what "befalls" him), the amorous subject draws on the reservoir (the thesaurus?) of figures, depending on the needs, the injunctions, or the pleasures of his image-repertoire. Each figure explodes, vibrates in and of itself like a sound severed from any tune--or is repeated to satiety, like the motif of a hovering music. (7)

The composer of an amorous song draws on the same figures as those suggested by Barthes. These figures are not connected with a specific genre. Love songs can thus be further categorized into "topics" or "figures," depending on what message is communicated. With titles like "agony," "anxiety," and "waiting," many of Barthes' "fragments" can be associated with topics popular in love songs.[28] But how does the music itself express this given that it is made up of so

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[28] My intention is not to develop a "lexicon of the love song" or a chart correlating each fragment to a list of songs, but I do believe it is relatively easy to think of songs that match each fragment.

many emotions (loss, longing, madness, melancholy, ecstasy, magic, and joy) that one particular overarching correlation between the sounds of music and the feeling of love cannot be construed? Writing on the music of Schubert, Kramer offers the following observation:

> Song provides a collection of dramatis personae through which identities can be concretely imagined; it centers performatively on the human voice as a nonvirtuoso instrument, and therefore as a vehicle for sincere expression rather than artistic display; and it centers topically on sexual roles and desires, the exemplary media for the interplay of norm and deviation and the pivotal domains of subject formation as a social process. (*Franz Schubert* 3)

Lyrics allow for one level of interpretation. However, formal diegetic devices used in Western music, such as musical metaphor, offer another. For example, the deliberate replication of the sound of rain, or cars, and the representation of physical gesture in musical forms, such as walking or sexual intercourse, are patterns in acoustic topical content that can likely be readily heard and understood by listeners in contemporary Western society. Likewise, other devices, such as harmonic progressions and instrumentation, are connected to metaphor, or particular emotional content, such as the use of major tonality for "happy" songs and minor modes for "sad" songs, are available to songwriters and performers.[29]

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[29] Music semioticians such as Spitzer have written on the shared "language" of patterns as opposed to music "topics" in Western music. In *Metaphor and Musical Thought,* Spitzer suggests there is something called "Hearing as" and that this concept allows listeners to establish a connection between the sound of a piece of music and meaning. Thus, we can, after repeated encounters with certain music progressions, hear something like "spring" or "rain" or "sunshine" in a piece of music. This is, as with meaning and language, dependent on a certain amount of literacy on the part of the listener, and it also takes for granted a great deal as it relates to the composer or songwriter.

Theorists of music and semiotics, such as Monelle, Spitzer, and Cumming, are concerned with the way music means. For example, how formal musical structures, harmonic patterns, and chord progressions function to carry meaning and communicate "something." A phrase that comes up often in the discourse on music and signification is "hearing as." It means, generally, hearing a sound as "something." Spitzer draws on Wittgenstein's example of the duck-rabbit figure to illustrate how the way we understand something is based on perception and our individual context. Drawing on Jastrow, Wittgenstein uses a line drawing that from one angle appears to be a rabbit, and from another, a duck (165). The point Wittgenstein is trying to demonstrate is that meaning depends on context of words and is not tied to the word itself—meaning is contingent on use (168). Spitzer applies this theory to music. Meaning in music is tied to how we "hear" the music, not that it is something specific. Meaning in music does not stand outside ourselves but is dependent on our internal system of reference. Spitzer writes: "Musical meaning comes not from the notes themselves but from a concept we apply to them. 'Hearing as,' like 'seeing as' mixes knowledge with perception. What might a musical equivalent of a concept such as rabbit or duck look like?" (10) Our "hearing as" is driven by our knowledge and our capacity to place what we hear within our realm of experience. We engage in "hearing as" often in music. In studying music concerning meaning, "hearing as" is a particularly useful strategy for breaking through some of the ambiguity in musical discourse. There is a superforce of performatives in music, not only in the shape of lyrics, but in the musical form of rhythm, timbre, and the semiotic power of gesture and motive. Thus, a song becomes a love song when we give it that performative status. We do not hear love songs as such unless they are understood as part of the amorous information system, unless we get the code.

Love songs align themselves along particular subject categories that are familiar to us. As with Barthes' identification of "figures" within his *A Lover's Discourse*, these topics are deliberately identifiable. Conceptual categories, such as breakup songs, wooing songs, and so on, become ways in which the amorous subject comes to understand the trajectory and course of love. Elvis Costello's song "Everyday I Write the Book," quoted at the head of this chapter, makes this trajectory painfully obvious by both linking love relationships to the narrative arc of a story and at the same time gesturing to the repetitive nature of love. Love is a story we learn and then repeat. This emotional and affective terrain is mapped through engagement with music.

In "Swann's Way", Proust gives music, and specifically the music itself, an ability to link to both emotion and the inner self.

> . . .the field open to the musician is not a miserable stave of seven notes, but an immeasurable keyboard (still almost entirely unknown) on which, here and there, only separated by the thick darkness of its unexplored tracks, some few among the millions of keys of tenderness, of passion, of courage, of serenity, which compose it, each one differing from all the rest as one universe differs from another, have been discovered by a few great artists who do us the services, when they awaken in us the emotion corresponding to the theme they have discovered, of showing us what richness, what variety lies hidden, unknown to us, in that vast, unfathomed and forbidding night of our soul which we take to be an impenetrable void. (Proust 497)

The "immeasurable keyboard" of musical possibility breaches the "forbidding night of our soul," mapping, it follows, the impenetrable void. This passage links to Lacan's work on fantasy as a screen to shield subjects from the horror of void, the hole that is at the core of our beings. It also ties into Luhamann's theory of symbolic media such as music as shaping and creating our

subjectivity. Music doesn't merely enrich existing emotion but creates a path or scene where before there was darkness and a void of nothing. It opens possibility and co-creates emotion and feeling, aligning with the idea of the creation of amorous subject.

Amorous subjects traverse both space and time through their relationships. By repeated meetings, the affective terrain becomes familiar and through the familiarity, understood. In *In Search of Lost Time,* Swann first hears the Sonata as venturing into unknown territory. Still, with a familiarity born of subsequent hearings, Swann experiences the Sonata as almost "home-like." He knows the arch of the tune well enough to see the way. Proust suggests composers do not cause or create desire or emotion but create paths, which may become roadways and then highways as particularly feelings are awakened. Interpreting amorous messages requires a sense of narrative, genre, and form. Luhmann suggests that "as early as the 17th century" love was not a "passion" as was generally understood, but instead as a code of communication. This code came with a full set of models to work from, models one had to have "in full view before embarking on the search for love." The applicability of metaphors such as maps or operating systems for the workings of passionate love suggests that lovers are seekers and interpreters of signs. Luhmann suggests we as amorous subjects are formed through our communication, while Lacan depends on the action of desire and drives. Both eschew the existence of "natural" or inherent feeling. What we enjoy in love is not the beloved, another subject, but pleasure and reassurance of our subjectivity mirrored back. Thus music, as a model tells us what to expect, our symbolic systems tell us what to desire.

Chapter 2.6 The Process(ing) of Love in Time

This section briefly contends with the vital connection between time in passionate love and music. A deeper exploration is located in the case study located Chapter Six. Passionate love exists within a trajectory. There is a beginning, a middle, and an end. Love takes place within time, and what is information, that is "noticed", in an amorous information system is impacted by where one is along this trajectory. For example, information that is relevant in the courtship phase is different than what is applicable in the middle period, or at the point of breakdown. At the opening of a relationship, the lover seeks to open a communication channel, and vital information is whether the desired subject is interested in forming a relationship. Relevant communication is different than if a lover suspects they are in the ending phase of passionate love. Not all communication between lovers is considered information. Only what is different, what is "new," becomes information. In the contemporary experience of passionate love, the necessary components and pieces of information have increased as human actors have become increasingly isolated and disconnected from other systems which might have previously provided alternative structures for marriage, such as the systems of the church. The combination of code, place, and time forms an overall semantic structure of love. "The overall structure of the semantics of love unfolds in time, and as a consequence, there can be no claim made of the code that does not itself have value and place in time. The process remains sovereign and decides on the difference it employs to access information" (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 93). Thus, what can be considered information in the context of a passionate love relationship is entirely dependent on time.

Music has a particular sensitivity to conveying a sense of movement and time. Music unfolds within time, and songs, especially songs we know well, give us a sense of past, present,

and future, and this narrative structure mirrors the temporal motion of passionate love. In both psychoanalysis and systems theory, time is essential. In psychoanalysis, a sense of time is tied to the concept of becoming; subjectivity is not static but an ever-shifting process. The concept of subjectivity as fragmented denies a sense a "completion" and thus a sense of time is integral. Likewise, for Luhmann, the system of passionate love requires an understanding of the temporal. However, the sense of the temporal is what binds love, creating a paradox between a need for the fiction of the fixedness of love (i.e., love never changes) and the reality that all lovers watch for signs of the status of love. All signs are temporal.

> The temporal difference between a momentary present, on the one hand, and the past and future, on the other, makes the difference of illusion and reality seem plausible. Accordingly, the unity of love in the form of a unity of moment and duration, the paradox of momentariness is called up to provide an eternally lasting value. Here the paradox also fuses the difference, which has to function as a difference, into a unity only by formulating it. The paradox nevertheless remains dependent on the fact that love is a process and that it bestows a temporal status on all information. (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 91)

In the same way we listen to music as it moves through time, we observe our relationships for information, for a difference in the signs.

> Each love has its own history (which need not in this context signify an individual, unique, incomparable history). It has a beginning and an end and between these a process of waxing and waning within which the relevance of the pattern of differences changes. It is thus often suggested in the literature that the beginning of a love affair, before the love has been granted any social certainty, depends above all

> on *plaire*. However, precisely this forces the difference of turn and false love; one is compelled to scan one's efforts to please for information that refers to this second difference until, at a later point, the being of one's efforts offer the first signs that true love is starting to wane. (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 91)

Though Luhmann resists the existence of emotions, it is interesting to circle back to Hesmondhalgh's suggestion that "Emotions have a narrative structure." Hesmondhalgh draws heavily on Nussbaum: "The understanding of any single emotion is incomplete. . . unless its narrative history is grasped and studied for the light it sheds on the present response," and further, narrative artworks "give us information about these emotion-histories that we could not easily get otherwise" (Nussbaum 236, and qtd. in Hesmondhalgh *Why* 15) Thus the temporal status of music as well its ability to transmit narrative make love songs a particularly powerful medium for modelling the practice of love.

Chapter 2.7 Music and Affective Mapping

Affective mapping is the idea that love songs are active agents within the social system of passionate love in Western society. The scenes staged through and in love songs tell us who we are for ourselves, who we are for others, and are part of the formative process of becoming amorous subjects. This process is intimately connected with the learning of the cultural codes that enable the existence of the idea of passionate love, and meaning cannot be separated from the interplay between subjects and symbolic media with the environment of social society. Luhmann suggests: "It is the enhancement of the meanings anchored in the code which enables love to be learned, tokens of it to be interpreted and small signs of it to convey deep feelings; and it is the code which allows difference to be experienced and makes unrequited love equally exalting" (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 20). Thus, passionate love itself is born of information, and one cannot spot or understand the signs of love without the code.

Love songs, as a specific form of generalized symbolic media draw, as Barthes recognizes with *Discourse,* a specific repertoire of figures. Luhmann describes this process thus:

> The generalized symbolic media use a "semantic matrix" to aid in the selection and motivation of communication. There are particular terms linked to "reality" (truth, love, money, power) And these terms give the form and meaning to the symbolic media (sentences, feelings, etc.) They then are a form of orientation. These media are not "real" but rather they are "communicative instructions" independent of the circumstances. The functions and effects of the media can thus not be adequately comprehended if studied only at this level of factually localized qualities, feelings and causalities, for they are always already socially mediated: by virtue of the

> agreement reached on the communicative capacities to be adopted. (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 19)

Luhmann, Lacan, and Žižek all recognize the need for symbolic media, for cultural objects, such as novels, film, and music, to carry and reinforce the codes and patterns which create and prop up human subjectivity. The amorous self is formed and reified through cultural content and objects. We know passionate love exists because stories tell us it is so and because our patterns of courtship and coupling are mirrored in love songs, novels, and other media. Luhmann suggests each epoch of love has a dominant form of symbolic media. For example, in the nineteenth century, novels were the primary form for the transmission of the code of passionate love. Luhmann states: "the detour via literature, via novels, was a necessary one, necessary if the intimate code were to be comprehended" (Luhmann *Love as Passion* 127). Luhmann suggests that, in the nineteenth century, men and women were not permitted to be outwardly aware of the manoeuvrings necessary for passionate love, and novels were an essential tool for the transmission of the structures of the code. The code learned in novels could then be deployed in social situations and understood. In contemporary society, music is a pervasive and an almost omnipresent form of media, piped into grocery stores, coffee shops, and other semi-public spaces, and is increasingly readily available through mobile devices and streaming services. Because it is so present in everyday life, and one of the most highly consumed forms of media, music, and especially popular music, is a particularly effective means of conveying the code of passionate love.

Love songs can be sorted into a codified set of topical content and musical content which enables the learning of the contours and rhythm of love. Love songs are an agent within a network of communication which forms the overall social system of passionate love. Theorists

such as DeNora have understood music as a tool which people use to do a kind of "emotion work" in everyday life. However, as stated previously music is not a tool that can make people fall in love or that can solve any love problems. In his writing on music and meaning, Hesmondhalgh (*Why*) handily debunks this mode of thinking as giving music too much agency. Furthermore, DeNora fails to recognize the complexity of the human subject. Tying music to the feedback loop model within a system of amorous communication creates the understanding that there is constant motion between actors, among the performers, the songwriters, the listeners, and the music itself, where "culture" writ large is reflected and created. Understanding love songs in this way, as part of a complex network of agents, prevents them from being overly invested with the power to make people/subjects act a certain way and at the same time reduces the role of humans as well.

While codification can seem to be limiting or restrictive, this is not necessarily the case. Codification of semantic structures can potentially play the opposite role, where the limitations in one place give rise to high productivity in another, such as the case of novels in the nineteenth century. Žižek, following on the work of Foucault, recognized the ways codification and regulation can be generative in the context of human sexuality (*Pervert's*). Žižek cites the way sexual content proliferated in films in the 1930s and 1940s, although the cinema Production Code in force in the United States prohibited reference to sex. Rather than suppressing sexual content, the prohibition forced filmmakers to develop a codified set of visual, musical, and verbal cues which audiences understood to communicate sexual activity. These nested sets of meanings and codes is a way symbolic media, such as film and music, can express more than one set of communications at the same time. Luhmann writes:

> We assume that the thematic choices and guiding principles of love are not arbitrary, but rather represent reactions to the respective society and the trend for change within it. These portrayals do not necessarily depict the real factual circumstances of love—even if given in descriptive form—but do indeed solve recognizable problems: by lending an historically transferrable form to functional necessities of the social system. The semantics of love can in each case therefore provide an understanding of the relationship between symbolic media and social structure. (*Love as Passion* 20)

Thus, codification aids in the creation of the semantic structure, and the structure itself leads to a proliferation of content. Content that must be understood by those listening. This concept applies in both Luhmann's theory of love as an information system and psychoanalytic theory. Both Luhmann and Lacan point to proliferation and codifications of content—semantics in the case of Luhmann, and signs in the case of Lacan—as necessary to human subjects. Codification allows symbolic media to play a functional role with the ongoing "becoming" of amorous subjects. Love songs communicate to and for subjects.

Luhmann suggests the contemporary experience of passionate love requires a more significant amount of information or communication than previous epochs of passionate love. Previous epochs depended only on the interpretation of physical signs and actions from the beloved:

> Whether or not these two people (truly) loved one another was the question, and both the mental calculations and the deliberate efforts were related to this. Needless to say, this problem of "do they or don't they" remained important, but the impact of the schematism appears to have shifted in the course of the eighteenth century to the extent that what constituted a human being as a person and as an individual was

> reformulated. The decisive process that triggered this off was probably the transformation of the code into one based on the semantics of emotion, of an emotion which reappeared, was formed and confirmed in social affirmation, i.e. in requited love. (*Love as Passion* 103)

However, the modern experience of passionate love involves a contemporary subjectivity that is, according to Luhmann, multifaceted:

> It was this structural change that people, without being consciously aware of the fact, had prepared themselves for by developing the symbolic medium of love. The semantics, partly oriented towards extra-marital passions (France), partly towards domesticity (England) and partly towards education (Germany), was ready at hand and could now be set into operation. (*Love as Passion* 146)

In the nineteenth century only the man had to develop this "other self" the outside world self. In contemporary society, all amorous subjects must have an external world self. As subjects are increasingly isolated, both in social situations (e.g., living away from family, staying unmarried longer) and psychologically isolated (e.g., a great sense of subjectivity) the social system of passionate love must do more considerable amounts of work to enable coupling. The result is increased complexity.

Chapter 2.8 Contemporary Love and Communicating Amorous Subjectivity

There is conceptual friction between the perception that lovers' communication and themselves are uniquely coupled and the reality that passionate love can only occur when all the elements of the system are highly codified. The communication system of passionate love is based on a paradox between lovers' communications as a unique set of communicative actions, and a reliance on a standard set of semantic structures in the symbolic network. Luhmann writes:

> even if this appears to the lovers to be the case at the outset, love can not centre on "total communication," on concentrating all possible acts of communication on the partner or the love affair. Not a total, but rather a universal frame of reference is expected of the other partner in the sense of a constant consideration of oneself in all possible situations. In other words, the informative content of all communication constantly being enriched by the ingredient of "for you." Accordingly, it is not the *thematic* level of the communicative process that provides the point from which love can be understood and practised, but rather its *codification*. (*Love as Passion* 22)

A unique set of experiences is needed to balance against codification, but all information is duplicated in the two worlds. One world is the anonymously constituted world of "everyone" and the other the world of just "us." Love must exist in both worlds. For example, the Vinteuil Sonata exists in the world but also exists for Swann and Odette as separately meaningful pieces of communication. Singer suggests that Proust is particularly interested in the challenges posed by subjectivity in the context of passionate love. In *Swann's Way*, Proust writes, "The belief that a person has a share in an unknown life to which his or her life may win us admission is, of all the prerequisites of love the one which it values most highly and which makes it set little store by the rest" (139). This bears out Singer's statement: "Proust investigates the nature of intuitive

feeling by studying what happens when one person seeks to coincide with the interior being of another. Examining sympathy and imagination as contributing factors, he finds that the latter introduces distortions that prevent the former from effecting identification with another person" (164). Attempting to engage another in love requires particular and unique demands of both communication and subjectivity. It forces lovers to expose an interior self, and at the same time attempt to identify with the perceived inner being of another. For Proust, this is an action doomed to fail. Luhmann writes, "One of the most obvious hallmarks of the semantics of love (in contrast to notions of friendship) is its *exclusivity*, in that it is generally regarded and there is a broad consensus on this point—that one can only love one person at one time" (*Love as Passion* 97). While we might argue against Luhmann's conjecture that love cannot overlap or that lovers must be serial, the idea that amorous subjects must conceptualize their communication as unique, is a theme repeated in symbolic media such as novels and music.

Communicative devices and codes are needed for subjects to engage in passionate love. Luhmann ties the development of a more complex set of communications in passionate love to the growing sense of subjectivity through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: "With the intensification of an understanding both of oneself as a person and one's feelings, the code's schematism initially changed with respect to the interconnection of *plaisir* and *amour*" (*Love as Passion* 103). Thus, the complexity of the system of love changes over time to meet the changing environment. The ties between the needs of the system of communication and the form the communication takes are a feedback loop which in turn influence the form of love itself. Information becomes possible as the old codification of love collapses. For example, Luhmann links the consideration of marriage to the needs of the communication system. The problem is not with the form or attractiveness of marriage, but with an "overall problem of socially

autonomized intimate relationships, i.e. marriages, and also extra-marital relationships, whenever they attempt to realize special demands placed on intimacy" (Luhmann, *Love as Passion* 157). The form and functionality of the code of passionate love are fused with the way subjectivity is formed. Luhmann writes: "The current semantics of love is more difficult to define in terms of one general formula than were any of its predecessors. A balance exists between rejecting and continuing traditional ideas in a disguised form" (Luhmann, *Love as Passion* 157). For Luhmann, the current environment for passionate love is one where subjects are so isolated by their sense of interior life that the whole system of passionate love is threatened with collapse.

Subjects do not utilize one concept of self but have numerous ideas of self to fit each situation of social relation. Each is deployed differently depending on the social system. This lengthy quotation lays out essential aspects of Luhmann's theories on the contemporary subject:

> the difference that now determines the form of the code takes lies at the level of social relations, in which the individual can or cannot immerse his whole self. The individual can—and this is new—provide cover for most of the demands made by his life only through impersonal relationships, i.e. through relationships in which he cannot communicate about himself, or, at the most, only within the narrow limits of the particular social system. This condition includes the actual creation of the self, namely one's personal development in the context of school and professional career. The experience of difference, the axis only which the self constitutes itself, is coloured in a specific manner by these socio-structural conditions. The need for another Self—and this means another Other Self and another Self of one's own—is deeply influenced by this and plays a part in constituting one's own identity. (*Love as Passion* 152)

The amorous self demands the sharing of intimacy with another subject in a way that is not required of any other system. The entire concept of passionate love is dependent on the sharing of an intimate, unique self with another unique self. The sharing of subjectivity, of "inner experiences," must be involved for the subjects to be "in love." The higher need for frequent communication leads Luhmann to suggest: "Lovers can talk incessantly with each other because everything they experience is worth sharing and meets with resonance" (*Love as Passion* 158). Amorous subjects engage in a continual checking in to ensure the commutation channels remain open and operational. Thus, the frequency of communication is itself a semantic device of the code of passionate love.

The melding of hearts or subjectivities is impossible and yet is a requirement for passionate love to exist. Psychoanalytic theories of "the subject" and contemporary theory of social systems and power structures continually demonstrate that as decentered subjects one can neither know the core of one's being or communicate fully with another subject via the bottleneck of language. What does it mean if we are no longer in a world of romantic ideals, and if there is an idea that love is doomed before we even start? Passionate love requires subjects to communicate the sense that they are sharing their intimate selves in a unique relationship causing a paradox as subjects engaged in love must continue to believe that a being's interior self can be breached and direct communication can take place. Luhmann developed the concept of "interpersonal interpenetration" to resolve this paradox. This complex and evocative concept is based on the idea that previous conceptualizations of romantic intimacy were flawed by a lack of attention to communication structures and a failure to account for the shift from stratified societies based on social hierarchies to a functionally based system. This term is intended to cover ideas related to relationships between humans. Luhmann writes:

> Even though a great deal has been said about intimacy, intimate relationships and so forth, we have still not designed a theoretical concept to deal with the subject adequately. One comes closest to capturing what is meant by characterizing it as a high degree of interpersonal interpenetration, meaning that in relation to each other, people lower their relevance thresholds with the result that what one regards as relevant almost always is also held relevant by the other. Communicative relationships accordingly become more dense. Bearing in mind the typology of the adoption of patterns of selection . . . one can characterize intimacy by saying that in it the (selective) inner experience of the partner, and not just his actions, becomes relevant for the actions of the other person. (*Love as Passion* 158)

The idea of interpersonal interpenetration is the linchpin of the information system of passionate love. The system of love requires subjects to engage with the environment of passionate love and with each other as part of this system and subjects must interact with each other for the system of passionate love to function. Borch explains interpenetration as a necessary element for the communication between psychic and social systems given Luhmann's theory that "only communication communicates" (38). The interoperation between psychic and social systems is required for the system of passionate love in a way that is not necessary with other social systems.

Psychic systems are autopoietic and are complete within their environment. Within this system, I, as a subject, am the only one with my sense of consciousness, and my sense of consciousness cannot be shared with another. Yet the sharing of consciousness is demanded by passionate love. Interpersonal interpenetration enables a sense of shared interiority. Luhmann states: "We replaced the notion of reciprocity of perspective with the (much richer and more

demanding) concept of interpersonal interpenetration. This has various consequences for the topic of love, each of which leads in a different direction. Most importantly, the imagery of a fusion of two hearts is cancelled out and replaced" (*Love as Passion* 174). This revolutionary idea keeps subjects as separate beings and enables a coming together of systems, the interaction of intimate communication through the production of the amorous code. Thus, two hearts do not meld but open a unique communication channel, a frequency only used by the lovers. Luhmann writes:

> Interpenetration does not fuse different systems into a unity. It is no *unio mystica*. It functions only at the operational level of a reproduction of elements, in this case the units of occurrence embodied by inner experience and action. Every operation, every action and every observation with which one system reproduces sequences of events thus also occurs in the other. Each operation has to be aware of the fact that, as an action of the one system, it is at the same time the inner experience of the other, and this is not only an external identification, but rather the very condition of the reproduction of such action. One can only act in love in such a manner that one can live with what the other person experiences inside. Actions must be inserted into the world of the other person's inner experience, and reproduced out of it; and they must not lose their freedom their self-chosenness and the expressive value they lend to last inclinations in the process. They must precisely not appear as submission, docility, acquiescence or as an attempt to avoid conflict. No love can be satisfied with an "oh, all right." It demands that only he who loves can act in a loving manner. (*Love as Passion* 175)

With this, Luhmann preserves the integrity of an individual's psychic system as well as the integrity of social systems and is reflective of Lacan's theory of the mirror phase. For Lacan, it is imperative that subjects see themselves as whole unified beings, and that assurances of this reality must be continuously mirrored back through culture. The critical difference between Lacan and Luhmann is that for Lacan, there is no "self-choseness" and subjects are locked into the deadlocks of desire, while Luhmann wants to preserve a sense of freedom. Thus, for all the charges that Luhmann is cold and anti-human, he does seem to want to remain hopeful for love as a meaningful experience.

That passionate love must be considered as a collection of functioning autopoietic systems shifts the concern away from the idea of "unity" of "fused hearts" or the purpose of higher love. Love is instead a set of observable communicative functions. Lovers do not inhabit each other's minds but instead choose and act on communicative devices selected from the codebook of passionate love. The communication system creates meaning and allows interpersonal interpenetration, that is, the meeting of systems without joining, in a symbiotic relationship. Luhmann insists: "Interpenetration should also be understood to mean lovers conceding each other the right to their own world and refraining from integrating everything into a totality. The *universality* of the significative reference of love does not need to grasp *all* topical inner experience and action; indeed, it cannot do so" (*Love as Passion* 176). By becoming lovers, subjects do not suddenly know what is in the other's mind—it is an impossibility. But interpenetration of systems allows lovers to hook into an intimate form of communication and to feel as if they are part of intimate communication. Psychical systems and souls can interact. Interpersonal interpenetration also reassures amorous subjects, like pinging back, confirming messages are received. There is no guarantee of perfect communication.

> All communication is subject to the incommunicabilities which it itself constitutes. We found this to be the insight discovered and covered up in the eighteenth century. This can also be clarified with the aid of the concept of interpenetration. Under conditions of interpenetration each action consists of two parts: on the one hand, what it intends, and, on the other, what it signifies for attribution processes. This also forms the basis of the famous double-bind theory. (*Love as Passion* 175-176)

The difficulties of communication are countered or enabled through the development of semantic devices. These devices, carried by symbolic media such as Luhmann's example of the novel, facilitate the communication demanded by the information system of passionate love. Singer observes that "Proust investigates the nature of intuitive feeling by studying what happens when one person seeks to coincide with the interior being of another. Examining sympathy and imagination as contributing factors, he finds that the latter introduces distortions that prevent the former from effecting identification with another person" (164). The hopeless and endless task of meeting the inner being of another burdens lovers in the current age. Both Lacanian psychoanalysis and Luhmann's theories of love as an information system reject the notion of love as an emotion and the melding of hearts. Instead, love is predicated on the availability and use of symbolic media. We are only lovers through the use of amorous semantic devices. Thus, the proliferation of songs about love is evidence that love songs are necessary for love.

Chapter 2.9 Music, Communication Pathways, and Analysis

Contemporary love songs are created using semantic devices recognizable to listeners, and they carry symbolic meaning. Any conceptualization of love must be concerned with ideas of subjectivity and the creation of relationships between subjects, for example, how an individual understands themself and their relations to others and to the world. Luhmann ties the development of the sense of the individual in the world to the existence of passionate love. If the concept of the individual lover, the amorous subject, did not emerge, then passionate love wouldn't exist. He tracks passionate love through an analysis of literature where amorous relationships are observed, documented and circulated. Critics charge Luhmann with treating humans as machines, mere nodes in a network, without regard for meaning. However, Borch contends "meaning is conceived by Luhmann as the medium through which both psychic and social systems reproduce themselves. Psychic and social systems are simply unthinkable without meaning" (41). Attaching meaning to communication keeps his work from the kind of anti-human stance adopted by theorists such as Kittler. Symbolic media are important in Luhmann's system because they are meaningful. Therefore, music is an essential component in the system because it carries meaning. Similarly, music creates meaning within theories of psychoanalysis, for example, music focusing subjects on the creation of desire. One can then observe individual love songs not only for information such as chord progressions and instrumentation, but also for the ways they build worlds, create information, and reinforce semantic devices.

By creating shared experiences and understandings of the love's narrative trajectory music works to assist in the development of interpersonal interpenetration and to solve the paradox that is love. A useful example drawn from Proust illustrates this point: Swann's feelings for Odette become wrapped up with his hearing of the little phrase from the Vinteuil Sonata. The

groove of their relationship and the groove of music are seemingly allied. Both have their own mutually reinforced formal rules but also the potential difficulties of timing and communication. We are hemmed in by the "wall of language," and yet we must engage in language to experience passionate love. The hearing of love, as with the hearing of the little phrase, must both be public and private, that is, a unique communication between lovers, at the same time. We must learn the communication pathways, the form and rhythm of love first. This learning takes place through repeated encounters with media and also through repeated love relationships. Luhmann observes:

> Thus this difference can never be compounded in one act of love, or rather this is always possible, but only from the eternal perspective of the moment. Every utterance separates the speaker from what he has said, thus destroying innocence in the process. Part of love must involve respecting this fact. The only other choice is to attempt to force insincerity, if not schizophrenia into existence. (*Love as Passion* 176)

However, once the grooves are present, it is possible for love to exist. The codification of love is necessary:

> Nevertheless, form will have to be found for it, for with the intensification that follows from the differentiation and codification of intimate relations, human interpenetration also transcends the possibilities afforded by communication. The language of love with its words, eye-language and body-language creates a transparency of its own; it creates ties that grow beyond it. Interpenetration cannot be intended, conveyed, demanded, reached by pact or ended. Human interpenetration means precisely that the other person, conceived of as the horizon representing his own experiences and actions, enables the lover to lead his life as a self which could

> not be realized in the absence of love. This presentation of a horizon embodied in interpenetration glides along with all communication—and yet cannot be grasped by it—and having to accept an experience of it can make one bitter or happy, depending on the state of one's love. (*Love as Passion* 128)

Thus, the experience of love and interpenetration is not something that can be controlled, forced, or stopped by the will of a subject and, Luhmann suggests, subjects find completeness in interpenetration that cannot be found elsewhere. This completeness is found in the beloved.

The realities of contemporary love are played out within love songs, and this gives amorous subjects a means to engage in love. Semantic structures formed by codes and devices at work in music are developed over time and through repeated, though shifting, encounters. Subjects learn these codes and can communicate love. In *Social Systems* Luhmann notes: "the individual can and must use formulas, distinctions, and definitions, with which it can acquire social resonance or rejection" (336). Only the communication system of passionate love can constitute the amorous. As soon as one begins to engage or communicate within the system, to know the codes, one begins to observe other subjects for signs of love. Psychoanalytical methods recognize a similar mechanism at work through symbolic structures.

In this study, music is analyzed along the lines of both psychoanalysis and love as a communication system. Both methodologies are concerned with the ways symbolic media work within a broader construct of human meaning and society. Focusing on music as a symbolic form carrying information both enabling and forming communication pathways within a network opens a different viewpoint on how meaning is constructed and circulated. Huhn adopts this methodology in the analysis of literature. In this instructive observation, Huhn states:

> novels mediate patterns or formulas which are part of the contemporary semantics of individuality and may serve as orientation for the autopoietic self-reproduction of the individual. . . . The novel creates specific forms for the observation of observation of a fictive world and enables him at the same to observe the observation, thus taking the position of a second-order observer and seeing the blind spots of the first perspective. Novels . . . present symbolically generalised models of individuality in the form of life-stories which enact the problems individuals have in adjusting to the functionally differentiated structure of society and constituting their own autopoiesis under the conditions of modernity. (366)

Thus, as with novels, love songs can be analyzed for the life-stories they enact. That is, the way the songs act as models, as a means of communicating about communication, and as observable evidence regarding the social structures of passionate love. The form, structure, and semantics of loves songs matter. As much as the system of love and affective matrices apprentice us to love and give us pathways for interacting with other amorous subjects, it a system rife with potential problems. Frith provides insight on the slipperiness of language in relation to love and music.

> Elvis Costello writes as a man who grew up on pop and has had to cope ever since with a world in which romantic male fictions don't work, in which women don't play the same game. For Costello what is at stake is the language of love. He is obsessed with puns because they represent the possibilities, the ambiguities, the confusions of sex—"your mouth is made up, your mind is undone." (*Music* 160)

Communication can always go awry. In writing on the entanglement between love and technology Pettman states: "The erotic encounter is inevitably enflamed by technologies, from

architecture to etiquette. Even if we happen to fall head over heels for someone in the forest or on a beach naked, there is the uber-techne of language to take into account" (*Love and Other* 15). As amorous subjects, we are never outside the system of love, a system enforced by language and symbolic media.

Chapter 2.10 Conclusion

Love songs tell stories of passionate love in a multitude of ways. For example, both lyrics and musical form build on and in semantics to become a codified form of communication. Music sets up an emotional and affective matrix through which we learn what it means to be a lover or beloved, how to produce and interpret signs of love, and how to become amorous subjects.[30] Methods from psychoanalysis and systems theory demonstrate the ways the music, through its form and lyrical content, sets up the conditions for the constitution of love. In contemporary society, indie rock music is a fitting sphere to observe the system of passionate love. Luhmann suggests contemporary passionate love is becoming difficult as human subjects are increasingly focused on themselves and the system of passionate love has had to grow in complexity to accommodate these changes. He writes: “The lovers’ conduct is no longer patterned on novels,

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[30] Although this dissertation is not specifically focused on sex, erotic love and relationships between bodies are components of passionate love. The place of the body within the communication network of passionate love is important. Passionate love as expressed through sexuality brings the interplay between emotion and bodies into being. Writing on Proust, Singer suggests: “That love should have a sexual base is important for Proust because of his pervasive interest in seeing how feelings are affected by bodily states” (174). Singer goes on to state: “we cannot understand the onset of love without considering our immersion in the realm of matter” (175). In the case of passionate love, the realm of matter most certainly includes bodies. Nothing is sure in the case of passionate love. Though he analyzes love in terms of feeling, Proust also insists upon the close relationship between love and sex. He does not idealize sex, as some of the Romantics had. He merely observes that it is usually indispensable if love is to make its greatest impact” (Singer 173). You can sustain the reality of sexual intercourse only through fantasy. Cinema (music) tells us something about how reality constitutes itself. We know it’s fake but we are still fascinated, there is something more real than reality. It’s not enough to reveal the “truth” appearance has an affectivity of its own. We always believe it is a fake, but nonetheless believe. “The matrix of these objects accounts for three modes of depicting the sexual act: comicality, perversion, pathetic ecstasy. In the comic mode, the gap which separates the sexual act from our everyday social interaction is rendered palpable; in perversion, the focus is displaced onto a partial object which acts as a stand-in for the impossible-unrepresentable act itself (for Lacan, the ultimate example of such a partial object is the gaze itself: what ultimately fascinates the pervert is the gaze transfixed by some traumatic Thing which can never be rendered present, like the state of Medusa’s head); finally, one can endeavour to erect a fascinating image destined to render present the pathos of the act.” (Žižek *Plague* 224)

but rather on psychotherapy" (*Love as Passion* 174). Thus, indie rock, with its concern for the exposure of the "inner self," coupled with an ideal of authenticity, becomes an exciting site for examining the structures of passionate love.

Chapter 3.1 It's All a Matter of Soul and Fire: Indie Rock Music

It's all a matter of soul and fire
Infatuation or true desire
The thrill of discovery, divine intervention
Cruel, cruel change, pain of rejection.
(Sebadoh)

Indie rock is a term with fuzzy borders, and it is a far less stable and less well defined genre category than many other types of popular music. This instability could be because the term was first used solely to define a mode of production rather than specific musical generic conventions. Indie's allegiance to ideas of authenticity in artistic intent and feeling make for an exciting discussion. Indie has strong connections to sentiments of "anti" or "against" other popular music genres, including genres where sexually explicit lyrics are more overt. This chapter focuses on indie's Origin stories. It will outline a brief history of "indie rock" as defined in popular and academic discourse, particularly the aesthetics of indie rock. The aesthetics of indie are interlinked to what and how the music of indie communicates. This factor, the way indie music communicates, relates to the form of the music as well as the ways the music is invested in conveying a sense of authenticity. Looking at passionate love and music through a generic lens such as indie allows us to look for specific points of friction between generic conventions and the broader cultural context, which can reveal the ways a system of passionate love is enacted in contemporary society.

There is some conflict around the use of indie as a genre term, and examining the use of genre terms reveals information about the communities themselves. Hesmondhalgh cites genre as "the basis for a theorized understanding of the relationships between music and the social" (*Youth Cultures* 43) and he further cites Jason Toynbee's work on genre. Toynebee states genre "is seen to express the collective interest or point of view of a community" (33). Genre must be

understood as a term[31] which is a result of negotiations between many different communities and industry forces, but like any genre, requires some form of agreed usage to exist and function at all. However, genre labels are not static taxonomies. They have the potential to change over time making genre labels unstable as new genres constantly develop. Holt defines genre as

> a type of category that refers to a particular kind of music with a distinctive cultural web of production, circulation and signification. That is to say, genre is not only "in the music," but also in the minds and bodies of particular groups of people who share certain conventions. These conventions are created in relation to particular music texts and artists and the contexts in which they are performed and expressed. (12)

Genre works as part of a network, sets up a system of expectations with music communities, and orders social systems. Writing on cinema and genre, Neale suggests genres involve an "interplay of codes, discursive structures and drives" and are "sites of repetition and difference." Further, Neale states that we derive desire and pleasure out of playing with expectations (qtd. in Fabbri and Shepherd 438). Given the way genre sets out musical and social codes, and a discursive structure, it is an effective means of focusing an examination of encoded structures related to a system of passionate love.

There is a link between indie's origins in the punk scene and the generic conventions it continues to uphold. The industrial origins of this term will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, but briefly, most recorded music was and continues to be recorded and released by record labels. Like publishers, record labels are responsible for the production and distribution of

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[31] Genre terms, and connected work on communities, are a well-worn area in the study of popular music and music as a whole. Raymond Williams' influential work *Keywords* demonstrated the power of terminology in shaping human society. For discussions of genre in popular music, see Borthwick and Moy; Brackett; Frith; Holt; Negus; and Shepherd.

recorded music for the musicians who have signed contracts with them. Record labels can then exercise control of the musical product. In the early 1980s "indie," originally known as "independent music," appeared as a term strictly for post-punk music independently produced and circulated. In the following decades the term broadened to include the subgenres of "college rock"[32] and "alternative music,"[33] as well as others. The restriction of the term "indie" for only independently produced music is no longer strictly observed. Despite indie's shift away from independent production there continues be an ethos grounded in opposition. This original spirit of resistance has provided the heaviest influence over the indie aesthetic, profoundly marking out indie music as seeming to be more authentic than mainstream rock, and also granting it "outsider" status, even as much of the music has moved to the mainstream.[34] Thus indie is infused with a do-it-yourself attitude, permeated with a Romantic idealization of authenticity that defines the indie rock ethos. This spirit of authenticity extends to the idea of expression of true feeling in the music. "Authenticity" and the identification of "truth" in music performance are aspects of long debate in the history of music and indeed through many forms of mass produced

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[32] "College rock" is loosely defined as alternative rock music that was played on American college campus radio stations. *AllMusic* defines it additionally as music that was distinct from the new wave music that was popular at the time and later encompassed the burgeoning alternative music scene. Holly Kruse's volume *Site and Sound: Independent Music Scenes* provides an excellent, detailed analysis of the college rock scene from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s.

[33] "Alternative music" is a genre term that in many respects took over the genre mantle from "college rock" when music related to that scene gained prominence through artists such as Nirvana and R.E.M. Alternative music continues to be an active genre term, though it is increasingly identified with the period of the mid-1990s to the early 2000s and encompasses groups as divergent as Nirvana, R.E.M., the Cure and the Smiths. As an industry term, "alternative" represented a particular marketing classification area for radio and record stores.

[34] Though one could argue that the idea of the mainstream in popular music is increasingly breaking down as ever increasing amounts of music are consumed online.

media and art. Benjamin points to problems with reproduction in the mechanical age and in the case of popular music it is difficult to identify what is the original and what is a copy given the ongoing shifts and changes within performed music where there is no score to lend an aura of "truth" (*The Work*), while Adorno continually points the problems of commodification. At the same time concepts of what is authentic and truthful are manufactured within music scenes and genres themselves.

The origins of the genre term "indie rock" are murky. Contemporary critics are split as to whether indie should continue to be defined along the lines of how the music is produced (i.e., independent of a record label) or along aesthetic lines. In "What Is Indie Rock?" Hibbett suggests indie is a complicated category primarily identified through sound, rather than through association with an independent label. Hibbett pinpoints the beginning of the indie sound to the period of the 1960s. He suggests bands such as the Velvet Underground exhibit some of the characteristics of indie with a sound that is "lo-fi yet highly experimental" (58). He further suggests a more organized appearance of an indie music genre is discernible at the advent of the punk scene in the 1970s.[35] Punk needed to operate outside the bounds of corporate conventions and thus offered musicians a break from the artistic control exercised by record labels. Releasing music independent of the backing of a mainstream label became a means for musicians to take control of their artistic production and to make music without interference.[36]

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[35] Hibbett, Hesmondhalgh, and Foronow all tie the beginning of "indie" to the rise of punk. One might then quibble as to whether the lo-fi and DIY sound of the Velvet Underground can really be thought a precursor to indie or whether it is better thought of as a precursor to punk, and by nature of this connection make the tie to indie.

[36] Punk was a favourite object of study for early popular music scholars and the methodological approaches employed by sociologists such as Hebdige had profound influence over the entire field of popular music studies, giving it a decidedly sociological stance where techniques of mass observation and ethnography were the primary methodologies. In academic institutions, popular music studies are frequently located outside the music department.

The move away from corporate control also meant that while artists had less money upfront to pay for production and lost access to distribution networks, they gained greater artistic freedom to produce music that might otherwise be considered "unmarketable." What initially were elements born of the realities of self-production, such as lo-fi sounds, hand-produced cover artwork, rough sound production, and an unpolished sound of the music, became generic conventions and hallmarks of the indie sound. A whole alternative scene, with its own set of small labels, distribution, and promotional networks, developed. These scenes were often highly localized and had their own set of conventions heavily influenced by the DIY and anti-establishment spirit created by punk. In writing on the early days of indie, Hesmondhalgh states:

> The core of punk's democratization efforts were decentralization and access based on sub-professional activity; entry into a more established, parallel industry involves compromise, through contact with the "bloody sharks" referred to by Mark Edmondson. Such purism often sees the process of professionalization as a sell-out: the abandonment of idealism for financial reward. ("Indie" 44)

Thus, it is indie's specific mode of commercial production that has had a profound influence on its style and sound, a performance and composition practice that continues today.[37]

From the early days of punk, an active link between production, aesthetics, and idealism stretched beyond considerations of the music itself. "Institutional musical independence has been

[37] Despite the fact that the indie aesthetic and practices can seem overly romantic as a creative endeavour, Hesmondhalgh makes a clear case for the opposite. He writes, "The commitment to independent production and distribution transcended romantic notions of musical creativity. Rather than naively contrasting the spontaneous art of independents with a corrupting and predatory commercial sector, some of the post-punk companies recognized that in a popular cultural medium, independent ownership of production and distribution was the most effective route towards democratization of the industry" ("Indie" 37).

very strongly linked to ideas of aesthetic, institutional and political *alternatives*: to the idea that independence might contribute to the formation of different and better ways of organizing cultural production and consumption, and society itself" (Hesmondhalgh and Meier). It was a scene heavily invested in an ethos of anti-corporate, anti-establishment sentiment, and self-organization and production was a pathway to not only disrupting corporate culture but also creating a more democratic way of operating. Hebdige's well-known work *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* focuses on the way people involved in and with various music genres used multiple markers, such as dress, venues, and dance styles, as ways to demonstrate their membership in a subculture. Hebdige's writing on punk also points to the ways these practices also clearly demarcate punk's rejection of the values of mainstream culture and signal refusal and revolt. Hebdige's detailed description of punk as a form of social rebellion within a youth subculture is essential for the later conceptualization of indie rock music as indie rock has managed to maintain a deep sense of "true" expression coupled with a rejection of corporate culture.

Hesmondhalgh suggests indie was groundbreaking as the first genre to be associated with an industrial organization instead of a stylistic form.

> The mid-1980s' coining and adoption of the term, an abbreviation of 'independent' (as in independent record company) was highly significant: no music genre had ever before taken its name from the form of industrial organization behind it. For indie proclaimed itself to be superior to other genres not only because it was more relevant or authentic to the youth who produced and consumed it (which was what rock had claimed) but also because it was based on new relationships between creativity and commerce. ("Indie" 35)

This further reinforces the idea that early in its development the genre of indie music had positioned itself as a more authentic expression of emotion, art, rebellion, and indeed of *being* than rock. Indie's claims of artistic integrity and authenticity are the most abiding characteristics of indie rock and thus a carrier of "true" feeling.

It is vital to consider the origins of the tension between musicians and aspects of the music industry, such as large multinational recording and publishing corporations, to understand the origins of aesthetic elements of indie. The industrialization of music, that is, corporate control of the recording and distribution process, arose as recordings, utilized for radio airplay or through a playback device, and replaced sheet music as the primary mechanism of the circulation of popular music. Writing on the industrialization of music, Frith suggests the mechanization of music and the recording and reproduction of music defined pop music in the twentieth century (*Music* 11). Furthermore, he suggested that we "retain a sense that the music industry is a bad thing—bad for music, bad for us. Read any pop history and you will find in outline the same sorry tale" (*Music* 11). Musicians sign contracts with corporations, the "record deal." Recording companies front the costs for recording, distribution, promotion, and even live shows. Artists are expected to make money back for the record label and are paid out of the remaining funds. Before digital music distribution, accessing these networks without the backing of a major label was very challenging for artists, and securing a record deal became a mark of success.[38]

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[38] The music and creative industries have received a great deal of attention from sociologists and popular music historians. The discussion in this dissertation is intended to give a very brief overview of some of the issues related to the development of the genre of indie music. More detailed discussions of the music industry can be found in works such as Negus and Hesmondhalgh.

Recording contracts typically include expectations that corporate backers will recoup the outlaid costs as well as make a profit. While record deals enable artists to produce and distribute music, the need for a commercially successful album could impact what music is made. There are numerous well-documented conflicts between artists and their record companies.[39] The ubiquity of online access has significantly changed the ability of artists to record and distribute their work through online music downloading and streaming. Further, online magazines, blogs and news sources, such as *Pitchfork*, have also given artists and smaller labels greater access to reviewers and offered other avenues for promotion and visibility. In the last fifteen years, bands such as Radiohead, Nine Inch Nails, and others have opted to not renew contracts with major record labels. Both Radiohead and Nine Inch Nails demonstrated that with the strength of the internet and a solid fan base, recordings could be successfully distributed and sold for profit without a major label (Kreps, "Nine" and "Thom").[40] For most rock and pop musicians, this continues to mean the production and circulation of sound recordings. For artists working in rock, success is measured by sales numbers, units sold, and the number of "plays" on the radio. For example, the system for granting artists gold albums is based on album unit sales. Artists achieving commercial success via album sales, something tied to chart position, can also expect to see higher plays on the radio. The music industry is tightly controlled where the circulation and consumption of a monetized product is a means of ensuring a livelihood for those working in the industry.

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[39]The dispute between Prince and his record label is one of best known such conflicts.
[40] There are far too many references to include here, but there has been a steady downward trend of recorded music sales since the early 2000s. Most tie this decline in sales to the advent of digital music delivery. In a 2015 article in the *Atlantic*, Derek Thompson points to declining sales numbers in every category of commercial music except for vinyl and streaming services, leading him to declare that the death of iTunes is not far behind that of the compact disc.

As cited in the introduction to this section, after the post-punk period of the 1980s, there was a move away from tying the definition of indie as a classification strictly to the music's mode of production (i.e., the independent label). Aesthetic elements, performance practice, and a developed music scene became the critical demarcations of indie music. Fonarow supports the idea of indie as something reflected by the community rather than a strictly industrial definition: "indie enthusiasts . . . feel that indie does not reflect merely a mode of circulation but a particular genre of music as well, with a recognizable sound and collective conventions that distinguish it from dance, country, or R&B for example" (39). Online commercial music sites such as AllMusic.com, streaming services such as Spotify, internet radio stations, and iTunes have representation by artists from both independent and mainstream record labels under the category of "indie," and various subcategories of indie. Other sources, such as *Pitchfork,* also have a more generous definition of indie. The concept of indie as something more than simply a category based on its means of distribution was perhaps there from the start. Hesmondhalgh has written extensively about the roots of indie music in the punk scene, and he repeatedly draws attention to the fact that indie is rooted in community and networks of individuals. He suggests early indie fundamentally changed the way rock music is created by challenging the business practices:

> Creative autonomy from commercial restraint is a theme which has often been used to mystify artistic production by making the isolated genius the hero of cultural myth. Indie, however, emerged from a hard-headed network of post-punk companies which made significant challenges to the commercial organization of cultural production favoured by the major record companies. ("Indie")

Indie's origin as a challenge to mainstream rock in business practices, community, and artistic practice are important factors in its aesthetic. Consumers of indie music came to regard this music as being more artistically and, therefore, more emotionally authentic.

The 90s formed a transition period. The popularity of the alternative genre was a mechanism for the formalization of indie. Alternative music was not bound by the requirement for financial independence of earlier indie music. James Endeacott, formerly of the indie label Rough Trade Records, sums up the transition, saying,

> In the 80s, indie meant the independent charts. It was just about distribution, not a style; Yazz's "The Only Way Is Up" was No 1, and that was an indie record. Bands that we'd call indie now called themselves "alternative" back then, as they were still to the left of the norm. But then came Britpop, which was the death of it, really. By the time I was in the eye of the storm at Rough Trade with the Strokes and the Libertines, indie was a genre. (qtd. in Rogers et al.)

During this period, indie shifted from a term used to define production and distribution to a genre label. Bands and artists, such as Pearl Jam, Nirvana, and Green Day, and the Britpop bands such as the Strokes, had wide commercial success and, as Endeacott mentioned, were listed on the mainstream charts such as the Billboard 100, and won mainstream awards such as Grammy Awards. Further evidence of a shift in the place of "indie" music is the inclusion of "alternative" and "indie" as categories in awards such as the Grammy Awards. When indie transitioned to a genre label, the whole apparatus of indie music production shifted toward mainstream industrial practices. For some people involved in indie music, such as Endeacott, the transition to the mainstream meant the end of attempts to construct an alternative and more democratic model of production. The change from "indie" as a description for a whole mode of production and

industrial complex to a genre label meant bands such as Arcade Fire could retain an identification with indie while being distributed by a mainstream label.

Despite these shifts, indie music continued to tap into a scene and sound that seemed to eschew the trappings of the music industry. The genre continued to carry many of the markers of the earlier post-punk aesthetic through the alternative scene in the 90s and into the present without the same commitment to anti-capitalism. These markers included things like an unpolished sound; production elements such as adding the sounds of breath and guitar string noises; non-mainstream instrumental and voicing choices; the inclusion of guitar feedback, pedals, and electronic looping techniques; and non-radio-friendly playing times. Artists and bands such as Radiohead were using highly sophisticated and layered sound and longer track lengths, while groups such as Wilco were stretching North American rock styles. These bands garnered critical as well as widespread acclaim.[41] In an article in the *Guardian*, musician Stuart Murdoch summed up indie: "In the 80s there was this very definite independent scene, and it didn't mean you played guitar – you could be punky, or hip-hop, or be making electronic records. And by the 90s that jangly guitar sound—with the Happy Mondays, the Stone Roses and Primal Scream—became mainstreamy, it became popular" (Rogers et al.). Through the 90s, indie retained its genre name but lost its tie to a mode of production and to its strong outsider status.

Since the 2000s, indie music as a genre label has overtaken the term "alternative" and there is less unification in sound, with numerous sub-genres such as indie pop and indie folk listed on music streaming sites such as Spotify and Apple Music. As with earlier periods, there

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[41] Bands such as Radiohead led a larger shift away from radio as it is a medium that is unfriendly to bands producing longer track times; however, most of the popular acts of the 1990s, in the college rock pedigree, continued to produce music that was radio friendly, although this music was not played on Top 40 mainstream radio.

continued to be a tie to aesthetic considerations. The growth of digital technologies and new distribution channels such as YouTube allowed artists to distribute music more quickly and cheaply. Recording technologies became easier and cheaper to manage. The maturation of the internet as a means of distribution, performance, and audience engagement meant the monetary threshold for getting one's music out to potential consumers became very low. The world of popular music has shifted. As Henderson writes: "The realm of popular music no longer resembles the AM radio and vinyl-focused world of the 1970s where reaching far-flung audiences required money, usually a major label, and extensive travel" (310). Instead of traditional A&R scouting at local clubs, one could record a couple of songs in your home, post it on streaming sites such as SoundCloud or YouTube, and build an audience of ardent fans. This shift has had a profound change in the indie music scene, not only regarding production and distribution, but a continued value placed on low-fi, DIY aesthetic.[42] James Dean Bradfield, of the Manic Street Preachers, stated: "Indie labels still have a place in this world, absolutely, and they can still be influential. The difference now is that if a band is born out of an indie environment, it can become a massive band. That old indie belief that you don't sell out has gone. Like Arctic Monkeys going on to become one of the biggest acts in the world . . . that is the well-trodden route now" (qtd. in Rogers et al.). Musician Pauline Black sums up the current state of indie well:

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[42] The advent of file sharing, YouTube, and other low-cost mechanisms had a massive impact on the commercial mainstream recording industry. According to Per Sundin (qtd. in Wolfson) the decline in revenue was severe, causing most mainstream labels to change signing practices: "the joy of taking a punt on a weird band of misfits in the hope something magical might happen . . . was all over." The Wolfson piece goes on to discuss the ways streaming services such as Spotify as providing a means for "saving" the music industry.

> Back then, indie was an ethos: what 2 Tone stood for was more important to me than anything else. It was being able to put your music with everything you talked about on stage: anti-racism, anti-sexism. It was being in charge of your art: you decided what you wanted to put out, how you wanted to put it out, who you wanted to produce it.
>
> I do think indie still has meaning now. As an artist, with the software that's available, you can pretty much make music on your laptop, do the artwork, put it out there, and hope for the best. That really is the spirit of indie. If you're willing to be patient, to build your audience gradually, you can remain independent. If you're in it to make huge quantities of dosh, you'll probably be disappointed. (qtd. in Rogers et al.)

The current state of indie does have meaning and artists working in and around this genre place value on aesthetic and musical considerations, but musicians also continue to place value on a sense of artistic freedom and authenticity, a tie back to the early roots of indie.

Chapter 3.2 Truth, Authenticity, and the Aesthetics of Indie

Now, the signals we send, are deflected again
We're still connected, but are we even friends?
We fell in love when I was nineteen
And I was staring at a screen
(Arcade Fire, *Reflektor*)

The ideals of authenticity and artistic integrity are fundamental to the practice and genre conventions of indie rock music. As outlined previously, this ethos was in part created by a method which eschewed mainstream corporate control and the radio-friendly sound and lyrics being produced in the late 1960s. During this period, musicians began to cultivate a deliberately amateurish sound (Weingarten) which frequently belied the complexity of the music's construction as well as masking the artistic abilities of the musicians. For example, rather than the smooth and deliberately complex sound being produced by prog-rock musicians, punk musicians and those following through to the alternative scene of the 1990s cultivated an intentionally rough sound. At the same time, the quirky sound and lyrics of new wave bands like the Talking Heads provided an alternative to the guitar-heavy sound of both mainstream rock and the music of the alternative scene. Production and compositional techniques are used to signal opposition to mainstream music-making. In contemporary indie rock, these practices have translated into an aesthetic, that is, lyrics, sound, and style, coded to deliberately signal "real" expression of emotion and artistic intent to audiences. This section of the dissertation deals with the ways ideas of authenticity are deployed in the context of indie music to foreground indie as a carrier for truth of emotion. In the music of Arcade Fire, the ability to convey communicative messages regarding love requires effective use of formal structures to invoke truth.

Fonarow's work on indie is heavily grounded in an assertion that indie is more "authentic" than other forms of music and conforms to a kind of aesthetic morality. She

compiled a list of characteristics that she asserts are integral to the indie aesthetic. "For indie, 'authentic' music is personal, live, youthful, organic, self-make, original, and motivated by concerns of artistic expression rather than commercial acquisition. This aesthetic morality is one of the ways indie asserts its music as more valuable than other genres" (179). Fonarow suggests the values of indie rock music are tied to an aesthetic morality that is bound up with the concepts of "right" and "true" expression. Furthermore, that "aesthetic morality" is an essential generic convention. While Fonarow asserts a necessary connection between indie rock and moral values, she fails to fully appreciate the need for indie musicians to communicate artistic integrity. In indie music, a variety of markers are used to convey artistic integrity. Indie artists use unconventional instrumentation, experimental techniques, extended song lengths, and so on—deliberate techniques used to demonstrate a dedication to producing non-commercial music. Furthermore, recording techniques which include and enhance the bodily sounds of musicians, the sound of the breath, and sounds of instruments all work to indicate their "realness." For example, the retention of sounds such as fingers moving up guitar strings and clicks of instrument keys are deliberate, as they could be removed in the course of production. For indie, the retention of these sounds signals opposition to music from other genres which employ cleaner production styles. All of these aesthetic conventions work together to create an illusion of authenticity. Aesthetic morality is embedded in the music itself.

Claims that indie music expresses "truth" and authentic emotion and feeling are met through artistic sensibility and tangled up with ideals of an autonomous self. In indie, this sense of autonomy is created by an illusion of indie musicians as being unbounded by capitalist intention and therefore free to make "real" music. Hesmondhalgh and Meier point to tensions within the discourse of indie music and Western music as a whole:

> A key context here is the relationship, in some everyday popular musical discourse, of independence as an institutional and organizational matter to more fundamental ideas about artistic *freedom*, which are in turn related to the hugely complex and disputed notion of *autonomy*. And music is a realm in which such ideas about artistic freedom and autonomy have been felt to matter a great deal. This fact derives from post-Enlightenment conceptions of the aesthetic as a vital realm of experience. In the wake of perceptions that religious thought could no longer act as a secure source of knowledge, the aesthetic came to be understood as a realm where the instrumentalism of science and the pursuit of wealth could be countered, providing access to more meaningful truths about being. Crucially, music was given a privileged place within such post-Enlightenment aesthetic thought, because of its supposedly special links to subjectivity, often felt to be manifest in its power to express, arouse or instil emotion. (2)

The connection between emotion and musical expression is long-standing, and the idea that music can express "right" or "true" feeling is not unique to indie. Hesmondhalgh and Meier point to essential links that will be taken up in later chapters regarding the reduction in the influence of religion in Western society and the rise of both capitalism and instrumentalism.

Music's privileged place as a powerful carrier of emotion is heightened in indie because its status as independent from commercial interest confers a greater sense of artistic autonomy and, therefore, value. For Luhmann, the rise of the system of passionate love is a direct response to the gap left in society by the loss of influence of religion and family, and symbolic media such as music work within the system, carrying emotional content and conveying a sense of truth to human actors. For Lacan and Žižek, there is no "reality" or truth of feelings, emotions and

desires are conceptualized as reflections or actions played out on screens. Middleton draws connections between the trope of rock music as "real" and a long history of music as being regarding as conveying "truth." Middleton writes: "calling up legacies of earlier Romantic subjectivities, of Enlightenment quests for genuine rather than false knowledge—and, indeed, of an insistent concern with the troubling relationship between 'reality' and 'truth' going back to ancient philosophy" (*Voicing* 199). Thus, the question of veracity in feelings and aesthetic works is an ongoing concern within human culture. Aesthetic works are often thought of as the space for the display and working out of frictions within society, mainly as it relates to genuine as opposed to false feeling. Artists work to effectively communicate the impression of real feeling. As stated earlier in this study, Lacan, Žižek, and Luhmann all privilege media such as novels, letters, and films as essential carriers for content related to subjectivity. At the same time, these theorists make it clear that the belief in true feeling, as with all feelings, is a construct. Media carry messages as fit the purpose, such as messages of how amorous subjects should feel and communicate.

Aesthetic value and commodity value are entangled. Music as a commodity not only to communicate within social systems but also to communicate commodity value. Adorno, a well-known theorist of the Frankfurt School, is essential to include for his reflections on how popular music is regarded aesthetically, on its role in society, and on the relationship between popular music and art music. Adorno took a critical view of popular music. He felt it lacked artistic merit and, more problematically, that popular music was an agent of capitalist forces, while art music was outside these forces. Adorno felt popular music worked to subdue the masses and create passive consumers. As one of the first theorists to seriously consider popular culture, Adorno's theories on popular music have been thoroughly debated in the literature of popular music. His

work has been criticized and largely rejected, in part because of its strict rejection of popular music. Some more recent theorists, such as DeNora, have attempted to reclaim Adorno's work through an expansion of his theories in a contemporary application. In the context of this dissertation, a discussion of Adorno is included to provide insight into the frictions among aesthetic, artistic, and commodity value, especially as relates to authenticity and music.

For Adorno, the complexity of classical music such as that of Beethoven required more involvement on the part of the listener, making it less susceptible to capitalist forces than the popular music of his time, and he saw music as a site for class struggle. Popular music's lesser status in Adorno's estimation is based in part on the supposed different modes of production between "autonomous" art music and the factory-like production of popular music. The difference between popular music and art music was a perceived difference between music produced as artwork and music produced as entertainment. Middleton points out one of the weaknesses in Adorno's theories is his assertion that avant-garde music is more artistic than popular music because the avant-garde is practiced outside the need for exchange value, when avant-garde music does, in fact, have an exchange value. The less appealing to a wide audience, the more artistic Adorno perceived the music be. There are parallels here to the way indie music is also perceived as being more artistic because of its lack of general appeal.

For Adorno, listening to popular music as entertainment puts one in danger of being subsumed into mass culture, and could lead to the loss of one's autonomy. Middleton writes, "Adorno's thinking on the question is locked into a model which pits individual subject against reified social totality leads his picture of the social meaning of music to take on a monolithic appearance" (*Studying* 40). Thus, for Adorno, popular music can never be art because of its

appeal as a form of mass culture, and related problems of use and circulation. Music becomes complicit in the oppression of the people. For, as Middleton points out,

> in reality the "culture industries" create, control and exploit musical desires, forming "a circle of manipulation and retroactive need in which the unity of the system grows ever stronger." Any sense of expressive immediacy is an illusion: use-value is replaced totally by value in exchange; autonomy disappears as music turns into nothing more than "social cement"; production is reduced, in effect, to reproduction. (*Studying* 36)

Because the production of popular music is driven by exchange value and not artistic value, or "higher" purpose, Adorno does not consider it as valuable as "artistic music" such as the music of Beethoven. Thus, people's desires, including passionate love, can be manufactured by culture industries. There are alignments between Adorno's view of music as "social cement" and the ways both Luhmann and Lacan view music as an actor with the cohesion of social systems; however, where Adorno falls short is in the belief that music such as Beethoven or the avant-garde sits outside control or exchange value.

Adorno's theory of standardization and pseudo-individualization understands popular music as a series of formulas/schemata which do not relate to the details of a song. Songs can have the same melody, length, and key structure whether about love, or drinking, or nothing at all. The details of a song can be substituted into the schema without making a difference to the overarching structure. Adorno calls this "pre-digested" music where "the composition hears for the listener." Adorno contrasts this with "serious" music like that of Beethoven, where song structures cannot be substituted, where the whole is the sum of the parts, where, Adorno

suggests, the music sits outside the cycle of exchange and is therefore autonomous. Middleton is critical of this stance:

> Such composition, which reached a peak in the large-scale abstract instrumental music of nineteenth-century Europe, coexisted even then with simper songs and dances. But functional differentiation of genres seems to disappear in Adorno's picture; all art apparently must aspire to the condition of the most "autonomous." Yet songs *qua* songs cannot be the same as symphonies, dances must satisfy certain basic functional requirement. (*Studying* 56)

Despite the faults with Adorno's theories, Middleton suggests that "one of Adorno's strengths is his insistence that changes in the circumstances of musical production affect musical *form*. His stress on music's 'social content' meant that he could never accept the tendency of positivist music sociology to treat genres, styles and forms as so much freely-existing data" (*Studying* 45). The existence of a piece of music is always tangled up with the intended system of its circulation and exchange. In the case of indie music, the ability of artists to be free from constraints like duration-related mainstream radio airplay, the need for danceability, and the costs associated with particular profit margins opened a set of compositional conditions that were not available to other genres.

Adorno's rigid sense of autonomy as bound up with high art versus popular music forms is problematic. Hesmondhalgh points to the limitations of Adorno's theories of popular music:

> the usefulness of Adorno's work is limited by its excessive austerity, by his idealist requirement that art should aspire to extremely demanding levels of autonomy and dialectic, by his failure to recognize adequately the ambivalence in both "high

> culture" and "popular culture" and, linked to all this, by his seeming contempt for everyday cultural experience in modern societies. (*Why* 35)

While this "contempt" is perhaps the most glaring problem within Adorno's theories of popular music, his ideas are striking in relation to the aesthetic of indie music given those within the indie scene see indie music as being outside this system of exchange, outside the control of larger corporate interests, and therefore of greater artistic value, reflecting, as discussed above, more "real" emotion than mainstream popular music. The cultural connections between artistic autonomy and an aura of authenticity and realness is pervasive. These connections give indie particular access to ideas of right and true emotions in connection to passionate love.

Building on the idea that indie is considered to be more authentic and more suited to carry emotion than other forms of popular music, it is useful to look at the work of Fonarow. Fonarow charges indie with the power to be genuinely autonomous and emotional than other forms of music. As with Adorno's assertion that music such as Beethoven is more autonomous than other kinds of music, Fonarow's stance is problematic and most certainly false. However, her suggestion that indie contains "two internally conflicting drives of 'emotional veracity'" and a kind of "Puritan simplicity," (195) or what we could also characterize as an idealization of music as art provides a provocative line of thought in the context of passionate love. Fonarow astutely ties these drives to the long continuum of cultural expression, value, and authenticity of music in the West. She writes:

> For indie, the conventional has questionable emotional veracity. To understand why indie conflates the conventional with the artificial, we must turn to broader cultural notions of emotional veracity. In the West, we confer emotional value on the novel

> and unique, and we see cliché as representing emptiness. Cliché or routine is seen as the opposite of true feeling. . . .Indie privileges itself over other genres by its purportedly original, self-made, personal unconventionality rather than by the purportedly impersonal, undifferentiated, other-made, phoney, generic, empty manipulations of other musical genres. (195)

There are lines between Adorno's binding of classical music's greater artistic intent, true feeling, and the ways musicians and composers seem to eschew monetary compensation with the aesthetic value and the indie ethos, where a separation between the music and its exchange value is downplayed.

Unlike Adorno, Fonarow locates these threads in indie aesthetic practice in expressions of Christian ideology:

> But to imagine that religious ideology would not also be inscribed in spectorial positions is almost inconceivable when so many of our tacitly held assumptions about the nature of the world and our place in it have their foundations in religious philosophy. Perhaps this oversight is due to the fact that the religious foundations of Western thought are so ingrained that they are treated as utterly transparent by Western scholars. If anthropologists studying another culture ignored the religio-ideologic narratives that underlie social institutions, it would be considered a significant oversight. Yet in our own culture we are loathe to recognize or discuss them. The mind/body split that pervades Western scholarship is a fundamental dichotomy that emerges from a Western religious tradition. (7)

Fonarow recognizes the influence of ideology on the genre of indie and, more generally and rightly, criticizes scholars for not taking religion into account in considering the pervasive nature of Christian ideology in Western culture. As stated earlier in the study, both Platonic and Christian thought on passionate love and music have had an enormous influence on contemporary culture. In this way, both passionate love and music are conceptualized as a means of achieving something "higher" and are, at the same time, always potential pathways to corruption. There are ties between Fonarow's theories of indie as expressing mainly Protestant Christian ideologies and ideas of Christian love. Indie artists' concern with the veracity of emotion and the purity of artistic practice make for a fascinating entanglement concerning passionate love, and that concern is what makes indie a particularly useful subject for the study of the amorous self, not because indie artists are themselves more loving, but because the value of the music is focused on the expression of "true" and "right" feeling. Though outside the scope of this work, the demands for "real" relationships and an eschewing of overly sexualized lyrics in favour of songs about friends and families and calls for greater care for each other make for interesting possibilities, especially as relates to the music of Arcade Fire.

In an effort to understand the creation of a relationship between artists and audience members, and the construction of a kind of contract which audience members need to feel they are receiving an authentic experience instead of a music product, Fonarow advances a theory of "beingness." She describes "beingness" as

> the word I use to describe an emotional presence viewed by participants as authentic. It is a concept that represents the antithesis of a performance in which the performer and the part he plays are seen to be separate and distinct from one another. . . . There are several ways that beingness is conveyed in indie performance genre: (1) a lack of

> stress on virtuosity; (2) a visual strategy where performers do not register the visual gaze of audience members; (3) a restraint on commentary during performance, suggesting a self-awareness and an intellectual distance from the unfolding event; and (4) an avoidance of the performance postures of other genres, particularly mainstream rock. (192)

Indie performers use a variety of markers and performance techniques to convey a particular kind of emotional presence. While Fonarow's theory of "beingness" is attractive, as is as her recognition of the continuation of the Western mind/body binary that seems to permeate indie, her identification of specific performance practices which are intended to invoke authenticity do not hold across all indie musics. Furthermore, this checklist of indie markers focuses purely on the experience of live performance, and her concept of beingness does not extend or comment on the music itself. However, it is possible to extend this thinking to the ways musical or semantic structures are used within the genre to signal emotional presence. Emotional presence has a direct relationship with the ability to convey the sense of "right" feeling and passionate love.

As Fonarow point outs, indie artists use performance techniques to mark off a distinct space from mainstream rock and convey a sense of authenticity. However, as stated earlier in this section, musical techniques are also used, for example, the deliberate use of lo-fi sounds, as well as highlighting sounds such as key clicks in the mix, works to signal the performance on physical instruments rather than the use of electronically engineered sound. A deliberately rough similarly marks off an oppositional space against the traditionally "clean" sounds of pop and rock. Hibbett suggests these techniques reveal the aesthetic value placed on authenticity in indie. Ironically, indie music is frequently just as highly engineered as mainstream pop and is manufactured to sound as if it is not. Hibbett writes:

> when one hears the crude "makings" of the song—the hiss, the pressing of buttons, technical glitches, distortion—one comes to trust it as both honest and real, or to read in its imperfections a kind of blue-collar integrity. In the strangest of ironies, the most direct evidence of production connotes its absence, and a claim for artistic distinction is forwarded through an aesthetic of working-class deprivation. (62)

Like live performances built around deliberate techniques to shift away from the mainstream pop show, indie music is deliberately marked off from mainstream pop music in the way it is engineered. Fonarow points to the connection between the use of cliché and the inauthentic. In indie, authenticity and realness of expression are linked to sound. Frequently this is the use of techniques to sound as if it's not highly produced, or the shifting of expectations. While indie originally had a DIY sound and appearance because it was, in fact, hand-manufactured, the traces of these roots and the values they connote are reified through performance practice, production techniques and aesthetics, even as music is produced in a heavily industrialized fashion.

For Hesmondhalgh and Fonarow, the lack of "aura" and "authenticity" of popular music is redeemed in indie.[43] Hesmondhalgh and Fonarow both suggest operating outside the confines of the pop-music machine gives artists the ability to be freer, more authentic, and, in matters related to emotion, "better." The idea that indie can both better express true emotion and is more

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[43] There are heavy allusions to Benjamin's "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in the way value is expressed in indie music. Authenticity and value are wrapped up with technology and reproduction. Unlike with fine art, it is harder to pin down an aura-filled original work, but the concept of a more artistic and original form is signalled by references to embodied performance. Recording breath reminds the listener that a human body and not a machine is present. It is also interesting to consider the use of older, analogue technologies such as older, nondigital soundboards, pressing recordings to vinyl, and the use of acoustic instruments as deliberate mechanisms to resist mechanization and the retention of "aura."

"true" than other forms of popular music drives the indie aesthetic. Fonarow writes: "Indie utilizes performance conventions that present performers as wholly involved in a singular unfolding event. Idiosyncrasies of live performance are considered a contribution to rather than a detraction from a show These are indie's conventions to suggest to audiences that what they are seeing is real" (195). Audiences wish to believe what they are seeing and hearing is "real," however, indie makes this claim central to its performing conventions and recording techniques. As was discussed in the first chapter of this study, Cave and Proust both charge music with the capacity to carry and express emotion. The differences between other forms of popular music and indie lie in the use of performance and stylistic conventions and techniques to signal authenticity and veracity. This does not make indie music more emotional or authentic than other forms of music, but rather these concepts are generic conventions. Artists working in this genre of music must work within the structures of the genre. For example, microphone techniques employed by artists such as Bon Iver deliberately infuse the sound with a DIY feel. The 2007 album *For Emma, Ever Ago* has a well-documented backstory and is touted as a "breakup" album written and recorded "alone" in a cabin in the woods (Lewis; Kelly). Other artists, including Arcade Fire, have followed a similar pathway to creating an aura of authenticity through recording in locations such as defunct churches, barns, and other evocative spaces. Furthermore, the use of timbres, instrumentation, and miking techniques evoke feelings, and sounds of intimacy meant to evoke a connection to emotion.

Concurrent to the aesthetic of authentic and "true" emotion is that of the "outsider." The outsider status is in keeping with the original punk roots of indie. Indie adheres to many additional genre conventions. For example, songs may be deemed too long for mainstream radio, may use unusual instruments and voicings, or may lack catchy lyrical content (or lyrical content

at all). Artists such as Animal Collective, Wolf Parade, and Destroyer are categorized as indie,[44] but their music seems less concerned with overt emotional content expressed by evoking intimacy and the kind of emotionalism or excess of feeling Fonarow writes about: “The goal in indie performance is to be in the moment rather than to think about the moment. To think about the moment is to fail. The goal of indie performance is to capture the ephemerality of emotion. The revelation of indie performance is to be in the present tense, to be emotion, to transcend distance and self-awareness, to make one moment real” (196). While Fonarow does provide a compelling argument about the means indie artists use to draw attention, she fails to recognize that it is likely the goal of any performer to ensure listeners be “in the present,” and to demand the attention of listeners. Indie artists focus on the sharing of a particular emotional space. Fonarow further asserts: “The art form of indie music asserts feeling over thinking, being in the moment over reflexivity, informality over formality, intimacy over distance, the decadent aesthete over the androgyne of manners. Indie valorises emotion as the wellspring of meaning” (196). The veracity of this statement and indie’s focus on emotion is reflected in pop culture’s pillorying of the image of the sensitive, hipster, indie musician. A *Billboard* article highlighting music parodies on the television program *Portlandia* summarizes one episode this way: “With guest stars J. Mascis and Dirty Projectors, *Portlandia* lovingly skewers the tendency of certain indie bands to get quieter and more esoteric with each passing year. Fittingly, the winning act is just a woman blowing on a row of feathers” (Flanagan et al.). *Portlandia’s* sketch of earnest musicians and fans and the absurdity of the non-sound of blowing feathers satirically points to the ways value is held and conveyed within indie music and linked to the performance of aesthetic value. Indie’s dual claims to both true emotion and authenticity of artistic intent drive

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[44] Music sites such as AllMusic.com categorize these bands under the “indie” genre category.

the aesthetic. Fonarow's claim that "the language of indie is the language of emotion, told in word and sound" (201) may be overwrought, but emotional expression is one of the hallmarks of the sound. Indie lends itself well to a discussion of love and sex in contemporary popular music.

Chapter 3.3 "They Left Before the Lights Came On": Indie Rock, Love, and Sex

I want to hold the hand inside you
I want to take the breath that's true
I look to you and I see nothing
I look to you to see the truth
(Mazzy Star)

They left before the lights came on
Because they didn't want to ruin
What it was that was brewing
Before they absolutely had to
(Arctic Monkeys)

This section of the chapter takes up issues related to sexuality, passionate love, and indie music. As outlined in the previous chapter, music's relationship to both love, sex, and desire long predates indie music. However, in the context of this discussion, it is crucial to broaden the focus from the previous section on indie's ties to authenticity and "truth" of emotion. It is also useful to briefly consider the ways rock music more generally has been linked to sexuality in the discourse of popular music studies.[45] There is no shortage of writers willing to take up the topic of sexuality and music (see, for instance, Fast; McClary; Powers; Walser; Whiteley). While sex is highly documented in scholarly and popular discourse on music, discussions of the connection between passionate love and music are more elusive. Discussions of passionate love are banished to women's magazines, movies with geeky male characters, and "top ten" lists of songs

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[45] The growth of rock music and of sexual content in popular music is complex, relating to issues such as the rise of youth culture in the postwar United States and in Britain and to deep and intricate issues related to race and appropriation. Most scholarly works on rock and popular music make some mention of issues related to sexuality. Scholarly discourse on pop and rock music and sexuality changes depending on the disciplinary lens. Discussions of sexuality are woven throughout Shuker's *Popular Music: The Key Concepts*, with lengthier discussions concentrated in entries on "Gender" and "Sexuality." Brackett draws points to the frictions between and connections between music genres and issues of class, race, gender, and sexuality in his entry on genre and meaning in *Popular Music Studies*.

appropriate for Valentine's day.[46] The thrilling boundary-pushing nature of sexual content and its connections to tropes of youth and freedom have led theorists and critics alike spend much energy writing about sex and contemporary popular music. Literature addressing the seemingly quieter and less controversial topic of passionate love and long-term relationships is much more challenging to find.

In the mid-90s along with the rise of "new musicology" came a raft of studies which sought to untangle the relationship between music and sex, with a particular focus on gender. Theorists such as Hesmondhalgh and Negus and Middleton (*Voicing*) frequently cite McClary's work as groundbreaking in its application of critical theory, especially psychoanalysis and feminist theory, in the context of musical analysis. She was one of the first theorists to use psychoanalysis in combination with traditional formal music analysis to question the construction of gender within the realm of classical music. The work opened the way for other theorists to follow and not only to focus on gender, performance, and sexuality, but to use critical theory within the discipline of musicology. Drawing on this work, and other methods from critical theory, theorists sought to challenge long-cherished "cock rock" narratives of popular music history (Fast; Walser; Middleton) and provide greater nuance to a body of literature which tended to focus on historical accounts or sociological methodologies. Fast turned to semiotics to illuminate the tight relationship between music and embodiment, citing performance and not only the music as the key to a full understanding of the links between the body as a sign and the

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[46] It is interesting to note such films as *High Fidelity* and *Pretty in Pink* seem to open an acceptable space for the mixing of rock and indie music and passionate love. The use of existing popular music, often in a diegetic setting, amplifies the pathos of the music-loving, lovelorn, outsider figure. Furthermore, the music is often represented as being "better" music than the music enjoyed by the masses, setting off that the beloved of the lovelorn figure is also "special" in their appreciation of the main character.

music. Middleton uses psychoanalysis to question the relationship between rock music and sexuality, finding a much more layered interplay between music and meaning than other studies that have focused on only the music itself or sociological studies focused on fan culture or production and circulation within culture. It is not a coincidence that these attempts to recall the body in critical discourse are also coupled with a focus on the music itself as an object of study. Over the last twenty years, theorists in musicology (Wood et al.; Gordon; Hawkins) and film studies (Silverman; Williams) have brought attention to the role of the body, sound, and gender in the performance, composition, and experience of music and film. However, there continues to be a disparity between the abundance of writing linking sex and music and the lack of available writing connecting music and love, including passionate love.

In considering the question stated in the title of *Why Music Matters*, Hesmondhalgh points to the imbalance in writing on sex as opposed to love as a problem, saying: "in considering such questions, as in life more generally, sex is made more complicated by love; and as in life there may be reasons to think that the complications love brings are sometimes good ones. One problem with overstating the relationship of music to sex is that this can cloud the importance of love" (57). Sexual expression in music and music culture has garnered more attention than passionate love. He further suggests other theorists such as Grossberg are too quick to charge rock music with transgressive qualities which cite rock as being concerned with sexual freedom, failing to recognize the ways rock music reinforces societal norms.[47] Pattison, like many other writers on rock, sets up a dialectic between rock as sexy, risky, and therefore

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[47] Rock is frequently conferred with a special status among popular musics as being particularly able to express sexuality—and freedom from the constraints of mainstream life. This mythology continues to have life in the rock canon, though there are those such as Whiteley and Coates, whose work reveals the ways rock is coded as being masculine and the ways women's roles and positions are typically subjugated within this context.

"good" and other forms of mainstream music as not offensive, sexy (i.e., not vulgar), and therefore less expressive. He writes: "Its admirers want to make it appealing by making it respectable. The thing can't be done. Rock is appealing because it's vulgar, and an appreciation of it requires a defence of vulgarity. This defence is implicit in the Romanticism and pantheism that have been staples of refined culture for the last two hundred years" (v). In a talk at the 2009 Experience Music Project Pop Conference, Hesmondhalgh stated: "We need a more generically variegated and historicized sense of music's relations with sex and erotic love (including the history of ideas)." His *Why Music Matters* was intended to remedy this situation, and in this volume, Hesmondhalgh points out the continued discourse of rock as being more rebellious, and more capable of expressing sexuality and sexual release than other kinds of music, misses the ways this discourse of rebellion plays down the opposite role of rock, the ways rock music is related to the mundane everyday experience of human culture, including long-term relationships. Hesmondhalgh states: "What we need is a conception of the ordinary pleasures of music in relation to sex and love" (7). When it comes to indie rock, the usual trope of sex and rock seems an uncomfortable fit. Indie's heady mix of emotion, outsider status and an ethos of authenticity make for a fraught and complex web where a distancing from mainstream rock and pop has also required a distancing from sex. While there may not be a direct causal link between the eschewing of highly sexual content and an increase in content related to passionate love, indie rock does demonstrate a concern with veracity, the communication of "meaningful" connection between lovers, with the fostering of long-term relationships[48] rather than with highly explicit sexual content that is present in mainstream rock and pop music.

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[48] This is not to suggest that these themes are completely absent from mainstream rock music; indeed, explicit sexual content was largely absent in the music of the 1950s and early 1960s.

The focus of academic and popular discourse on sex and music versus the emotion of love and music exposes a deep tension within the study of music. Frith is one of a handful of theorists to acknowledge passionate love has an essential place within everyday life. Writing on rock and passionate love, Frith suggests love songs work to create “truth” in love relationships. Frith states: “The problem of romantic ideology is not that it is false to life, but that it is the ‘truth’ against which people measure their desires. And love and sex songs (the 60s legacy) are as important in this context as love and marriage songs” (*Music* 159). For Frith, as for Lacan and Luhmann with cultural objects more generally, the ideology promulgated by popular music becomes “truth” and is formative for the way passionate love is practiced and understood in Western society. Writing on popular music more generally, Frith comments: “The writers of these contemporary love songs don’t believe that if the restraints and regulations of romantic love were thrown off the natural sexual juices would somehow just flow. Their love problem is not the gap between fantasy and reality but between fantasy and fantasy—sex has to be shrouded in language to make it possible” (160). The problem with love and sex in music is one of language and systems of control.

Hesmondhalgh’s slim volume *Why Music Matters* attempts to address a gap in the literature on music, love, and sex.[49] He differentiates his approach to love, sex, and music, from that of “critical musicology’s appropriation of post-structuralist theory, and new-Deluezean ideas

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However, this content was still present in the music of figures such as Elvis Presley. In the current age, it could be that “rock” is no longer dominant in the popular music landscape. Other genres, such as RnB and hip hop, could have greater impact.

[49] Most of this discussion is an exposition of the history of popular music genres and idioms such rock, dance and metal. Additionally he focuses only on ideas of sexual love, despite what seems like a desire to move the conversation into the less travelled area of passionate love and even marriage. Hesmondhalgh’s call to engage with the history of the idea of love this volume falls short, with a mere twenty-four pages devoted to “love and sex.”

of rock as a music of bodily desire" (7), choosing a sociological focus instead on ". . . the affective experiences that music can help generate in ordinary life" and the ways attachment becomes institutionalized through ". . . changing processes of courtship, romance, and marriage" (7). Hesmondhalgh effectively points to the seeming tendency of academic discourse to deny the importance of love in the day-to-day lives of human subjects. Hesmondhalgh has criticized previous work by musicologists like McClary and Middleton as being underpinned by a "limited view of subjectivity" that is too caught up with Lacanian ideas such as "lack" and is ultimately overly negative (*Body*). Hesmondhalgh seeks to reinstate the human to discourse on desire in music, recognizing music is enjoyable as an experience. As stated in the previous chapter, Hesmondhalgh engages with popular music theorists as well as philosophers such as Nussbaum as part of this project in order to demonstrate the ways music is involved in human fulfillment and well-being. Again, the idea of "flourishing" is an attempt to pull away from the posthuman stances articulated in the work of theorists of Lacan and Luhmann. There is a tension, then, between theorists who invest music with too much agency and ability to sit outside societal norms, and others who see music and humans bound in eternal deadlocks.

Philosophers and theorists have challenged the notion that sexual relationships drive contemporary society. Our sense of selves is, in part, connected to either having or not having passionate love. Luhmann, as stated in the previous chapter, cites passionate love, not sex, as a key social system. May, writing on Nietzsche's assertion that there haven't been any new gods for two thousand years, suggests:

> Human love, now even more than then, is widely tasked with achieving what once only divine love was thought capable of: to be our ultimate source of meaning and happiness, and of power over suffering and disappointment. Not as the rarest

> exceptions but as a possibility open to practically all who have faith in it; not as the result of its being infused into us by a creator-God or after long and disciplined training, but as a spontaneous and intuitive power with which, to some degree, we are all endowed. (1)

Love occupies a prominent role in our conceptualizations of ourselves in society. Thus, our place in society is, at least in part, understood through our love relationships.[50] Singer suggests:

> The philosophy of love originates with erotic idealizations. . . . To the Platonist all realistic attempts to define eros as the child of earthly rather than heavenly Aphrodite can only misread its spiritual intent. To the traditional realist all love must be reducible to some organic condition—e.g., direct or aim-inhibited sexuality. Yet both extremes idealize the fact of human desire. (147)

Thus, while erotic desire seems to dominate the discourse of popular music, the everyday desire for romantic connection and authentic communion with another person is at least equally, if not more, powerful.

A more fulsome understanding of how and why music means within human culture requires a recognition of the interplay between subjects and sound within culture. Music is not separate from bodies and desire is not only sexual. Music can arouse our desire, plays with these desires, but keeps them at a safe distance. As stated in the previous chapters, music has a role in entraining us to the practices of passionate love. In discussing ways to think about emotion and

[50] In his lecture on Luhmann, Dwyer suggested that the age of passionate love may be passing or in transition and shifting to an environment where one's career success usurps what was the place of passionate love. As he suggests, it could be that people are more inclined to choose a job over a partner.

music, Hesmondhalgh states: "Higgins outlines three predominant historical Western explanations of the relationship between music and emotion: that music imitates or represents emotions, that it arouses them, and that it expresses them (the first two of these have often overlapped and interacted)" (*Why* 12). These explanations align with the ways Proust discusses music's relationship to the emotions of passionate love. Proust cites the composer's use of the "immeasurable keyboard" to arouse and express feeling. For Luhmann, representations of emotion are collapsed into the concept of semantic devices. These semantic devices are the structures which allow symbolic media, such as music, to communicate emotion structures.

Passionate love, as discussed in the previous chapter, requires both emotions, as an exchange between subjects, as well as a belief in the authenticity of this exchange. Amorous subjects must engage in interpersonal interpenetration, must believe in a union of souls and feel there is a shared space of true emotion. Indie's reliance on emotion and authenticity as the primary markers of exchange value within the genre make it a particularly charged space in reference to passionate love. But, as with the promise of genuine emotion in indie, is it a trick of performance? The disavowal of anything overly refined or "produced" reinforces the idea that what is being conveyed is truer than pop music. For Fonarow, "Verisimilitude in musical performance is a trick. The performance that strives for authenticity will always be a traveling salesman from Kansas. It will have something to hide, because it is not the thing itself" (180).

At the same time, indie's investment in emotion and authenticity make it particularly challenging to express sexuality. It is potentially more challenging to express "realness" of emotion and intent concerning sex. Fonarow writes:

> The decay of emotional signification in the indie gig makes one question not only the veracity of emotions that are felt in the gig setting but the reliability of emotions in

> general. Indie, whose language is the language of emotion, offers a ritual event in which participation first validates the veracity and power of emotion but, over time, ultimately undermines this very assertion. If emotions once made you believe the truth to be otherwise, emotions themselves appear dubious. Emotions appear to be the empty manipulators. You've been betrayed. (197)

Thus, indie as a genre and performance practice has internal tensions which make the structure of passionate love as a system rather than an emotion more visible. It is invested with appearing to be authentic and at the same time, there are breakage points at the lines between passionate love and sexuality. This will be discussed in more detail through the case study chapters.

The "whole" story of rock music and sexuality is challenging to express through any one methodology or narrative. Specific genres of popular music, such as hip hop, and rock, like heavy metal, have their own particular expressions of sexuality which deliberately mark themselves off from other genres. Biographical and historical accounts related to particular artists or bands may make reference to the groupie culture or "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" lifestyles, and include strictly historical accounts. Other accounts focus on discussions of moral panics in the white population concerning the sexuality displayed by artists such as Elvis and later the Rolling Stones, without further reflection on a more nuanced discussion. On questions of love, even in relation to sex, theorists are almost silent. What has been less discussed in both academia and the popular press is the relationship between passionate love and rock.

Chapter 3.4 Indie Scenes

Local scenes are integral to the existence of particular kinds of music; therefore, before moving into a discussion of the Arcade Fire music group, it is essential to discuss the formative role scenes have in the development of music and thus identity. Furthermore, the connection between an artist and a scene helps to create a sense of authenticity and connection. As discussed in the previous section, the generic conventions of indie music draw particularly heavy connections between the idea of "real" feeling and "truth" in performance. The identification of a scene, either physical or virtual, is vital. Born writes: "Music has a formative role in the construction, negotiation and transformation of sociocultural identities" (qtd in Hesmondhalgh, "Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes?" 34). However, it is necessary to briefly untangle the idea of "scene" as the term has shifted along with methodological approaches to the study of local music-making. This section will outline some of the tensions around the idea of a "scene" and set out the concept of the scene in operation around the genre of "indie" generally and within the locality of Montreal in the 2000s. In this dissertation, the term "scene" is used as a means to identify the actors within a particular network of participants. This network is understood to function concerning a geographic area and/or in a virtual environment.

Most of the early academic work on the consumption of music in the everyday came out of the Birmingham school in England. This research took the form of a study of youth subcultures, and in particular punk rock music. This early bend of popular music studies toward sociological methods has had a substantial impact on subsequent methodologies and research on popular music. These early studies of subcultures and small, local populations focused on image-based ideas and frequently lacked depth, mainly because they tended to ignore the music itself. Widely considered to be the first serious study of rock music, the work of Hebdige, mentioned at

the beginning of Chapter 3, focused on the punk scene. This work is the pattern used in much of the later work on rock music genres, and it was one of the first studies to study youth culture seriously. His method involved observation of the target subculture.

Critics of the idea of subcultures felt the parameters were too closed to reflect the circulation of culture accurately. Such studies didn't allow for movement in and out of a subculture. The conceptualization of music scenes became a way to focus on using methods from ethnography, such as participant interviews, in addition to more traditional methods of observation. Later sociologists and other researchers took issue with the characterization of music consumption along the lines of subcultures and scenes because it implies there is a single dominant culture. In their 2004 work on scenes, Bennett and Peterson point out that the concept of the scene in everyday usage has now taken on a particular currency in the academic sphere and become a popular method of analysis. They connect this focus on scenes as a rejection or shifts away from the idea of subcultures, though undoubtedly many academics, especially in the UK, are tied to this concept. Additionally, much of the work on subcultures and scenes is ethnography (Swiss et al.; Shuker; Bennett et al.; S. Cohen).

Other terms that have come in and out of currency in relation to the study of people gathering around particular kinds of music include "tribes," and many theorists drew on the concept of fields as developed by Bourdieu (A. Bennett 8). In "Subcultures, Scenes or Tribes?" Hesmondhalgh specifically criticizes Bennett's use of the term "tribes"[51] to replace the problematic term of scene, which in turn had replaced the problematic term of subculture.

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[51] Hemondhalgh's critique of the term "tribe" in this context refers only to its theoretical structure, not to the appropriate use of a term connected to Indigenous communities. However, the use of "tribe" in this context is largely considered offensive to Indigenous peoples in the North American context.

According to Bennett, “tribes” offered a “new way forward” in which a plurality of methods that recognize the variety of ways in which people interact with music and communities can be utilized. He puts particular a focus on genre. In “Consolidating Scenes,” Bennett gives a detailed review of the idea of scene within popular music in academic writing. However, despite the popularity of writing about subcultures, scenes, tribes, and fields, this methodology remains a contested way to divide what is in practice a network of interconnected threads rather than a patchwork of practices. The idea of a music scene implies an interplay between entities. A shortlist of these actors could include people, a locality or localities, dress, and music. Myriad local cultures interact with different genres. Localities include online spaces as well as physical spaces. In popular music studies, the theory of scenes offers an alternative to other approaches which ignore music within its context or which suggest popular music is “predigested” and intended to create and keep people passive. Using the concept of scenes for the study of popular music ensures listeners, consumers, and other actors are recognized as active participants with agency. Further, a scenes approach attempts to account for the multitude of ways music circulates in everyday life.

In this study, it is essential to recognize the ways an early grounding in sociology has coloured methodological approaches to popular music studies. For example, a first active area for the research of popular music scenes was the punk scene in the United Kingdom. It was an attractive initial area of study at least in part because members of the punk scenes typically had particularly obvious ways of expressing community membership. For example, members of the scene had a particular mode of dress. Dress allowed members to mark themselves as being a member of the group. As was discussed in the previous section on the origins of indie, members of the punk scene also set themselves apart by deliberately not participating in mainstream

culture, resulting in obvious markers such as DIY music production. Furthermore, for researchers, this activity seemed to disprove the "passive consumer" model promulgated by figures such as Adorno. It became a way to argue for the value of musics other than art music as an essential part of everyday life. These studies include that of Hebdige and later Thornton. In these studies, scenes are used as a means to demonstrate resistance to mainstream corporate culture and have a Marxist stance. Later studies on scenes recognized that there are myriad actors within these scenes, including the press. Thus, conceptualizing popular music, and music more generally, along the lines of a scene worked to recognize a much broader spectrum of elements within music consumption. In scene-based discourse, expression and community are given greater emphasis, particularly as they relate to space.

Another term that has come into some usage is "trans-local." This is a term denoting "widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle" (Bennett and Peterson 6). Kruse was one of the first academic writers to identify and write about indie rock music as a "scene." Her work is focused on the college rock community in the United States. As Bennett points out, Kruse's work is groundbreaking not only for identifying and discussing the specifics of the music scene, but for identifying it as "trans-local." These trans-local scenes move beyond geographic localities and involve the interaction of several local scenes. They are "affective communities that transcend the need for face-to-face interaction as a necessary requirement for membership" (Bennett and Peterson 9). These trans-local scenes might now be thought of as virtual scenes as online interaction has at least rivalled face-to-face interaction or even surpassed it. Hesmondhalgh ("Subcultures") points out that the use terms for a music scene is always problematic.

No one label sits comfortably when one is attempting to define group identity given the constantly shifting nature of a social entity. Shank, writing on the Austin scene promulgates the idea of a series of temporary identities: “spectators become fans, fans become musicians, musicians are always, already fans.” (131) Scenes are an effective means of conceptualizing and understanding the interrelationships between producers, artists, and musicians and provide a further layer in understanding the structures of music and the way music is created and circulated in culture. For the purposes of this study, it is useful to give a brief grounding of the cultural conditions which impacted the music of Arcade Fire.

Chapter 3.5 Montreal and Indie Scenes

The cultural milieus of Quebec and Montreal have had a significant influence on Arcade Fire's development and success. In an evocative piece written in 2015, Will Straw remarks on the way the idea of music scenes has persisted:

> Scenes, I suggest, might be seen as all of the following: as *collectivities* marked by some form of proximity; as *spaces of assembly* engaged in pulling together the varieties of cultural phenomena; as *workplaces* engaged (explicitly or implicitly) in the transformation of materials; as *ethical worlds* shaped by the working out and maintenance of behavioural protocols; as *spaces of traversal and preservation* through which cultural energies and practices pass at particular speeds and as *spaces of mediation* which regulate the visibility and invisibility of cultural life and the extent of its intelligibility to others. ("Some" 477)

This view of scenes calls for a more variegated understanding of scenes, one which calls for an understanding of collectivities of all kinds. For the purposes of this study, it is useful to take a brief look at some of the conditions present in Canada and Montreal to gain an understanding of the ways national and local government as well as geographic locations contributed to music production.

Canada has always been challenged by many factors when it comes to the music industry. For example, in comparison to the United States, Canada has a small population spread out over a large geographic area, making practicalities such as touring and distribution challenging. Furthermore, Canada's smaller population means its market is much smaller than the American market. Factors such as these have involved the development of Canadian content rules intended to protect Canadian cultural production. There is little academic research on the specific

workings of the Canadian music industry or local Canadian scenes in comparison to research on popular music in the USA and the UK. Will Straw has contributed to discussions on popular music scenes in Canada in some different facets, including a focus on urban localities such as Montreal and Toronto ("Cultural Scenes"). Scott Henderson has written on the music industry and local indie scenes in Canada, specifically targeting the Hamilton and Toronto scenes. Historically focused academic work on scenes includes Stuart Henderson's work on the Yorkville scene in Toronto.

From the mid-2000s forward there was a significant shift in the indie rock scene and the rise of a new kind of indie music. In these scenes a sense of collectively came to the fore, and a wider variety of instruments and sounds were used in comparison to other mainstream rock and the alternative music scene. Indie groups achieved a measure of commercial success and found a broader market for their music. The music coming out of Toronto and Montreal was at the forefront of this movement. It is uncertain whether this music has a "Canadian sound," or even a regional sound, but what does seem sure is that productive local scenes achieved a certain level of cohesion regarding cooperation and collaboration among musicians, as well as aesthetic approach. Henderson points out:

> The band Stars formed in Toronto, but then moved to New York before returning to Canada to take up residence in Montreal. Arcade Fire is fronted by a transplanted Texan and a Haitian resident of Montreal. Metric includes both Canadian and American members, and the band has been resident in both the US and Canada, while Broken Social Scene is a loose, collaborative group with a constantly evolving membership. Still, all of these bands are readily identified as part of the Canadian "scene" as it is popularly constructed. (313)

Thus, it is possible to see the development of an indie scene in Toronto and Montreal in the early 2000s as something particularly Canadian, and tied to regional and urban scenes of those cities. Cummins-Russell and Rantisi suggest "The proximity of industry actors within a cluster facilitates communication, reduces transaction costs, and creates localized pools of workers with specialized skills, which benefits cultural firms with high turnover rates" (81). The network of actors, including bookers, promoters, and even the kind and availability of performance and rehearsal space supports the scene where a certain type of cultural production can emerge.

The increased activity coming out of Toronto and Montreal with bands like Broken Social Scene in Toronto and Stars and Arcade Fire in Montreal was at the forefront of a "breakout" (Hamilton; Fricke ,"Unstoppable Ambition"; Bray). The success of these bands appeared to signal a particular strength in the Canadian environment to support indie music. However, this strength may, at least partly, be attributable to the high degree of government regulation and protection of the Canadian music and radio industry. Henderson, writing on the success of bands such as Arcade Fire and Stars, suggests, "Ultimately it is important that we recognize that this music is Canadian, and part of a scene, and it is a scene that has been successful as a result of thirty-five years of policy" (313). Thus, in the case of indie rock and Montreal, myriad factors, including government policy, came to provide the conditions under which the Arcade Fire band were able to come together and gain enough support to enable their big break. A clustering of conditions within the geographic area enabled musicians to interact, operate, and produce specific forms of the music that did seem different from other music being produced elsewhere at the time (Cummins-Russell and Rantisi; Hamilton; Noel; Catchlove; Bedford).

Cummins-Russell and Rantisi suggest there were many very particular factors in Montreal which enabled the development of the local indie scene, and they cite economic factors as the most critical condition for the support and development of the scene. Economic and local municipal issues created conditions which allowed for a particular form of creative expression. For example, the availability of affordable performance and rehearsal spaces, as well as affordable housing near these spaces, enabled musicians to live and work within the urban core. Living, working, and performing within proximity allowed for musicians to more easily practice, meet, and perform. This clustering is more difficult in much more expensive centres such as Toronto and Vancouver, where musicians often live far away from rehearsal spaces.

Furthermore, Cummins-Russell and Rantisi cite a campaign by the local government to “clean up” Montreal as having a productive impact on the Montreal indie sound and scene. Municipal politicians perceived strip clubs and bars as problematic elements. They discouraged these businesses in the downtown core, leaving a shortage of traditional public performance spaces such as bars and clubs. Montreal musicians turned to the numerous warehouses and loft spaces as areas to hold live performances. These spaces were not only cheaper than bars and clubs, but lent themselves to non-traditional rock performances because the audience was typically on the same level as the performers, and a different, perhaps more casual and “avant” vibe.

The particular conditions in Montreal led to the development of many bands known as “art rock” or “avant rock” such as Godspeed You! Black Emperor, a band known for very long, drone-infused tracks. Bands such as Arcade Fire, Stars, Wolf Parade, and others developed a sound based on fuzzy beats, feedback, and echoing vocals that may not have been entirely at home in a traditional bar setting. Noel’s 2012 Spin Magazine article on the Montreal indie scene

focused on the Mile End neighbourhood of Montreal. In his interview article with Claire Boucher, better known as Grimes, Noel connects the heavy use of lofts as performance spaces to the success of indie acts. Noel states:

> The pulsing heart of Montreal's loft scene is crammed into a three-block radius, where decades earlier a textile industry boomed. A few members of Godspeed You! Black Emperor and Arcade Fire—the scene's forebears—still call the area home, and an inordinate number of musicians are joining them: Eccentric crooner Mac DeMarco (formerly known as Makeout Videotapes); singer-songwriter Sean Nicholas Savage; and Braids, purveyors of ethereal dreamwave, live on the cheap, attend hastily arranged shows in scrappy venues, and glean inspiration for sounds steeped in a common DIY-pop aesthetic. "Everything I know about music I learned from my friends in the Montreal scene," Boucher says. "Every piece of equipment I use, I use because somebody there showed me how."

Former Montreal music promoter Cowan asserts, "The loft scene is the foundation of the music scene. Any show that happened at Lab Synthèse, our friends would have to play. That grew a community. It was a really cool way to curate a scene" (qtd. in Noel). In an article on the early years of Arcade Fire, Nelles writes:

> At the time, Montreal was not quite the indie rock mecca we know today. It had a rich history—jazz in the '60s, punk in the '70s, new wave in the '80s—but around 2001, widespread pay-to-play policies discouraged live music in bars, and the city's best-known band was the sombre, instrumental Godspeed You! Black Emperor. Over the next several years, as Arcade Fire performed in lofts and galleries, supported by a rotating cast of local musicians, it gained a reputation as a formidable live act.

The lack of availability of bars as performance spaces and the resulting use of lofts and galleries strongly influenced the development of the live performance styles and the music of the Montreal bands. The tight proximity of musicians in the community enabled rotating casts and larger-scale groups. All of these factors, in turn, influenced the kind of music that could be made, perhaps too allowing for a much larger mixing of musicians. McGill University in Montreal, where many Arcade Fire members were students, is widely known for its large music school. McGill is near Concordia University. These universities connect to the numerous scenes within Montreal, including classical, jazz, contemporary art, and experimental music scenes.

The non-traditional performances spaces used in Montreal reduced the gap between performers and audience, both literally and figuratively, making for an intimate and visceral performance. These performances invited participation on the part of the audience, as they became active members of the performance. Arcade Fire adopted a style of performance which involved incorporating the whole room with elaborate, thematic sets and direct interaction with the audience. Win Butler continues to demand a strong sense of participation even after Arcade Fire has moved from the small loft spaces to large arenas and outdoor festival settings. In an interview in *Maclean's* magazine with Michael Barclay, Win Butler states:

> no matter what the show, there are a lot of rules as to how it works: here's the stage, here's the band. It felt very formulaic to me. There were a lot of rules of engagement. Even in a punk DIY venue there were still a lot of unspoken rules. When I got into a [performance] space, I always wanted to find a way to cross the line. I think we're still interested in finding ways of doing that.

> Arcade Fire's interest in pushing the boundaries of the traditional rock show, especially when it comes to engaging with the audience, has always been part of the band's practice.[52]

Other factors enabled the indie music scene to flourish in Montreal at that time. The strict Canadian content rules regulated by the federal government required specific percentages of Canadian content played on the radio. These content regulations have traditionally favoured and protected the development of Canadian music, musicians, and the music industry. The Canadian content rules, along with federal, provincial, and municipal grants and other supports available to cultural organizations set up pre-existing conditions to favour Canadian music. Cummins-Russell and Rantisi suggest the development of the indie scene in Montreal was further incubated through the support and direct interventions in funding for the arts by the Quebec government. The Quebec government's strong support for arts and culture is connected to its long-standing support and protection of Francophone culture. Numerous policies meant to protect Quebec culture are enacted and enforced.

Montreal is recognized to be more cosmopolitan and has a larger arts scene, for some of the reasons cited above. While Quebec is overwhelmingly a Francophone province, Montreal is bilingual. Cummins-Russell and Rantisi suggest this mix of languages also set up unique

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[52] In numerous live videos Win Butler can be seen to look visibly frustrated when the gap between the audience and the stage is too large and he is not getting the kind of connection to the audience he needs. In these moments, he will take action such getting off the stage and wading into the audience. He is quoted by Eells in *Rolling Stone* as saying "So we showed up at Montreux, which we didn't realize was in Switzerland. And it was the worst fucking audience we've ever played for. People were giving nothing. Just a black hole. So I started pushing. Before every song, I was like, 'and this is the last time we'll play this song in Switzerland!' Just trying to get a rise." Eells goes on to write: "Even "Wake Up," the triumphant, show-closing number that helped make them heroes to a generation of indie-rock fans, started out as what Butler has called a "fuck-you song"—it was meant to grab the audience by the throat and force them to pay attention."

conditions that may have played a role in making Montreal fertile ground for the development of an active indie scene. For example, they suggest "the presence of a large francophone population in Montreal and Quebec discourages the major labels from penetrating the market, allowing an independent scene and its associated organizations to flourish" (94). The more restrictive market allows for greater freedom and circulation for smaller labels and bands. Thus, the development of the indie rock music scene in Montreal and the band Arcade Fire are tied to many factors which include economic conditions, government policy, and the specific geography of the city. The aesthetic and performance style of the band is linked not only to the legacy of indie's roots in the punk scene and aesthetic, but also to specific conditions present in Montreal which allowed for the band to access a particular pool of musicians, non-traditional performance spaces, and economic support for arts activities.

Chapter 4.1 Arcade Fire 2001-12

If there's no music in heaven then what's it for?
(Arcade Fire, "Here Comes the Night Time")

There are many factors which enable Arcade Fire to function as a useful model or pattern of indie music: the band both adheres to and deviates from perceived models for both the genre of indie rock and for love songs. These tensions call attention to the scaffolding in the construction of meaning and subjectivity within indie rock in the context of passionate love in Western culture. Furthermore, the thematic approach taken with the development of their albums, with an almost concept album–like approach, makes for interesting musical and industry frictions. The band has a specific and well-documented approach to composition and recording. Their music exhibits large, sprawling tracks and unusual instrumentation. Finally, how they have chosen to tackle the business of music-making through production and artistic control, despite achieving wide-ranging "success" through music sales and distribution channels, sets them apart from both mainstream music and the indie rock scene. The music and artistic practices of Arcade Fire are a means to demonstrate how human relations and ideals of passionate love are communicated and create a communicative network. Finally, the band has achieved a great deal of critical and commercial success, more than most other indie acts.[53]

Early History

Arcade Fire was founded by Win Butler in 2001 and is jointly headed by Win Butler on guitar and vocals; and Régine Chassagne on vocals, keyboards and additional instruments. Current regular members of the band include Win's brother Will Butler on guitar, bass, and keyboards; Richard Reed Parry on guitar; Tim Kingsbury on bass; and Jeremy Gara on drums. Sarah

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[53] Despite their commercial success and critical acclaim, there is very little written about the band in the academic field and very little substantive work in the popular press.

Neufeld, violin, was a long-serving member of the band, first performing on the band's debut album in 2004 and then joining in a full-time capacity in 2007. She left the band in 2011 but continues to play with the group. Owen Pallett, violinist and solo artist, is a frequent collaborator, co-writing music, creating orchestrations, and frequently performing on the violin in shows and on albums. Numerous additional performers play with the band on specific albums and tours. All Arcade Fire members are multi-instrumentalists, and there is a certain level of fluidity on band member's roles in performance. Each has core positions, but all members of the band contribute vocals and other instruments as needed. The band's flexibility and openness of music-making practices draws on individual member's experiences and musical training, as well as formal training in literature and other fine art forms.

While Win Butler and Chassagne are responsible for lead vocals, all members provide backup vocals. Win Bulter, Parry, Kingsbury, and Gara are relatively stable in their instrumental roles. The flexible, multi-instrumental approach the band brings to music-making is one of the characteristics that has set them apart from many other indie rock groups and has given them a reputation as skilful and accomplished musical artists. The sharing and trading of roles have also given rise to a reputation as a co-operative or more democratically oriented group. However, there is some tension here as to the group's dynamics and the idea of leadership, with Win Bulter and Chassagne considered to be the band's leaders.[54] Despite this, all regular members get equal writing credits. Moreover, it is clear, based on interviews and the sound of the music, that even

[54] There is a tension between the appearance of a co-operative and the actual workings of the band. For example, in an interview with Darcy Frey, Parry stated "There's also a genuine lack of egotism in this band that serves us well; people get out of the way of an idea that's working. So it is an open democracy and a creative space. But at the end of the day, Win is very much the leader of this band—because of his strong personality, and the fact that he was founder and writes most of the songs. Win is King and Régine is Queen, and we all figure out the rest."

though Win Butler or Chassagne may contribute the kernel of an idea about a song, all members contribute to the working through of the composition. As of this writing, the Arcade Fire has released five full-length albums: *Funeral*, 2004; *Neon Bible*, 2006; *Suburbs*, 2010; *Reflektor*, 2013; and *Everything Now,* 2017. The first four albums were released on the independent Merge label, while *Everything Now* was released through Sonovox. In addition to full-length albums, Arcade Fire has released two EPs and several songs on soundtrack albums and compilations. This study examines selected material from 2004 to 2013.

Win Butler and his younger brother, Will, were raised in a suburban town outside of Houston, Texas. Their father, Edwin Farnham Butler II, is a geologist working in the oil industry. Their mother, Liza Rey, performed on her parent's television program before she was married and is a harpist and singer who played on several tracks on the *Funeral* album. Her father, Alvino Rey (born Alvin McBurney), was a swing bandleader and an influential guitarist known as the inventor of the pedal steel guitar. Both Liza Rey and Alvino Rey has had a substantial impact on the Butlers. Win and Will Butler both attended the storied, elite prep school Exeter in New Hampshire (Gatehouse "Arcade Fire (Profile)"). Win later attended Sarah Lawrence College, starting undergraduate studies in photography. He left after one year. In 2000, Win moved to Montreal from Boston with his friend and bandmate Josh Deu as Deu was beginning studies at Concordia University. Butler took up studies toward a degree in religion at McGill University, a degree he received in 2004 ("The Arcade Fire Is Red Hot"). According to his accounts, Butler was always interested in music. He lists his early influences as bands such as the Talking Heads, the Cure and other alternative acts of the early 1990s. While at Exeter, Butler was in his first band and he continued to play in bands after he graduated from high school

(Gatehouse "Arcade Fire (Profile)"). It was during his studies at McGill that he met Chassagne and together they formed the band Arcade Fire.

Régine Chassagne was born in a suburb of Montreal to parents who fled Haiti in the 1960s during the dictatorship of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier. Chassagne is a Francophone (Lynskey). Many Arcade Fire songs which have lyrics in French and are sung by Chassagne. Her Haitian roots have been enormously influential on the band. Several songs contain overt lyrical content and references to Haiti, such as "Haiti," and the entire *Reflector* album, which was directly influenced by the time the band spent in Haiti. Haitian drummers perform on *Reflector*, and musical styles and beats from Haiti are adapted and used on the album. The group has provided ongoing support to Haitian charities such as Partners in Health (Gatehouse "Arcade Fire (Profile)"). Chassagne's mother passed away when Chassagne was young (Chassagne). Chassagne did not study music formally but has performed music in various capacities and a multitude of genres, including jazz and Medieval recorder (Gatehouse "Arcade Fire (Profile)"). She obtained a bachelor's degree in communication studies at Montreal's Concordia University. She later went on to McGill University, where she began studies in the vocal jazz program but did not finish ("The Arcade Fire Is Red Hot"). She is a singer and multi-instrumentalist, typically performing on keyboards, accordion, hurdy-gurdy, and vocals in Arcade Fire. Before joining Arcade Fire, she was a member of a group who played in a Medieval music ensemble. She gigged around Montreal, frequently singing jazz while accompanying herself on the keyboard. Win Bulter met Chassagne while she was singing at an art opening, and the two subsequently formed both a romantic and artistic relationship. Chassagne joined the first iteration of Arcade Fire in 2001 (Gatehouse "Arcade Fire (Profile)").

Richard Reed Parry comes from a musically active family. He was born in Ottawa, Ontario, and grew up in Toronto. His parents were members of the folk music scene in Toronto and part of the Fiddler's Green Collective, a well-known group that performed and promoted folk music in Toronto. Parry's father, David Parry, was a singer, guitarist, and Morris dancer, and his mother is a poet (Jack). Parry studied music at Concordia University, focusing on electroacoustic composition, but he also worked in many different genres, playing chiefly guitar and bass. He is a founder and producer of a group called the "Bell Orchestre." Parry was with Bell Orchestre, and another band called the New International Standards, when he joined Arcade Fire early in 2003. He is credited with significantly helping to overhaul the membership of Arcade Fire (Crossover Media). Bell Orchestre is an experimental group which included other Arcade Fire members Tim Kingsbury, on bass, and Sarah Neufeld, on violin. Other musicians performed on horn, trumpet, cello, and other instruments (Bell Orchestre). The music has been described as "chamber rock," or "art rock," and "post-rock" (Bell Orchestre). While seemingly genre-defying, its form and stylistic elements were typical of those coming from Montreal during a period that also sported acts such as God Speed You! Black Emperor and Destroyer. Parry's involvement with the electroacoustic and dance programs at Concordia provided a fertile environment for experimentation.

Bell Orchestre continued to have a life after Parry, Kingsbury, and Neufeld joined Arcade Fire. In describing the group in 2005 to *Now* reporter Sarah Liss, Parry stated: "We're all musical kids: Sarah was into Suzuki, Pietro played in the Ottawa Youth Orchestra, and I grew up inside Toronto's British folk and kids' folk scenes. My parents were friends with Eric Nagler and Fred Penner. We used to have moments with the contemporary dance stuff where everyone hit xylophones at once in interlocking patterns, à la Steve Reich. It was so Orff." This short

quotation is revealing. Parry was born into a musical scene, one that valued both improvisational styles and storytelling, as well as music-making for young children. Moreover, the music of Bell Orchestre displays the hallmarks of Parry's early experience as well as his later education in electroacoustic music-making practices, a practice often more aligned with dance and the fine arts than with classical music. It is not surprising that the group was in residence at the Banff Centre in 2005 given the Centre's focus on supporting all performing arts (Liss). Bell Orchestre's instrumental music is atmospheric and leans heavily on minimalist composers such as Steve Reich, making extensive use of grounds, repetition, and extended instrumental techniques. Parry, as well as Kingsbury and Neufeld, also uses these techniques in Arcade Fire. Since joining Arcade Fire, Parry has continued to work on other projects, included a composition entitled "Heart and Breath," which was recorded by the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony in 2014. Parry has continued to compose and collaborate on several more classically oriented pieces. He is an accomplished performer and composer, and while he often appears to be in the background against the larger personas of Will and Win Butler and Chassagne, Parry is a strong musical artist in his own right.

Tim Kingsbury is a native of Guelph, Ontario, and is a self-taught guitarist and bassist. He was an active member in the music ministries of his local church, making Christian rock music an early influence (Dunlevy). In high school, Kingsbury decided he wanted to play rock music and went to Montreal in 2001 to find performing opportunities (Halfnight). He played with several different bands including the New International Standards, a group that also included Richard Reed Parry and Jeremy Gara. It was this relationship that led him to join Arcade Fire when Parry suggested he replace outgoing member Brendan Reed. Like other members of Arcade Fire, Kingsbury retained relationships with other bands and artists, notably

playing bass and recording with the Montreal band Wolf Parade. In 2015 he launched a side project under the name "Sam Patch." This project includes Arcade Fire drummer Jeremy Gara and Toronto artist Basia Bulat (Rettig).

Will Butler, like Kingsbury, joined the band during the reformation period. He had recently graduated from Northwestern University and agreed to move to Montreal (Simpson). Like Win, Will studied at Exeter; however, his musical influences differ from his older sibling, with Will putting a greater emphasis on punk. Will's role within Arcade Fire has more fluidity than any of the other permanent members. He fills in on various instruments, typically keyboards, guitar, or bass for standard instruments, but he might also take up the tambourine or a side drum, and he frequently provides a kind of visual rather than musical interest (Berman). Will Butler didn't have deep connections to the artistic community before joining Arcade Fire and had little experience playing in bands in comparison to the other members. As with other members of the group, Will Butler performs in different capacities. He and Owen Pallet, a frequent Arcade Fire collaborator, wrote music for the Spike Jonze film *Her.* The music was nominated for a Grammy in 2013 (Simpson). Will Butler released solo albums in 2015 and 2016 (Berman).

Jeremy Gara is the long-time drummer for the band. As with Kingsbury and Parry, Gara was already active in the Montreal indie scene before joining Arcade Fire in 2004. Originally from Ottawa, Ontario, Gara moved to Montreal and played with bands like Kepler, and Weights and Measures, and was a frequent collaborator with Michael Feuerstack (Khanna; ISSUE Project Room). Gara frequently performs on other projects with band members Neufeld and Kingsbury as well as with other bands. In 2016, he released *Limn*, a solo electronic-focused album (O'Meara).

As cited previously, Arcade Fire had its beginnings in 2001 with a somewhat flexible lineup, initially including Win Butler and Josh Deu with Chassagne joining a short time later. The trio recorded demos and began playing gigs. The early iteration also included Tim Kyle, Alan Lavian, Dane Mills, Myles Broscoe, and Brendan Reed. This incarnation came to an end around the recording of the band's first EP, entitled *Arcade Fire*. Broscoe left during the recording, and the friction continued with an on-stage argument and "implosion" between Butler and Reed. Reed reportedly left the stage during a show, and most of the rest of the band quit after that, considering the group done. Parry and Kingsbury noted heavy tension among members during this early period, with the band split into two factions that were not speaking to each other during the recording of the EP. Deu left a short time later to focus more on his studies in the art program at Concordia University. Kingsbury, Gara, and Parry knew the band from the Montreal scene. They'd seen them play, played on the same lineups while in different groups. As Kingsbury noted in a 2015 interview in the *Montreal Gazette*, the New International Standards were breaking up, leaving Gara, Parry, and himself with space for a new project. Kingsbury said: "We played a few shows (on the same bill as) the old Arcade Fire lineup. . . . That's how we got into that circle. At the same time, Richie, Jeremy and my band broke up, and the original Arcade Fire lineup fell apart. We were all friends, so it made sense" (Dunlevy). After the departure of Kyle, Lavian, Mills, and Reed, the band began to achieve a level of stability. It began to settle into its current lineup with Butler, Chassagne, and Parry. Tim Kingsbury and Win's brother, Will, were added. This new formation continued to tour the band's EP, gaining more experience playing together, and was subsequently signed to the Merge label. Shortly afterwards they began to record their first full-length album, *Funeral*, in 2004.

Chapter 4.2 Albums

Sometimes storytelling is more important than the melody. Sometimes it's more important than the music. (Joseph and Arcade Fire).[55]

Arcade Fire's albums exhibit many characteristics which demonstrate an overarching cohesive approach to the act of making a record. During the period covered by this study, 2005 to 2012, Arcade Fire released four full-length studio albums: *Funeral* (2005), their first full-length album; *Neon Bible* (2007); *Suburbs* (2010); and *Reflektor* (2012). This section will provide a brief account of the production and history of each of the records, giving a short description on the relationship with the overarching theme of this study.

Despite being recorded in the era of iTunes and the single-track download, Arcade Fire's albums are each conceptualized as a whole, organized around a loose theme or several thematic threads. However, in an interview, Parry and Kingsbury pushed back against the idea that the thematic elements of the albums are predetermined before the band begins writing and recording. Instead, they claim the group writes a mass of songs and thematic elements start to emerge and solidify; as the writing and recording process unfolds, they find the songs and ideas that stick. This process means the band may jettison songs they consider to be good but that don't fit into the feel and thematic goals of the album as a whole. The band's approach to sequencing reveals their plan to record as a whole entity versus a collection of single tracks. In an interview with Patrick Doyle in *Rolling Stone* on the album, *Reflektor*, Will Butler emphasized the band's attention to sequencing.

> I think we spend more time sequencing records than most people spend making records. Our process takes forever to the point where it's crazy. We lived with the

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[55] This was heard from an off-camera band member in the 2015 film *The Reflektor Tapes.*

> songs for a while and just tried to figure out how they were gonna work together. The record is really long. We intended to make a short record and we ended up with 18 songs that were all between six and eight minutes and we were like, "Uh oh, I think we screwed up making a short record.

Sequencing, that is, determining which tracks are where on the album, is part of the creative process. Thus, the band takes particular care with the relationship between songs and the overall album structure.

For Arcade Fire, tracks are more like chapters within a novel than entries within an anthology. The order one listens to tracks on the album matters. Furthermore, attention has increasingly been paid not only to sequencing but to the connections between these tracks in the context of the album. There are deliberate fade-outs on some tracks, some tracks are elided with the next, and at times there are jarring, sharp contrasts between tracks. In a 2013 review of *Reflektor*, Chris DeVille suggests the time and space between tracks form a deliberate "connective tissue" which binds the album together. This use of sequencing and the connection between tracks is also essential in the other Arcade Fire albums. Each record represents a body of work and is intended to be listened to as a whole.

Every album, at least so far, is fundamentally different in stylistic approach. Arcade Fire's approach to releasing albums rather than a collection of tracks or singles has potentially affected the economic impact of their music. Writing on the production side of *The Suburbs*, Tingen points out that

> Although the band's three albums, *Funeral* (2004), *Neon Bible* (2007) and now *The Suburbs*, have been increasingly successful, their singles continue to barely register in the charts. The new album's title track and first single reached number 94 in

> Canada and didn't even chart in the UK and the US, while the UK single "We Used To Wait" only managed a measly 75th place. In short, Arcade Fire are that increasingly rare, old-fashioned thing: an album act.

Given that in the current digital music market singles tend to be the preferred method for purchasing music, the band's adhesion to the album as a deliberate artistic form represents the eschewing of commercial success in favour of artistic goals. The foregrounding of artistic intent or practices is connected to an indie ethos.

Funeral

Funeral is the Arcade Fire's first full-length release and includes the band's stabilized membership. The album was recorded and mixed in Montreal in 2003 and released in September 2004, with a UK release in early 2005. The music builds on the sound and performance techniques developed during the band's early days playing small clubs and lofts, and art classes and spaces. While very much a rock album, with a traditional rock lineup of guitar, drums, bass, and keyboard, the instrumentation is stretched to include accordion, violins, French horn, and an assortment of other "instruments" such as megaphone. These instrumental and stylistic choices are influenced by Montreal indie scene and Parry, Kingsbury, and Gara's connections and work with groups such as Bell Orchestre and the New International Standards. The personnel list on the album is extensive. Many of the other musicians listed on the album and involved in touring also play with these other bands.

On *Funeral* the music is highly layered, with large-scale soundscapes developed over the course of each song while keeping to a rock texture. Much has been made, at least on a surface level, of the album's title and thematic elements dealing with death, disillusionment, and loss. (Mardles; David Moore). Win Butler, Chassagne, and other band members have been transparent

in media interviews around the forces active during the album's production. The Butlers' grandfather Alvino Rey passed away in 2004 during the production of the album; Chassagne's grandmother and Parry's aunt, in 2003. At its release, the album garnered numerous highly positive reviews and recommendations from sources like the influential *Pitchfork* magazine (David Moore). Now, over ten years since its release, *Funeral* is considered to be one of the best albums of the early 2000s, making it onto lists such as Jay-Z's 2011 "500 Greatest Songs of All Time" as well as fifth on the Guardian's 2009 list of the top albums of the decade (Jay-Z; Mardles). As much as these kinds of lists can be problematic, there is a fair level of agreement among rock critics that *Funeral* is a well-crafted and original album. The album generated a great deal of interest and admiration from other musicians as well. Arcade Fire was invited to play with U2, David Bowie, and David Byrne and found themselves in demand to play major festivals. It was an impressive feat both for a Canadian-based band and for a debut album.

As the title indicates, thematic influences are related to a kind of angst in life in the early twenty-first century. David Moore suggests:

> These songs demonstrate a collective subliminal recognition of the powerful but oddly distanced pain that follows the death of an aging loved one. *Funeral* evokes sickness and death, but also understanding and renewal; childlike mystification, but also the impending coldness of maturity. The recurring motif of a non-specific "neighborhood" suggests the supportive bonds of family and community, but most of its lyrical imagery is overpoweringly desolate.

Thus, while as a whole, the album does not contend specifically with passionate love, ideas of love and alienation are woven through the entire collection. Themes related to passionate love are overwhelmingly located in adolescence. "Neighbourhood #1 (Tunnels)" tells the story of

secretly leaving the parental home to meet a lover, while “Crown of Love” is a song about the pain of love lost. David Moore suggests “that it’s so easy to embrace this album’s operatic proclamation of love and redemption speaks to the scope of The Arcade Fire’s vision. It’s taken perhaps too long for us to reach this point where an album is at last capable of completely and successfully restoring the tainted phrase ‘emotional’ to its true origin.” McMahon pinpoints the release of *Funeral* as a watershed moment for indie music and pop music more generally, charging it with the “death” of indie, but also suggesting “*Funeral* is a record that provided a soundtrack to a generation who wanted to feel something but didn’t know what, and barely remembered how.” Thus, *Funeral* is notable for not only its commercial and critical success but also for the ways Arcade Fire infused the music with emotion and authenticity.

Neon Bible

Arcade Fire’s much anticipated second album, *Neon Bible*, was released in 2007. The success of *Funeral* meant that the band was able to cover the recording costs outright and avoid potential pressure and influence from a record label (Morley). They stayed with Merge Records, and according to interviews with band members, there was the feeling that they wanted to take more time with song development and recording. The band purchased an old church in Montreal, where they created rehearsal and recording spaces as well as living and sleeping areas (Morley). While they didn’t do all their recording at the church, space played an important role both conceptually in regard to the lyrical content, but musically as well. The boomy, live acoustics played into song structures and sounds. The church’s pipe organ makes an appearance on the song “Intervention.”

Neon Bible, while still successful, didn’t engage critics in the same way as *Funeral*. Critics cite various reasons for this unease. One is that the subject matter was rather less intimate

in nature, with Deusner citing the album as outward-looking. He suggests the music is "Angry, embittered, and paranoid, but often generously empathetic in their points of view; they target the government, the church, the military, the entertainment industry, and even the basest instincts of the common man." With such grand aims, the album gets away from them, lacking in the tighter cohesion of *Funeral*, and of course it becomes more challenging to relate to on a personal level. Despite these challenges, Deusner gives the album a score of 8.4 out of 10. *Neon Bible* was a successful album, debuting on the Top 200 Billboard Chart and selling 92,0000 copies in the first week of sales (Partridge).

Many of the same musicians from the first album performed on this album, and the creative input, therefore, remained constant. The album retains a solid indie rock sound with prominent guitar work and little electronic music. Despite this, as stated in the paragraph above, there is a difference in the sound. For example, the use of pipe organ on tracks such as "Intervention" and "My Body Is a Cage" amplifies the music. In an obvious way, the sound itself is louder, and though this can be controlled in the "mix," the organ is nonetheless dominant. The pipe organ works on a symbolic level, referencing an instrument heavily used in the Christian church. It gives the album as a whole a much larger feel and is not an instrument for the bedroom or solitary pursuit; it is meant to penetrate a large space, to impress, and to lead congregational singing. As much as this is the case, there is a strong current of forward-looking traditional rock in songs such as "Keep the Car Running." In his review of the album, Deusner suggested the album has a debt to Bruce Springsteen, a notion perhaps confirmed by the fact that the band began to cover songs of Springsteen and Springsteen himself has been known to cover Arcade Fire's songs.

The title *Neon Bible* is derived from a work of fiction by John Kennedy Toole of the same title, and the tenor of the bulk of the songs is perhaps a twin action as an expression of alienation and a call to action through resistance. As the title and as the use of church organ suggest, Christian references as allusion run through the album, but to call this an album of Christian music would be overstating matters. The record is very much concerned with love, mortality, and meaning—not passionate love, but agape love. It is as if the band is asking people to wake up and pay attention to the world around them, poignantly referenced in a line in the track "Black Wave": "Nothing lasts forever / that's the way it's gonna be / there's a great black wave in the middle of the sea for me / for you / for me / it's always for you." However, in an article written for the tenth anniversary of *Neon Bible*, Brown wrote:

> The Arcade Fire are too smart to fall into the traps of a sophomore slump—but their self-consciousness about commodification never quite turns inward, to examine the privileges of their musical preoccupations with nostalgia, melodrama, or even optimism. To both their benefit and detriment, they consistently embody a commitment to the ideals (and purity) of the 21st century Big Problems rock band, one disillusioned with the potential of the counterpublic economies of '80s post-punk and alternative rock but still adherent to that era's ethics and skepticism toward mass mediation.

Brown's description of the *Neon Bible's* reliance on melodrama and rock angst is apt, as is his critique of Arcade Fire's place within indie as a descendant of punk's countercultural ideals. However, as Brown points out, Arcade Fire's lack of critical reflection on their place within class structures and the privilege they have make the criticisms of contemporary culture fall short.

The Suburbs

While *Neon Bible* did not garner much love from critics, their next release turned things around. The 2010 album *The Suburbs* gave the band real breakthrough mainstream success. It garnered numerous awards from the 2011 Polaris Prize to a Grammy and made multiple lists for top album of the year ("*The Suburbs*"). The band retains many of the same musicians as on *Funeral* and *Neon Bible*, but the overall instrumentation and sound are more in line with traditional rock. This rock sound was in part achieved through the way the album was recorded, with parts of the album recorded at the home of Butler and Chassagne, parts at the church recording studio, and parts in a traditional studio in New York. For example, as noted by Tingen:

> They wanted to record the album on one tape recorder with everyone in the room, so, for instance, people are clapping live into the overhead mics with the drums playing. They did not want the sonic elements to become too precise and too controlled, instead they wanted some wildness. It's a bit like listening to records by Sly Stone and the like, where you really can hear that they had fun while recording.

The fact that they funded the album meant that they were able to use the mechanisms and technologies they wanted to.

The band used of "outdated" technology for recording, as well as imposing specific restrictions on the way the album was mixed. They hired Craig Silvey to mix the album. In an interview with Paul Tingen in *SOS: Sound on Sound* magazine on mixing *The Suburbs* Silvey, stated:

> It was their third record, and given the success of the first two, they now had the time and the financial means to try anything and everything. They needed to do that, but they also knew that this could be a recipe for disaster. This was the main reason for putting limitations on the way they recorded, and then the rest of the time they

> worked out how to get around these limitations. It was also, for example, why we mixed at Frisson, rather than at Celine Dion's studio in Montreal, which has a 96-input SSL that would have, in many ways, been much easier, particularly as the Neve at Frisson doesn't have workable automation. Working at Celine Dion's studio would have given us more options, but we didn't need these, we needed restrictions.

The use of analogue recording and mixing technologies, and the heavy use of restrictions and limitations, was used by the band as a way to produce a tight, cohesive album.

The album reflects the experiences of Win and Will Butler's childhood, as well as those of other members of the band. *The Suburbs* centres on themes of the growing up in the suburbs. In an interview, Win Bulter noted the album is not a critique of the suburbs, but instead the songs on the album are like letters sent from the suburbs. Many of the songs deal with themes of growing up and the shifting period between childhood and adulthood as well as with a middle-class experience of North America (I. Cohen). As Mackay notes in her review of *Suburbs*: "You can tell a lot about someone by their touchstone words. Key nouns, cropping up again and again, leave trails like psychic footprints. Some words that recur and ring through the work of Arcade Fire: 'kids,' 'parents,' 'car,' 'town,' 'city,' 'house,' 'home.'" Words which reflect the central theme of the album, which is both nostalgic and disaffected in turn. These themes will be taken up in the case study section of this dissertation, but as with previous Arcade Fire albums, themes of passionate love are filtered through themes of nostalgia and family. Through the record, Arcade Fire constructed, or reconstructed, the world of the suburbs as experienced by a teenager. For many, *The Suburbs* remains the band's best album.

Reflektor

Reflektor, released in October 2013, came three years after the release of *The Suburbs*. Its release was preceded by a complex, multi-platform pre-release strategy which included traditional pre-release teasers such as "leaked" tracks, secret shows, and surprise appearances where the band performed as the Reflektors, as well as more unusual initiatives such as billboards, Instagram pics, and graffiti on buildings in Montreal. These teasers appeared for several weeks in advance of the official album release. When the full album was finally released, it hit the charts high, landing at the top of the Billboard chart in its first week. *Reflector* garnered some praise from critics, but the album did not meet with the kind of acclaim and adulation of either *Funeral* or *The Suburbs*, and reception in the popular press was mixed. While not necessarily cited as an all-out failure, a number of factors seem to have either mystified, maddened, or disappointed critics by turn and there are many theories about why this album doesn't entirely work.

Some critics cite issues such as it being too long, the music being stiff and boring, and the album not having the charm of the previous releases. Others continued to recognize the band for their craft and originality (Harvilla; Zoladz; Fricke; Empire). As much as *The Suburbs* was an album of a band having fun, *Reflektor* is that band now "working" at music, and the music is no longer fun, or so critic Carl Wilson suggests in this lengthy but evocative quotation:

> But that intimacy gets drowned out in the sawing on about screens and texting and Twitter, the current peeves of all professional scolds. Arcade Fire can't escape its nature as an Internet-era band, so the critique comes reflecting, deflecting, dejecting back. I know they know this. They know I know it. Knowing doesn't break the circuit. Spending three years using sophisticated recording technology to criticize technology is modern rock's most exhausted routine. These songs arrived to me, as

> they likely did to you, via download. Rather than something being lost in transmission, it's as if the stream accumulated too much flotsam en route—the flourishes, the nonissues. Meanwhile the distinct individuals we became attached to seem to pixelate and blur. It's not cheap but expensive irony. (Thirteen)

From stylistic and musical aspects to the traditional promotional campaign, *Reflektor* can be seen as less a departure from the "usual" and more in keeping with their philosophy and approach to music-making than it might otherwise seem. One point of agreement in the popular press is that it is a deliberate whole-hearted shift to something new in stylistic, musical, and lyrical content. Given this is the band's fourth full-length release, and they have a considerable back catalogue to act as a comparative, the change could be considered risky to one's profits and fan base; though, at the same time, to deliver something similar to previous work comes with its own risks. However, it could be this album proves Arcade Fire's determination to eschew industry norms and buck pressure to produce a "safe," commercially successful record.

Musically the album moves from a solid indie and rock aesthetic to one heavily weighted toward dance genres, making the connection to the indie sound seem much more tenuous if not fully broken. As outlined in the discussion of indie above, Arcade Fire continues to manifest many qualities of indie despite the arena shows and the electronics. LCD Soundsystem member James Murphy produced *Reflektor*. Arcade Fire had previously toured with LCD Soundsystem, and the sound of many of *Reflektor's* tracks seems to have absorbed their heavily electronic dance sound. The change to a heavy electronic sound is perhaps the change that many found most disruptive to their concept of the Arcade Fire's music. There was also a shift from the usual Arcade Fire line-up and instrumentation. The sounds of accordion and brass are reduced in favour of more electronically focused sounds and a Haitian rhythm and percussion group.

The band spent several months travelling, visiting Haiti, and living and recording music in Jamaica. They found the experience “transformative” (Pareles). However, in a *Rolling Stone* interview, Win Butler resisted Pareles’ suggestion that the music was an outright adoption or appropriation of traditional Haitian music forms such as rara. Butler did admit the sounds and rhythm of rara were adapted to songs such as “Into the Night.” The album represents an attempt by the band to experiment and shift to a different sound and to different modes of creating their music, from recording venues to the range of musicians appearing on the album. *Reflektor* was not as successful as *The Suburbs* in terms of critical acclaim or accolades. As was the case with other bands such as U2, a group they are often compared to, trying out new sounds and genres led to fewer album sales. However, given the indie ethos of the band, at least outwardly, Arcade Fire album sales and ticket sales seem to be less of a factor in the making of the album.

Of all of Arcade Fire’s albums, *Reflektor* deals most directly with themes of passionate love. The cover art of the double album features a Rodin sculpture of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and two of the tracks have titles and lyrical content directly referencing the story. These tracks are at the centre of the twelve tracks if one places them in order. Given their placement, they are gesturing to the myth as a central organizing force. This possibility is reinforced by Win’s comments cited earlier in this study on the importance of sequencing the album. Butler’s conceptualization of the records as “worlds” is telling. Like most students of Western art music, Chassagne, Win Butler, and other members of the band would no doubt be familiar with the Greek myth of Orpheus. The myth Win Butler refers to as a “love triangle” is favourite source material for many composers, including a very well known opera by Monteverdi, and would be familiar to students of both literature and religion. In the story, Orpheus is a musician and plays the lyre with such skill he can charm people and animals alike. Eurydice, his lover, is killed by a

snake. Orpheus is determined to find her and bring her back from the underworld. He can enter the underworld by charming Hades, the gatekeeper to the underworld, by playing his lyre. Orpheus is permitted to bring Eurydice back, but he is told he must not turn around to look at her and Eurydice cannot speak. As they travel through the underworld, Orpheus becomes anxious and impatient as he begins to believe Eurydice is not behind him. Just before they have reached the gates, Orpheus turns around, confirming that Eurydice was in fact behind him, and she fades back into the underworld. They are lost to each other forever.

The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice acts as a centrepiece in a multifaceted thematic album. Such a blatant and deliberate use of pre-existing narrative material is a departure from previous albums where thematic elements were much more nebulous and the songs on the records deal in some way with love and love relationships. While it might be a stretch to suggest the entire album is a musical retelling of the myth, many songs could be connected deliberately. It is difficult to say what aspect of the myth provided the hook for the album, but the idea of sight and seeing is central. Many songs include references to seeing, screens, insight, reflection, not seeing, masks, night, day and the idea of sight leading to truth.

Conclusion

In an article on the *Reflektor* album, Ravenscroft cites many interviews where Win Butler reveals influences on the album's content and style, in particular Butler's references to Kierkegaard's short work "The Present Age." Butler uses Kierkegaard's critique of contemporary society as overly obsessed with being busy with meaningless activity. Kierkegaard charges people with an existence devoid of passion and lacking in reflection on the matters of the soul without concern for what matters. Butler makes connections between this and contemporary times. A concern

with a lack of "seeing" and a lack of attention to what matters is at the heart of Arcade Fire's philosophy and mission as a band and artists.

Arcade Fire's albums demonstrate careful attention to the craft of music and art. Each song makes part of a world, and the record is the whole. While each album is different in the story it tells, they each reveal a band concerned with meaning and the idea of truth. Arcade Fire's commitment to storytelling makes the band a fascinating object of study. The group has broken many pop conventions from being "too big," to writing songs that are too long, to inserting themselves into your childhood home, to demanding concertgoers attend in costume. Despite this, it is at the level of the voice that Arcade Fire performs its most purposeful work. It is in the act of vocalization where the body becomes fully drawn into communal presence, whether at a live concert or at home.

As stated in the film *The Reflektor Tapes,* Arcade Fire considers the music they produce to be in service to a call to higher action, higher ideals, and these actions seem to be in a very Platonic/Christian sense of higher ideals. In the ethos of Arcade Fire, participating in music is an artistic practice which means one must be "open to being led by a spirit. Music is exactly that" (Joseph and Arcade Fire). Arcade Fire utilizes deliberate song structures and lyrics to act as provocations to move audiences to action. Moments such as the chant "lies!" in "Rebellion" and the wordless vocalizations in "Wake Up," are built for participation and singing along and for the engagement of the whole body and the soul. In matters of love, Arcade Fire's music is a form evangelizing.

Chapter 4.3 Arcade Fire, Love, Sex, and Race Too

Oh, when love is gone, where does it go? Where do we go?
(Arcade Fire, "Afterlife")

In his review of *Reflektor* in the *Washington Post*, Chris Richards referred to the members of Arcade Fire as sounding like "gigantic dorks with boring sex lives." *Atlantic* magazine's Zach Schonfeld suggested Richards may not be far off the mark. Arcade Fire's *Reflektor* album sparked discussions of "sexiness" or lack thereof. The critics' focus on whether Arcade Fire is sexy or not is something that is not evident in reviews of *Funeral*, *The Suburbs*, or *Neon Bible*. Criticism ranges from comments about their dancing abilities, to debates about whether they are "hip" or sexy enough for the music, to severe charges of appropriation of black culture.

While criticism is not unexpected along with accolades, specific criticism focused on a lack of sexual groove comes with a disconcerting subtext related to authenticity, hegemony, and race. This discourse in the popular press around *Reflector* makes tensions within the expression of sexuality and love concerning genre and race more obvious. As Schonfeld satirically suggests, "White people being funky are all genealogically descended from David Byrne, the logic goes, and critics are all too happy to indulge it." Arcade Fire's venture into sounds and rhythms that are considered to be funky and the incorporation of Haitian musicians, rhythms, and styles required the press to deal with a whole host of different issues, not in play in the other Arcade Fire albums. While this study does not deal specifically with the problems of race, the history of rock and roll is bound together with both race and sexuality, especially in the American context. It is necessary to acknowledge the ways indie has been regarded around sex and race, and the following section will briefly discuss some of these issues.

In 2007, Arcade Fire became the focal point of a scathing article written by *New Yorker* magazine's music critic, Sasha Frere-Jones ("Paler"). Frere-Jones charged indie with

being too white and lacking in "musical miscegenation." Numerous counter articles appeared in publications such as *Slate* and *Playboy*, causing the online magazine *Stereogum* to proclaim it a "war" (Mohr; Wilson, "Trouble"; "Magazine Music Writer War"). Frere-Jones eventually published a rebuttal but not a retraction. (Frere-Jones, "Black and White"). While Frere-Jones' article made considerable waves in rock criticism circles, charges that indie is too white, too male, and too middle class have continued. The debacle over the Frere-Jones article revealed problematic elements in the canonical story of the history of indie and the history of rock and roll itself. In his original piece, Frere-Jones' related a history of rock music which dwelled on the borrowing or adaption of African American music by white musicians, citing Elvis through the Beatles, Rolling Stones, and Led Zeppelin as examples. He stated white musicians made rock more palatable and accessible to white audiences ("Paler"). While this is a point agreed upon by many music critics and historians (Greil), Frere-Jones approach is both heavy-handed and glib.

One of the arguments about indie rock music, love, and sex appears to be driven by aesthetics. Frere-Jones' controversial piece concludes with a statement which suggests he equates a lack of particular rhythms to a lack of sexiness. He claims:

> The uneasy, and sometimes inappropriate, borrowings and imitations that set rock and roll in motion gave popular music a heat and an intensity that can't be duplicated today, and the loss isn't just musical; it's also about risk. Rock and roll was never a synonym for a polite handshake. If you've forgotten where the term came from, look it up. There's a reason the lights were off. ("Paler")

Frere-Jones seems to be nostalgic, and longing for the "good old days" of rock and roll denies a whole history of other kinds of music which was equally engaged in bringing "heat." Furthermore, his claim that contemporary music cannot come with risk is also weak. While this

is not a new assertion, nor is it false, it's Frere-Jones equation of blackness with sexiness, and that contemporary white musicians were not black and therefore unable to access natural sexiness, that was a surprise considering this line of thinking has been challenged in both the academic and popular press. Equating African American music as more authentically primal and, therefore, sexier, is problematic. Frere-Jones located the "problem" with sexiness in indie rock music as a problem of race and set up a dialectic against the "better" African American music, and this is problematic, particularly in the form of a five-page article in *The New Yorker* magazine. The most pointed rebuttal came from Mohr. He wrote that "Leaving aside for a moment the gaping holes he must leave in of the arc of indie music over the last few decades in order to advance his argument, the argument itself is based on retrograde ideas of race and sex, and how race is encapsulated in music." Mohr roundly rejects Frere-Jones' arguments as baseless outmoded "bullshit." Writers were critical Frere-Jones' history of blues, rock, and indie music.

Frere-Jones lauded bands such as the Rolling Stones because they were closer to African American blues and therefore better than other groups because other bands lost the way by losing the beat. In his response, Mohr presented a concise and detailed history of the indie rock movement and the connection to "beat," running through major movements like electroclash, Britpop, as well as current indie dance music. He cites the apparent influence of the Talking Heads on Arcade Fire and draws connections between Arcade Fire and a whole constellation of rock influences. At the same time, Arcade Fire has been charged with outright racism and racial exploitation (Higgens). Certainly, music has complex connections between race, class, sex, and gender, and Arcade Fire is not immune or outside this complex world.

In Arcade Fire's body of work as a whole, there is a concern for the expression of "right feelings," and emotion. The straining for higher love and purpose in the Platonic sense has left

little room for sex. Josephs cites the communication of emotion as their particular strength; straying from this role into music that attempts to be "sexy" or overly moralistic sits uncomfortably on the band. Leaving the safe bounds of indie aesthetics exposes the mind/body divide, which pervades Western ideals of passionate love in indie music. Speaking on the experience of being in Haiti during Carnival, Win Butler discusses the unconscious grip of the mind/body split in Western thought.

> For me, wearing a mask and dancing and being in the crowd—there's this whole inversion of society that happens. For a lot of my friends and people that I grew up with, the only time you ever really feel comfortable dancing is if you're with only your best friends and you're really drunk. You know what I mean—feeling less of a break between the spirit and the body, and sex and death not being completely unrelated. [You] just kind of feel like a more whole person, I guess. (Doyle)

This quotation speaks to an overall ethos within the work of the band to both express true feeling as well as authenticity within musical practice.

Indie may sound "emotional," but it is harder to say if it sounds "sexy." Win Butler has said that Arcade Fire is not sexy (Doyle). In his review of the album *Reflector* music critic Carl Wilson sums up this feeling neatly with the following reflection:

> Arcade Fire is dancing. Arcade Fire has on its shoulders a big shiny head that looks like Arcade Fire's own head, but huge and crinkled. Arcade Fire is playing a song that sounds like Arcade Fire's own song, but fatter and clumsier. It looks like dancing, but it is social work. It looks like dancing, but it is guilt. It looks like praying, but it is a lecture about praying. It looks like fun, but it is not fun. Arcade Fire says it is fun, because Arcade Fire is dancing. ("Thirteen Ways")

While he is describing the music and video for the song *Reflektor* and not referring specifically to passionate love, he does convey the idea that Arcade Fire's music is a little too earnest, a little too preachy, a little too controlled to be believed. Dancing, like sex, love, and music, needs to seem "natural" to be believed. Hence indie, and in particular Arcade Fire, with its heavy investment in veracity and "truth" of feeling, with its drawing attention to the masks and structures of mainstream culture, is complicit in the construction of the information structures and the manufacture of desire—ones that may or may not be deemed sexy, but are absolutely about love.

Chapter 5.1 Crown of Love: Courtly Love, Yearning, Desire, and the Inaccessible Lady

"Crown of Love" is a track on Arcade Fire's 2010 album *Funeral.* For music critic Jim Beviglia, "'Crown Of Love' is perhaps the most monumental deep track on the disc, an impassioned lament for lost love that keeps hitting stunning musical heights while the protagonist sinks to unfathomable depths." This track stands out for its subject matter, its scoring, and as a "deep track." Musically it follows the form of a song of petition. In the song, a lover asks his beloved many questions, seeks to be forgiven, praises the beloved, and seems to exhibit the many signs of lovesickness. The song makes audible the tension between the emotional pain of the protagonist at not being with the beloved, and the enjoyment we experience in this pain. The formal, regulatory structures of love songs allow us to encounter, and enjoy, not an actual person, but our object-cause of desire. At the heart of every love song, there is a necessary "black hole," an empty space around which we construct our desires. The figure of the beloved is a vehicle for registering and expressing these desires. Thus, at the core, instead of the body of the expected beloved, there exists only blank space. We can experience, understand, and enjoy desire and longing through repeated encounters with songs of petition. Luhmann's reflections on the generation of feelings of love and the problem of communicating love are useful in reflecting on the role of these songs in the development and sustainment of the system of passionate love. This chapter explicates the idea of the role of songs of petition by using the psychoanalytic theories of Žižek and Lacan and the systems theory of Luhmann to explore Arcade Fire's song "Crown of Love" (see App. 1). This chapter demonstrates how the tropes, topics, and hooks of the song of petition construct an endless motion of desire, where instead of a body of the beloved to be enjoyed, there is only empty space.

Longing, pain, and desire are part of the experience of the amorous subject. In *A Lover's Discourse* Barthes repeatedly refers to passionate love as pain, with entries such as "crying," "anxiety," "flayed," and "unbearable." The experience of frustrated desire and longing has a long history in literature and music which will be explicated in this chapter. Musically this is expressed in songs of petition. One of the most noted songs of the Medieval period is *Can vei la lauzeta* composed by Bernart de Ventadorn in the twelfth century. Its lyrics echo those of Werther: "She has stolen my heart, stolen me from myself / and stolen her own self and all the world; and when she stole herself from me, she left me naught but desire and a yearning heart." The impacts of the petition are both affective and emotional, and the impacts seem to be beyond the body of the actual beloved. Songs of petition still exist in contemporary culture. These love songs typically follow the pattern of the courtly love song where a protagonist supplicates himself at the actual or metaphorical feet of the beloved. Songs of petition are not serenades or wooing songs, where a lover courts the beloved through displays of artistry and skill, and they are not songs that speak of the blissful happiness of love. They are songs of pain, yearning, desire, and anguish.

The separation of the lover and the beloved is the cause of mental and physical suffering. As the "Lady" in the tradition of courtly love, the beloved is inaccessible to the lover, and music becomes a form of intercession. Expressions of longing and desire create a strong motion in the system of passionate love and, for many artists, an engine in the production of artistic works. The emotional and affective impact of the absence, loss, or unresponsiveness of the beloved is both shattering and productive for the amorous subject. Contemporary songs of petition demonstrate the continued place of the inaccessible beloved in the amorous information system.

Courtly love, sometimes also referred to as *fin d'amour*, was a Medieval phenomenon that was popularized primarily in the regions of Provence, northern France, and Germany and had a wide influence on Western Europe as a whole. Courtly love was a ritualized practice of extramarital love exclusively practiced among the aristocratic class. In this practice, a nobleman or knight, through acts of chivalry, petitioned a married noblewoman for amorous favours. In the Medieval period, marriage was a contract between families and concerned with the exchange of material wealth, land, and the strengthening of familial ties. Passionate love, as was understood at the time, had to be exercised outside the confines of marriage.

Courtly love was a formalized system in which an aristocratic lover could petition a potential beloved for favours. The petitions often took the form of music and poetry. During this period, an active trade grew among minstrels to sing love songs to the target of the nobleman's affection for money. These minstrels either had permanent positions in courts or travelled and worked freelance. There were different regional forms with the minstrels known as troubadours in the Provincial region of France, trouvères in the northern region of France, and minnesingers in Germany. Because of their connection with nobility, with either noblemen or musicians enjoying noble patronage, numerous courtly love songs have survived to the present day in the form of notated music and lyrics. While it is impossible to know exactly how these songs would have been performed, the surviving notations at the very least provide information on melody, rhythm, and lyrics. Performance practice is much less understood. Luhmann points to the legacy of the courtly love tradition as a remarkably advanced method of extramarital courtship as evidenced by documentation contained in the written record. However, he also states this is not necessarily reflective of a highly evolved sense of subjectivity and sexuality in terms of passionate love as we might recognize it today. The courtly period has had a marked impact on

Western ideals of love, and the music of love (Singer 35), in particular as it relates to the value of love freely given and expressed outside the needs of family and society. Ripples of these practices continue to be found in contemporary music, the primary example being the impassioned petition to a seemingly unobtainable and remote beloved.

As stated in the previous chapters, Luhmann marked the epoch of courtly love as the beginning of the codification of passionate love. Symbolic media, such as the songs of the troubadours, were produced in reaction to a need to develop a system for lovers to communicate their desires in a society where roles of class and gender were highly defined and stratified. Modes of communication were highly restrictive. Luhmann suggests that "The major concern of Medieval love poems and particularly of courtly love seems to have been to appear not vulgar. The main thing was to be able to distance oneself from the vulgar, common, direct satisfaction of sensual needs in the face of an increasing aristocratization of the Medieval structure of stratification" (*Love as Passion* 43). The need to express desire within a framework of appearing "not vulgar" causes tension and gives rise to the development of codified information.

Luhmann ties the development of the system of courtly love to the need for an amorous communication system. It is the gap in communication and the conditions of Medieval society which created the requirements for the creation of poetry, songs, and instructional manuals. The question as to whether the sensual passion or sexual activity took place during this period is not of interest to Luhmann. His analysis as focused on courtly love as a solution to a communication problem. Thus, the growth of passionate love and the concept of the "love game" is key to an emerging communication system for passionate love. Through courtly love, and its poetry and music, lovers had to find a way to begin a relationship and to see if amorous communication was possible, and the existing communication channels were not sufficient to carry the message.

The development of a stable mode of amorous communication, one that could be recognized and practiced and become a pattern for contemporary lovers, had its beginnings with courtly love. According to Luhmann, for passionate love to begin a lover must at first draw out the beloved, to open the communication channels, or to find a way to reopen communication channels that have closed. The lover needs to impact another individual, the intended recipient of the message, and move the subject to some action and favourable response. In the practice of courtly love, the initial message often took the form of publicly performed poetry and music. Symbolic media, and especially music, became an integral part of the practice of passionate love. Through an apprenticeship-like model, lovers learned a whole host of signs that were available for use and interpretation.

Luhmann carefully places courtly love within an extended continuum and marks it as the beginning point for Western passionate love information system. In this way, the system of courtly love fits into his project to demonstrate the growth and complexity of passionate love. Using courtly love as a model for the communication of the desire of amorous subjects enables a means of musical analysis that deepens understanding of possible action beyond the apparent content of the lyrics. The rules of communication in the system of courtly love developed as a way to overcome the gap between amorous subjects.

Many of the ideas expressed in indie rock music align with the ideals of courtly love. As discussed in Chapter Three, indie tends to eschew overt sexual content and practices a distancing from base sexual desire in favour of commenting on the beloved's other qualities. Connections between the highly codified model of the courtly love song and indie seem particularly apt given the ways indie appears to eschew the graphic sexuality and misogyny of mainstream rock and

other forms of popular music. In his work, *Music and Eros*, Döpp emphasises the feminine culture that emerged from the practice of courtly love. He suggests this is because

> men—in contrast to epic poetry—were taught to feel and think with a feminine point of view. An example of this is the poetry of the troubadours in southern France (home of the Cathers) that already originated half a century before minnesang. These provincial love songs are primarily directed at women. Eleanor of Aquitaine (c. 1122-1204), Marie of Champagne (1145-1198), Ermengarde of Narbonne (c. 1128-1196) and other women that were idolized by the poets of their time would oftentimes run their own literary "salons" and speak directly with the voice of the poet. Not only did men owe their aesthetic and moral education to women, but also poets viewed and experienced the world through a female prism. (93)

Courtly music and poetry were written to appeal to female sensibilities and took a deliberately different form than previous styles of poetry and music whose audience was marked as male.

In courtly love, the topics of the songs and poems typically come in the form of praise for the beauty, virtue, and intelligence of the woman. While they may speak of the despair of being spurned or separated from the beloved, they are not abusive or insulting. These songs portray the Lady as virtuous and beautiful, but often cold, heartless, and immune to the suffering of the lover. In addition to praising the good qualities of the Lady, lovers had to demonstrate perseverance and fealty to the beloved by overcoming trials. The lover must persevere despite the unattainability of the beloved. The trials and barriers must be endured and surmounted before a relationship is formed, and the lover is granted the sought-after sexual favours. Suffering is part of the expected experience of passionate love as practiced in courtly love. The narrative of courtly love that is the desire and reverence for a potentially unattainable object was taken up by

Lacan and later Žižek, as a means of understanding human sexual relations and the role of fantasy in the sustaining of desire. Their interest is markedly different from that of Luhmann. Luhmann's work on courtly love centres on looking at patterns of communication as expressed through symbolic media such as poetry and song as evidence of a cohesive and unique system of information. However, despite the different areas of focus, Lacan, Žižek, and Luhmann are all concerned with the codification and regulation of desire through symbolic media.

The system of courtly love is constructed through the building of narrative. The "language" of courtly love is formed by a set of rules which act as a framework to guide and impact the behaviour of lovers. Once the lover has opened the communication channel, it is up to the beloved as the receiver to respond. For Lacan and Žižek, courtly love provides a model for representing the way desire functions. The subject is focused on obtaining the beloved, the object of desire, but in courtly love the figure of the beloved is challenging to attain. In Žižek's work, the narrative of courtly love continues to be endlessly replayed in modern society where the Lady of courtly love is an empty space. Fantasy creates a cloak in the shape of the desired object. Thus, subjects never achieve full access to the beloved, or the object of desire, because there is nothing but empty space where the object should be. According to Žižek, the illusion of the object-cause of desire is an integral part of the construction of subjectivity. Subjects work to obtain the object and understand themselves in relation to the desired object. For example, he uses the film *Crying Game* as an example of "courtly love." In the film, a straight man, Finn, is caught up in a romantic entanglement with a character, Dil; he doesn't realize she is a trans woman. After this fact is revealed, the remainder of the film deals with Finn's attraction and aversion to Dil. Žižek uses the film as a way to advance a conversation about the ways fantasy is a necessary screen to sex, and also as a means to reveal that we never have full access to another

subject ("From Courtly"). It is through the essential action of desire and illusion of fantasy that passionate love and sex are constructed. Without fantasy as an intermediary, passionate love and sex would be impossible.

In the case of courtly love, the beloved stands in for the "answer to the real" as the desired object external to the amorous subject allowing the lover to focus his desire. Furthermore, the beloved must appear to be a unique, desired object. The amorous subject must pick the beloved out of all the possible subjects, and it is the beloved alone who holds the key to satisfying desire in addition to giving meaning to the existence of the lover as a subject. The beloved must not seem arbitrary. Žižek states:

> Herein consists, also, the fundamental lesson of Lacan: while it is true that any object can occupy the empty place of the Thing, it can do so only by means of the illusion that it was always already there, i.e., that it was not placed there by us but found there as an "answer of the real." Although any object can function as the object cause of desire--insofar as the power of fascination it exerts is not its immediate property but results from the place it occupies in the structure--we must, by structural necessity, fall prey to the illusion that the power of fascination belongs to the object as such. (*Looking* 33)

To know what we desire would disrupt and destroy the ability of subjects to enter into any amorous relationship. As maintained throughout this study, love songs do not "make" someone fall in love, but in the case of courtly love, they act in a multifaceted fashion. As with Luhmann, the song of courtly love opens a communication channel, both directly with the subject of the song and then indirectly through the entraining of subjects to structures of love. Entraining

extends to the role of the lover and the beloved, and the stages of courtship fit along a continuum. The problem comes when we are not sure.

In his lecture on love songs, Nick Cave discusses the “song of address.” He gives the example of his “West Country Girl,” written with the express purpose to win affection and gain favour from a real-life person. However, Cave reflects that though these songs were written as a means to actively target an intended beloved, they continue to have “life” and influence long after the love relationship itself has dissolved. Cave, as does Proust, views desire, requited and not, as necessary to art. Love, and in particular the pursuit of courtly-style love, is productive. Singer suggests that much of the narrator’s romantic experiences in Proust’s *Search* relates to the understanding that love and sexual desire are experiences which are not real but are a pathway to artistic fuel. Singer writes, “In the second stage of the Proustian lover, expecting much less of the world, has the appearance of greater maturity but he is also subject to greater egoism. He resembles the undaunted roué in the anecdote about a woman who protests that she can never give him her heart” (180). Love becomes a medium for arousing sexual and poetic sensations that are cultivated for their own sake, not for the sake of any metaphysical goal external to themselves. To know what we desire would disrupt and destroy the ability of subjects to enter into an amorous relationship. Therefore, a system of discourse for passionate love, an ideology, gives shape and organizes our desires. Love songs play a role in creating and reinforcing this discourse. Repeated encounters with love songs invest the beloved object with the power of fascination. These songs build and focus our desires.

For Cave, Proust, and other artists, the Lady object of song and poetry becomes a means to focus desire and imagination and is productive. Music does not create emotion, but it reveals the traces and the excess that would otherwise be inaccessible and what we cannot express in the

ordinary course of things. The troubadour and the suffering amorous subject are part of the code of love and are familiar. The work of the courtly love song is to give a framework for wooing and gives expression to the emotion of loss that is always already there from the very beginnings of love. The beloved is still, in the end, inaccessible, as within every person is the "unfathomable abyss of radical Otherness, of one about whom I finally know nothing" (Žižek, *How* 43). Songs of petition and address fit into the models of both psychoanalysis and systems theory.

Chapter 5.2 The "Crown of Love" as Lament

"Crown of Love" is a song of petition. It invokes many of the common elements of a courtly love song. For example, courtly tradition demands that the lover court the Lady and endure many trials to prove his worthiness and acquire both sexual favour and higher spiritual enlightenment. The figure of "difficulty in love" is a component of songs of courtly address. In this model, lovers must overcome difficulties in service to the beloved. The idea that the favours of love should be challenging to obtain still run strong within Western ideals of love, and while courtly lovers had to overcome challenges such as the joust and evasion of the husband of the Lady, modern lovers face different challenges. In reflecting on the connections between the model of courtly love, "Crown of Love" becomes not simple lament for lost love, but part of the broader information system of passionate love. In "Crown of Love," Arcade Fire uses what seems to be a youthful protagonist, and the context of the lover's challenges come in the form of parental prohibitions, the ambiguity of the beloved, the impossibility of sustaining a feeling of love indefinitely, and difficulties of sexuality. Here, as with courtly love songs, the Lady is never named, given a body or a voice.[56] The lyrics and music play on the hooks and familiar tropes and topics of love in crisis. At the same time, as a piece of music, the song opens a transgressive space that may be unavailable in other spaces in contemporary society. This next section will look at the ways "Crown of Love" plays with ideas of the lover's challenge, creates a pattern of meaning, and reveals the complexity of contemporary passionate love.

In "Crown of Love," sounds of nostalgia and loss are invoked musically. The timbres and scoring gesture toward emotions of remembrance, memory, and loss, all played with a heavy

[56] The term "Lady" is used throughout, but this does not imply a specific connection to gender. The Lady is a position within the courtly love matrix and not gender-specific.

hand. For example, the piano and strings are out of tune, and this could gesture to something old, like an old piano standing in for memory, or to more complex readings which suggest a lack of focus, a lack of accuracy (i.e., misremembered, or lack of truth), or something out of place. The ploddingly slow, heavy piano and drum of this track provide a stark contrast against the more raucous songs found elsewhere on the album. In the lyrics, a protagonist (sung by Win Butler) addresses an unnamed beloved. The protagonist charts the experience of losing the "crown of love" and no longer being able to sustain love. The lines of the chorus:

> If you still want me, please forgive me / The crown of love is falling from me. / If you still want me, please forgive me / Because the spark is not within me

appear to indicate that the protagonist has fallen out of love, but the overall meaning of the lament is unclear. Overall, the obtuse lyrics and the messages of the music complicate the song. The track may adopt the guise of a love ballad, but the lyrics, orchestration, and formal elements are in tension with each other, pulling at the tensions within the practice of love itself.

Rhythmic elements and the tempo of "Crown of Love" also provide information about the song. The tempo is a slow 12/8, starting with the bass drum. It evokes the sound of a waltz or dance form, but the dance is frustrated by a plodding heaviness that is reinforced by a heavy fourth beat. The bodily sense of this rhythm is hard to place, but the rhythm echoes the mixed messages, the lyrics, and the music, like a dance (mis)remembered. There is weariness and further reinforcement of the feeling that something is out of place. The compound metre keeps the song from becoming a dirge-like funeral march and also complicates the intent of the song because it hints at a dance form. The heaviness of the verses, especially on the downbeats, restrain and deny the romantic gestures of the strings. At the same time, 12/8 metre becomes a useful technique for the final "breakout" section of the track, where the beat considerably

increases and morphs into a true dance tune as it enables the band to keep the same downbeats and quickly shift into four. The plodding beginning acts as a foil to the final section, so while the heaviness of the accents hints at death, the lyrics, the metre, and the texture of the music point to something else. The final upbeat breakout dance section of the track calls the meaning of the whole the song into question. Is the relationship dead? Was the lover lamenting the loss of the beloved? Does the protagonist want the beloved back, or is it the other way around?

"Crown of Love" sets out several templates or figures within the code bank of passionate love which are crucial to the constitution of the amorous subject. The confusion as to the purpose or aim of this song is part of this code. "Crown of Love" as a song of petition works to communicate the emotions of lost love. The work of this song is not to communicate the story of one lover but to hook into the pattern of courtly songs of petition, a model which has continued into the contemporary practice of love. Luhmann connects the circulation of symbolic media such as this track, with the needs of the communication system of passionate love. Symbolic media also play a role within psychoanalysis as a mechanism for focusing the energies of the subject. Music creates space for the organizing our desires (ideology). Lovers must imagine a union with and desire for the beloved, including the desire for the relationship itself as fulfilling a requirement for the subject. This forms part of an overall system of passionate love. Proust writes: ". . . the imagination awakened by the incertitude of being able to attain its object, should create an end which hides its other end, which it does by substituting for the sexual pleasure the idea of penetrating into a life" (qtd. in Singer 187). Thus, as Proust so aptly stated, amorous subjects need incertitude, as well as imagination and the hope of interpenetration, as fuel to drive subjects to sustain involvement in passionate love.

Chapter 5.3 Arcade Fire, Black Holes, Mercy, and the Myths of Love

Love songs reinforce a sense of pining and loss as a necessary experience of passionate love. Framing the problems of the protagonist in "Crown of Love" according to courtly love has an instructive role. However, a particularly productive vestige of this in music is the Lady's "promised gesture of Mercy" to give relief to the suffering love (Žižek "From" 100). Suffering for lack of both the promised intimacy of passionate love as well as sexual satisfaction is expressed in "Crown of Love" and can be seen as a pattern or base code in love songs. The expression of suffering for lack of love, desire, and failure to connect as subjects sets up this pattern. At the same time, to attain the Lady is to encounter the Lacanian Real, something that is impossible. The Real cannot be met directly; we can catch glimpses by looking sideways. For Žižek, gestures toward courtly love are evidence of little pieces of the real where "any imaginary or symbolic formation must anchor itself: something that seems found without having been sought, something met with involuntarily, of necessity, even though from a certain point of view it can only have been planted by design." Žižek suggests the expression of petitions are vital to the formation of the amorous relationship. Amorous subjects are only recognized as such once a communication channel has been opened, but the crux is, following Lacan, that there is no beloved, no object, only subjects:

> . . .we find the inescapable deadlock that defines the position of the loved one: the other sees something in me and wants something from me, but I cannot give him what I do not possess—or, as Lacan puts it, there is no relationship between what the loved one possesses and what the loving one lacks. The only way for the loved one to escape this deadlock is to stretch out his hand towards the loving one and to "return love"—that is, to exchange, in a metaphorical gesture, his status as the loved one for

> the status of the loving one. This reversal designates the point of subjectivization: the object of love changes into the subject the moment it answers the call of love. ("From" 104)

The position of the object of love is unstable, and this is evident in the Arcade Fire track in the lack of clarity around the name of the beloved. The lyrics in "Crown of Love" state:

> The only thing that you keep changin'/ Is your name, my love keeps growin'/ Still the same, just like a cancer / And you won't give me a straight answer.

For Lacan, the trouble runs much deeper than a lack of communication. The object of love itself is always absent; there is no actual object. The beloved is a position that can never be held.

The shifting and ambiguous position of the beloved in "Crown of Love" makes visible the inability of amorous subjects to encounter the actual object of their desire. The protagonist of the song sings that he can only say the name of his beloved, yet this name keeps changing. While it remains unclear what Butler might exactly mean by this, there are a number of intriguing possibilities. As stated previously, in psychoanalysis, the beloved is not an actual subject, but a position. Furthermore, the inability of the lover to name the beloved, or to forget their name, could mark beloved as the "inhuman partner" and the "traumatic Object" with whom no relationship is possible. The position of the "traumatic Object" is in keeping with courtly love. The position of the Lady is both traumatic and necessary. Luhmann, too, states:

> There is thus in the final instance no freedom vis-a-vis one's own *plaisir* and accordingly the subject can also not be reduced to freedom. But one can enjoy pain, can attempt to eradicate *plaisirs* by means for thriftiness or even suicide—with *plaisir*; and to this extent *amour passion* comes into close contact with pleasure in suffering. It is only logical that masochistic figures subsequently appear on the scene,

> ensuring the totality of the principle of self-referentiality. One replaces, as it were, the freedom towards oneself, which is no longer attainable, with self-torment. (*Love as Passion* 87)

Lacan asks: "What am I as an object for the other? What does the other see in me that causes his love?" (qtd. in Žižek, "From") and Žižek elaborates:

> Why must the symbolic mechanism be hooked onto a "thing," some piece of the real? The Lacanian answer is, of course: because the symbolic field is in itself always already barred, crippled, porous, structured around some extimate kernel, some impossibility. The function of the "little piece of the real" is precisely to fill out the place of this void that gapes in the very heart of the symbolic. (*Looking Awry* 33)

Thus, the beloved in "Crown of Love" fulfills a particular function within the overall system of passionate love by standing in as an object of address, but by remaining ambiguous the lover/protagonist has space to discuss feelings of love.

Žižek proposes that the trope of courtly love, that of a knight and his inaccessible Lady, is still active, despite the seemingly open, "anything goes" attitude to romantic and sexual relationships in contemporary culture. He further expands Lacan's reading of the Lady as an inhuman Other. Lacan proposes an alternate reading to the Lady as "man's narcissistic project," insisting "the Lady is the Other which is not our 'fellow-creature'; that is to say, she is someone with whom no relationship of empathy is possible. This traumatic Otherness is what Lacan designates employing the Freudian term *das Ding*, the Thing—the Real that 'always returns to its place', the hard kernel that resists symbolization" ("From" 90). This traumatic Otherness as a reflection of "the Real" for the lover-subject is illustrated in "Crown of Love." The highly

harmonically consonant string lines are contrasted with lines such as “The pains of love, and they keep blowin’ / In my heart, there’s flowers growin’ / On the grave of our old love / Since you gave me a straight answer.” For “How, on closer examination, are we to conceptualise the inaccessibility of the Lady-Object in courtly love?” (Žižek, “From” 94), for it is not as simple as “desire and prohibition.” Songs of petition can both reveal and hide the gaps that are at the very centre of the practice of passionate love.

Desire requires an object to be productive. Žižek has shown the “Lady” is merely an empty shell around which we cloak our desires. In “Crown of Love,” the protagonist, the lover, sings that he wants to write the beloved’s name on his eyelids, that the beloved’s name is the only word he can speak, yet he cannot hold a body. Žižek writes: “by means of which the mysterious, fascinating, elusive object of love discloses its deadlock, and thus acquires the status of another subject” (“From” 104). He elaborates this point by using Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, noting the monster is subjectivized when he starts to refer to himself in the first person. In “Crown,” the beloved, the Lady, never answers the call, never reveals a name, and never moves from object into subject. The beloved remains in the position of Lady. Žižek concludes his piece on courtly love with the assertion that “the sexual relationship is condemned to remain an asymmetrical non-relationship in which the Other, or partner, prior to being a subject, is a Thing, an ‘inhuman partner’; as such, the sexual relationship cannot be transposed into a symmetrical relationship between pure subjects” (“From” 108). Žižek’s examples all hinge on the breaking of the courtly love contract when the Lady moves into the position of an “objet petit a.” In “Crown of Love,” this shift never happens, and the roles are entirely fixed. The barriers are impenetrable.

Chapter 5.4 Losing the "Crown of Love" and Prohibitions on Enjoyment

The lyrics in "Crown of Love" are rife with references to prohibitions; references to parental prohibition, or interruption of sexual activity, are a particularly compelling case. Prohibitions on accessing the beloved plague the protagonist in "Crown of Love." The beloved is never accessible. At first, the beloved doesn't answer, and then when they do, the problem is still not solved for the lover. The protagonist loses "the crown of love" and the touch of his beloved when [his] "mom walks in my bedroom." Prohibitions on enjoyment align with the interpretation of Lacan's theories by Žižek where the important idea in courtly love is "courtesy and etiquette" and not a passion "immune to social rules." Through a focus on the code and rules of courtesy and etiquette, Žižek links courtly love and masochism.

Further building on theories of Deleuze, Žižek proposes that masochism is not equated with sadism. In masochism, "negation assumes the form of disavowal—that is, of feigning, of an 'as if' which suspends reality" ("From" 91). There is a relationship based on a contract/agreement between the servant and master, and in this relationship, the "screenplay" is "written" by the servant. Žižek contends masochist activities are theatrical and never cross over into the real. He writes: "The nature of masochistic theatre is therefore thoroughly 'non-psychological': the surrealistic passionate masochistic game, which suspends social reality, none the less fits easily if not that everyday reality" ("From" 92). He uses masochism as a way into a discussion of courtly love in a contemporary context:

> the phenomenon of masochism exemplifies in its purest form what Lacan had in mind when he insisted again and again that psychoanalysis is not psychology. Masochism confronts us with the paradox of the symbolic order qua the order of "fictions": there is more truth in the mask we wear, in the game we play, in the

> "fiction" we obey and follow, than in what is concealed beneath the mask. ("From" 92)

Thus, in the case of contemporary love, the structures of passionate love and the construction of ourselves as amorous subjects are what creates love itself, not the qualities of the object or target of our desires. The paradox of love is revealed when a seeming outside force thwarts our desires. This relationship only breaks down when the masochist becomes an objet a, the "strange object that is nothing but the inscription of the subject itself in the field of objects, in the guise of a blotch that takes shape only when part of the field is anamorphically distorted by the subject's desire" (*How* 69). It is at this point that the contract between the master and the slave breaks down, acting more like the contract between the knight and his Lady.

The Lacanian "little piece of the real" is necessary to ensure the illusion of passionate love persists. The function of the "little piece of the real" is precisely to fill out the place of this void that gapes in the very heart of the symbolic" (*Looking Awry* 33). Songs of petition create and support the idea of the contract of courtly love, helping to keep the system of passionate love fixed and functional. The relationship between lover and beloved, or knight and Lady, the petitioner and the petitioned, creates and fulfills exceptions of the contract. Thus "Crown of Love," with its thwarting of the lover from his goal of a love relationship through disruption, hides the fact that beloved is an empty space. Denial is due to these forces rather than the actual impossibility of the relationship itself. Thus, if the sexual relationship is impossible, then we need these "little pieces of the real," and this is where the love song is a means to fill the void.

Desire is productive and, in the case of the pattern and code of courtly love, it requires the beloved to be inaccessible. Interventions in the form of external interference must be seen to

be preventing the lover uniting fully with the beloved and are integral to the system of passionate love. Žižek writes:

> The point, therefore, is not merely that we set up additional conventional hindrances in order to heighten the value of the object: external hindrances that thwart our access to the object are there precisely to create the illusion that without them, the object would be directly accessible—what such hindrances thereby conceal is the inherent impossibility of attaining the object. . . The space of desire is bent like space in the theory of relativity; the only way to reach the Object-Lady is indirectly, in a devious, meandering way—proceeding straight on ensures that we miss the target. ("From" 94)

Hindrances or blockages to "full enjoyment" and satisfaction are thus not only part of love, but are there to ensure the lover continues to believe full satisfaction is possible.

Commenting on love in the Romantic period, Luhmann states: "Love for the sake of love became an existential maxim" (*Love as Passion* 138). Thus, love only for the sake of love, without the promise of sexual intimacy, with the real possibility of disappointment and suffering, is part of the experience of love. Lovers expect to suffer, even as the feeling of passionate love is enjoyable. To suffer in love becomes part of the expected pleasure. Žižek states:

> It would be difficult to invent a better metaphor for psychosis in contrast to the "normal" state of things in which the real is a lack, a hole in the midst of the symbolic order (like the central black spot in Rothko's paintings), we have here the "aquarium" of the real surrounding isolated islands of the symbolic. In other words, it is no longer enjoyment that "drives" the proliferation of the signifiers by functioning as a central "black hole" around which the signifying network is

> interlaces; it is, on the contrary, the symbolic order itself that is reduced to the status of floating islands of the signifier, white *iles flouttantes* in a sea of yolky enjoyment. (*Looking Awry* 40)

Furthermore, Luhmann ties the increased difficulty in forming love relationships as particularly problematic in contemporary passionate love. He suggests this is due to a complication caused by an increased coupling between sexuality and love.

As blank space, the Lady must be avoided and "not seen." Lovers must continue to feel that fulfillment is possible, and if this fiction begins to fray, the cause can be placed on external forces. Meeting our actual true desire is cause for terror. Žižek writes, "the paradox of the Lady in courtly love ultimately amounts to is thus the paradox of detour: our 'official' desire is that we want to sleep with the Lady; whereas in truth, there is nothing we fear more than a Lady who might generously yield to this wish of ours—what we truly expect and want from the Lady is simply yet another new ordeal, yet one more postponement ("From" 96). Because we cannot see it directly, "the Object can be perceived only when it is viewed from the side, in a partial, distorted form, as its own shadow. The Object, therefore, is literally something that is created—whose place is encircled—thorough a network of detours, approximations and near-misses" ("From" 95). Illusions are needed to form the outline of the space. The object of desire is always veiled, but there is nothing under the veil. The lyrics of the song repeatedly refer to problems of access and the impacts on the body. For example, allusions are made in the lyrics to blindness, rain, knowing, and seeing. There is confusion between what is real and what is perceived and felt by the body. The fact that the name of beloved in "Crown of Love" "keeps changing," making the object of the song ambiguous and the position and involvement of an actual body tenuous. There is a fragile balance between reality and fantasy dimension in our sexual activity. Proust

suggests that difficulties fire the imagination and therefore love, but this is also what makes it false.

The lover's mother represents an additional barrier to the full possession of the desired object in "Crown of Love." The threat of the parent requires the lover to keep his love secret, and by extension forms a parental prohibition of sexual activity. The lover sings a lament, asking forgiveness of the beloved for being unable to sustain love through trials. The protagonist's mother enters the room at several points in the narrative, causing the lover to lose his crown and his grip on the flesh of the beloved. The lover sings, "I snuffed it out before my mom walked in my bedroom," and later: "I shrugged them off before my mom walked in my bedroom." One presumes the protagonist is alone in his room, and he must repeatedly hide different actions from this mother, for example, removing hands before his mother walks in his bedroom. In psychoanalytic theory, the fear of castration or prohibition on sexual activity is typically defined as the Law of the Father. However, the prohibition coming in the form of the mother figure aligns more with the concept of the "phallic mother." In this case "the mother seems to the child to be omnipotent—at this point she is Law—yet she is also patently lacking (otherwise she would not desire)" (Middleton, *Voicing* 114). Maternal authority, the "phallic mother," coupled with the figure of the Lady provides further weight to underlying anxiety in the song. Far from a comforting and sweet love song, the plodding and overly sweet rhythm and orchestrations in combination with the lyrics speak to ambivalence about love.

The insertion of "Law" into the song presents an interesting analogy to the discussion of the song of courtly love. The figure of the mother calls the status of the lover into question. Is he a teenager or a younger person? Furthermore, the connection to Lacan's "Law of the Father" provides a strong connection to questions of morality and guilt. Luhmann is less concerned with

subjectivity along the lines of psychoanalytic concerns with desire and the inner mind. However, Luhmann does find space within the system of passionate love for questions of family and morality. The idea of a parental or maternal prohibition on sexuality or love is a semantic figure, and something frequently played out in symbolic media such as films and novels. It is less often a statement within song lyrics. Luhmann suggests the system of passionate loves exists as a mechanism for subjects to connect as a result of the breakdown of stable familial structures. The trope of transgressive love, of lovers connecting despite parental prohibition, is a strong cultural force. In the album *Funeral*, parental figures return again and again ("Neighborhood #1," "Neighborhood #2," and "Neighborhood #3"). There is a contradiction between the need to transgress and the threat of punishment that remains an underlying anxiety.

Thus, the subject barred from not only the actual access to the cause of desire, but also enjoyment. Lacanian jouissance is "a transgressive ecstasy, which it is the role of the normative pleasure-principle inscribed under the sign of castration to forbid, and which is therefore also associated with pain" (Middleton, *Voicing* 103). Thus, the amorous subject is further prohibited from the pleasure of love. Middleton writes on jouissance and, in an analysis of Patti Smith's track "Gloria," suggests "To the extent that Smith's vocal performance approaches objectivity in this sense, it is the terrifying jouissance associated with an invocation of the object-voice that is at issue" (*Voicing* 103). What is unsettling is the missing subject.

Thus, for all, "Crown of Love" sounds like a standard ballad with its full string sound and consonant chord structures; the deeply ambiguous lyrics coupled with off-kilter elements of the music open up another set of interpretations which point to a profoundly unsettling view of love. Middleton writing on Smith's "Gloria" provides a helpful reflection on Lacan and jouissance.

> For Lacan, there is no prediscursive reality, no presymbolic body; for him, jouissance (what escapes in sexuality) and significance (what shifts within language) are inseparable, and the excess is therefore radically undecideable in its orientation. It can subvert the Law but it can also stick to it, the terrifying, superhuman, disembodied voice of the patriarchical god acting precisely as what lends a spurious authority to the dicta of the superego. (*Voicing* 104)

"Crown of Love" also plays out the complexity of the engagement with sexuality itself.

How are the structures of sex to be spoken of? How is one to conceptualize it? To sing of it is equally as challenging as speaking of it. This song also speaks to the pleasure of the orgasm, juxtaposed against the everyday life of a suburban teen. Žižek proposes three different modes of depicting the sexual act: comicality, perversion, and pathetic ecstasy. He describes the action of each against the object. "In the comic mode, the gap which separates the sexual act from our everyday social interaction is rendered palpable; in perversion, the focus is displaced on to a partial object which acts as a stand-in for the impossible-unrepresentable act itself. . . finally, one can endeavour to erect a fascinating image destined to render present the pathos of the act" (*Plague* 224). The use of the framework of courtly love enables sex and love to be sounded into the space of contemporary love while keeping the fictions of the amorous subject intact. Amorous subjects can safeguard the enterprise of love through the figure of the beloved as Lady. Thus, the frictions between the lover's lament for lost love and the presentations of various prohibitions on sexual fulfillment and satisfaction speak to the problematic elements of the contemporary system of love. Songs which follow a pattern of courtly love can point to these issues.

Finally, the use of the metaphor of the crown is interesting to investigate in relation to the development of the amorous subject. The crown as an object is heavily invested with special symbolic status. Not only does a crown mark one as royalty; it also has Biblical connotations. Biblical references include the obvious connection to the crown of thorns that the Roman soldiers place on Jesus' head leading up to his crucifixion, and also Old Testament imagery related to the bestowing of kingship and anointment. Furthermore, the crown has "fallen" instead of being forcibly removed. Is it too heavy? Was it an accident? Was it due to needing to keep things secret? So too is love, like the idea of power of the king, not something that befalls someone, but rather something that is. One can see then that the "crown of love" is an almost literal crown amorous subjects wear in the throes of love. Žižek and Lacan both write on the idea of the crown.

> The basic reversal of Pascal and Marx lies, of course, in their defining the king's charisma not as an immediate property of the person-king but as a "reflexive determination" of the comportment of his subjects, or—to use the terms of speech act theory—a performative effect of their symbolic ritual. But the crucial point is that it is a positive, necessary condition for this performative effect to take place that the king's charisma is a performative effect, the effect itself is aborted. In other words, if we attempt to "subtract" the fetishistic inversion and witness the performative effect directly, the performative power will be dissipated. (Žižek, *Looking* 33)

Locating love in a "crown" that can be removed or can fall provides an additional element of dis-ease. Passionate love is not a feeling, but a status that is performative and fundamentally unstable.

Chapter 5.5 Conclusion

Courtly love, with its codified modes of behaviour, has left a long-lasting legacy on the idea of passionate love in Western thought and culture. Songs of petition and music which could be considered courtly love songs have a multifunctional role within the system of passionate love in contemporary society, by normalizing the experience of the suffering lover; the formation of desire and an object of focus for those desires; as well as the experience of overcoming barriers and trials as part of the experience of passionate love. Thus "Crown of Love," with its sound of bathos and ambiguous lyrics, forms a kind of source material for the figure of the amorous subject. Like the role of the ballad within the Medieval system of courtly love, love songs have a function in creating and perpetuating a system of love. The experience of pining for a beloved and lost love is captured within the sound and lyric of the song. Through the multitude of songs like this circulating in contemporary culture, the loss becomes something expected, right from our earliest experiences in amorous relationships. Both Luhmann's systems theory and Lacan's psychoanalysis recognize desire, even in the face of probable disappointment and suffering, as the engine which drives subjects to engage in passionate love. We expect and even anticipate trials, suffering and frustration as part of love, and yet we persist in hope and expectation of ultimate fulfillment. Amorous subjects are driven to pursue and desire the beloved as an answer to a gap in our being, to expect the beloved to grant us favour and access to satisfaction in having connected with another subject, to fulfill a role within the overall system of passionate love. And yet, at the same time these songs also teach us the paradox of passionate love. We will never access the unknown substance of another person. The lyric "Love is made to forget it," the second line in "Crown of Love," plays at the tension within a system in which we must engage, and the challenges that we must both remember and forget.

Chapter 6.1 We Used to Wait: Time, Memory, Repetition

Love, love will tear us apart again
(Joy Division, "Love")

Now how I remember you
How I would push my fingers through
Your mouth to make those muscles move
That made your voice so smooth and sweet
But now we keep where we don't know
All secrets sleep in winter clothes
With one you loved so long ago
Now he don't even know his name
(Neutral Milk Hotel, "In the Aeroplane")

The track "We Used to Wait" was released as a single in 2010, just ahead of the release of Arcade Fire's third album *The Suburbs*. "We Used to Wait" received positive responses in the mainstream press and has found a spot on many "best of" lists. The track plays heavily on ideas of growing up, nostalgia, technology, and discontent, and in many ways this song is related to concepts of time, space, and memory. The lyrical content of the song deals with the idea that the lover/protagonist recalls the time when "we used to wait" with the waiting referencing a time before the ubiquitous presence of communication technologies such as cell phones. In an article on "The 15 Best Arcade Fire Songs" in *Paste Magazine*, Adrian Spinelli suggests that "We Used to Wait" is the lynchpin of the entire album because of the track's heavy connections to the main thematic elements of the album: the experience of growing up, the experience of cities and suburbs, and themes related to technology and communication. This chapter takes up the patterns and relationships among memory, forgetting, and repetition in the context of music and passionate love. The thematic relationship between "We Used to Wait" and ideas of challenges of love in contemporary times makes it a potent and exciting song to discuss in this study.

Passionate love is repetitive. Passionate love is experienced as repetition and through time, and repeated encounters and engagements in passionate love keep amorous subjects within the system. For example, a first love may be wondrous and unique, but by the time of the second love, amorous subjects are already familiar with the narrative of passionate love—its form and arch, how it begins, and that it will end. Luhmann, as outlined earlier in this study, suggests the reality of the course of passionate love is fatalistic. With the outset of every new potential relationship, we are cursed with the knowledge that it is doomed, that it is an impossibility, and that we will never breach the void between ourselves and another's subjectivity. Deleuze identifies this as the trauma of the second love. Furthermore, as Luhmann suggests, subjects can't remain in a state of passionate love indefinitely. The information system of passionate love takes place in time.

Barthes, in *Discourse* under the figure "Agony," suggests the constant agony of the lover might be broken if we realized at the beginning of our love relationships that everything is always already lost: "Similarly, it seems, for the lover's anxiety: it is the fear of a mourning which has already occurred, at the very origin of love, from the moment when I was first 'ravished.' Someone would have to be able to tell me: 'Don't be anxious anymore—you've already lost him/her.'" (30) There are several interesting threads in this short passage. As has been discussed previously in this study, love as a permanent joining of two souls is not possible. Amorous subjects are always already lost to each other. Barthes draws attention to the circular narrative time of amorous relationships. In "We Used to Wait," Arcade Fire play with ideas of time, memory, and passionate love.

Chapter 6.2 Infinite Moments and Temporization

Luhmann, like Barthes, points to difficulty and frictions between passionate love and time. Lovers know that the time of love follows a narrative arch which contains an end, and love can only be sustained by a kind of "living in the moment" which sustains the illusion that it will last forever. The time within passionate love when this can be supported is fleeting. Amorous subjects are always somewhere within the narrative arch of the information system of passionate love. Luhmann's theories of passionate love are inseparable from concepts of time. He writes:

> This convergence of sincere and insincere behaviour results in the final instance from the *temporalization of social complexity*, from the insertion of a reflexive consciousness of time into the process of love itself. The lovers find themselves faced by the necessity—or so their code instructs them—to distinguish between present future and future present. They take an oath on their love's duration—in the moment and for the moment. And they know that they are deceiving themselves. This problem cannot be eliminated by either normative or cognitive modes of expectation; and it is solved neither by demanding that promises be kept, thus making love an obligation, nor by relying on an ability to learn and adapt in future situations. The ethics of supratemporal phronesis also collapses in this process. One can only surrender to love itself, and only live in the present and for the present: thus submitting inadvertently to the *difference* between sincerity and insincerity. All the same, this reference to the present remains relevant by virtue of the concept of passion. (*Love as Passion* 105)

Proust grapples with time throughout *Search*. Benjamin, writing on Proust, points to the challenge of time, writing: "Proust's eternity is by no means a platonic or a utopian one; it is

rapturous. Therefore, if 'time reveals a new and hitherto unknown kind of eternity to anyone who becomes engrossed in its passing,' this certainly does not enable an individual to approach 'the higher regions which a Plato or Spinoza reached with one beat of the wings" ("Image" 121). Time is both a pleasure and a threat.

Luhmann also draws on ideas of time and temporality within passionate love, pointing to the challenges of the need to be "in the moment" to be able to be "in tune" with the other person. Of the need for passionate love to be experienced as existing within time, Luhmann writes:

> Immersing oneself in the infinite moment was now the condition for experience oneself in the self-referential reference to love. All that one attempted to be, to remain, to withstand, petrified into an unwieldy wooden hand with which one could not love; or subsequently into vanity, replacing *amour passion* with *amour de vanite*. Here as well, failure awaited one, owing to the timeless existence—and stretched as far as the impossibility of remembering, since one could now only remember reproducible texts. And in the end the nineteenth-century novel led to a reoccupation of the position from which love could be reflected on: *amour passion* was succeeded by *amour de vanite*—superior in that it not only had to negate all other forms of *plaisir*, but itself as well. (*Love as Passion* 140)

Temporization of love relationships is a crucial aspect of passionate love itself. Passionate love, like music, must be experienced in and through time, and frictions result given the trauma of the second love and the shifting and changing the environment in which passionate love is experienced. Information, as experienced by the amorous subject, is dependent on repetition and can only be understood and processed through time.

Becoming an amorous subject within the system of passionate love requires a dual motion of remembering and forgetting. Amorous communication with another subject requires memory and knowledge of the code of communication for passionate love; at the same time enough of the previous relationship must be forgotten to believe this new love is possible. As discussed in previous chapters, passionate love requires that subjects believe another subject must be unique. There is a constant oscillating motion between remembering and forgetting. Music, with its powerful connections to memory and to time, allows for a bodily feel and experience of time, the inertia of time, the density of time, outside the meaning of clock time. This experience of the narrative time of passionate love is interconnected to both memory and forgetting. One can only move to the second love and beyond through this motion of remembering and forgetting. The amorous subject is formed through these repeated encounters, and the system of passionate love requires an endless repeated motion of remembering and forgetting, of storage and retrieval, in our amorous relationships. Peters writes: “The problem of communication is not language’s slipperiness, it is the unfixable difference between the self and other” (266). This “unfixable difference” is also in play in matters of love. Amorous subjects feel themselves in love by engaging in a series of leaps in communication.

Music is always time-bound. As a sounding art, it can only be experienced within time. The unfolding of time of a musical object never “is” and is never complete or fixed. It is always becoming. Nattiez writes: “the musical work unfolds in time. Even when one first hears it, memory intervenes to establish connections between its various parts, so that understanding of the work evolves during the course of its performance” (37). Thus, even before we first hear a piece of music, it is already charted along existing pathways. Inner versus out of time is bound together by musical time and repetition is central to our understanding of time. Eisenberg

suggests: “A beat is like a Kantian category, a matrix that lets us perceive things as things instead of chaos” (152). Frith suggests music allows us to engage with the experience of time passing: “In the most general terms, music shapes memory defines nostalgia, programs the way we age (changing and staying the same)” (*Performing* 149). Human concepts and metaphors of time are tangled up with memory, repetition, and duration, and this impacts how music is understood and experienced. Music is a time-based art form which depends on beats, patterns, and repetition to provide structure, but these are also the means through which subjects engage with it. Formal musical structures, such as repeats, climaxes, and tempo, set up a kind of contract between musicians and listeners.

Musically, Arcade Fire draws on many techniques to convey the idea of time, anxiety, and melancholy concerning passionate love. Time is foregrounded from the opening bars of “We Used to Wait.” The track, set in C minor, begins with eight bars of repeated eighth notes on the piano with the same second-inversion C minor chord played in both hands. After the first pattern, the piano is joined by the hi-hat cymbals played with a stick, a reference to a clock ticking. By referencing the sound of “ticking” or “clock time” from the first bars of the track, with no other sound or music, the attention of listeners is drawn to the physical experience of time. Listeners are forced to “hear” time, wait, and experience slippages within this time. This experience of time is something that can be grasped intellectually, but it also has a physical dimension as the sounds of the music and time passing impact the body. The experience of waiting is also set up in this opening section. Listeners are forced to wait for what seems like an extraordinarily long time before the lyric and a change in the music take place.

The forced act of waiting demands attention and attunes the ears and bodies of listeners to the song. When Win Butler sings the opening lyric, “I used to wait,” the vocal line enters on

the second eighth note of the third beat, displacing the emphasis of the entry. The entry is further emphasized by the simultaneous entrance of the kick drum. While the vocal line is not entirely out of time, it is displaced from the strict, clock-like rhythm set up by the repeated eighth notes. The simultaneous experience of both rigid clock time and slightly out-of-time displacement, with the emphasis on the back part of the bar, causes friction that continues through the entire track. This dissonance of time creates a sense of phasing between being pushed by time, waiting, and being behind time, echoing the conflicts within lyrical content. Time becomes a gesture.

> . . .sounds that take their meanings from place in a musical structure (climaxes, endings, recapitulations, and so on) and sounds that are, in fact, *gestures* at such moments *in themselves*, and not because of their structural position. Such sounds signify transition, climax, contrast, and so forth, but they do so conventionally without actually functioning as such in this particular score. Composers, in other words can play with “gestures of time”; they can suggest a contrast between “absolute” and “gestural” time. A piece can end gesturally before it is actually over. (Frith, *Performing* 148)

The experience of off-kilter time switches for each repetition of the chorus and in the final repeated bars of the end of the track where the all instruments, especially the bass and the kick drum, come together. The track ends with a return to the stripped-down repeated eighths, but this time sixteenth notes are overplayed with what seems to be the ambient sounds of a car on a highway. It is important to stress that the music is not chaotic, nor does it seem to indicate a complete falling out of time, but instead emphasizes the different experience of time. Listeners are involved in the time of another virtual world of the song. “Music thus enables us to

experience time aesthetically, intellectually, and physically in new ways" (Frith, *Performing* 149). "We Used to Wait" brings listeners into direct relationship with time.

This layered and sophisticated use of "audible" time and approach to musical timing plays with the lines of the lyric. References to waiting, moving, change, and time are all expressed primarily within the past tense, directly called up by the title "We Used to Wait." The experience of time within the context of passionate love has a direct bearing on this track. The song compares the analogue past to the digital present. The past is idealized as a period when time could be wasted, when waiting was part of the experience of love, and when love was documented in analog form such as letters. The song serves as a lament for the loss not only of the experience of waiting, but also passionate love in a "slower" and more authentic time. The song is a critique of the contemporary experience of love as one impacted by the speed of communication, and this speed is equated with a lack of the ability to express true emotions. Technology as it relates to love and the experience of life is foregrounded, with a lyric expressing that the "flashing light settled deep in my brain." The protagonist of the song may sing nostalgically about a time before technology when letters were written and when true hearts could be permanently recorded; he also admits that this was a time he never experienced. The impact of digital time cannot be untangled from the contemporary experience of love by the amorous subject, and "We Used to Wait" expresses a deep longing for a slower time. Also interesting is the relation between the experience of time by the amorous subject and the judgment of whether the relationship was successful. The trajectory of the passionate love relationship and the experience of time is integral.

Luhmann suggests the link between passionate love and the need for a sense of permanence is specific to the requirements to the contemporary system of passionate love.

Amorous subjects need to fix permanence to intimate relations and sexual relations. As the sense of individuality or separate subjects grew over time, so did the difficulty in ascribing fixedness to passionate love. Luhmann uses the concepts of a factual dimension, temporal dimension, and social dimension to describe this process. These concepts form a "triad of referential dimensions" which builds the subject's sense of being-of-the-world: "love, following education and sociability, now acquired a function of its own, for the factual development in time of the uniqueness of a given view of the world required that people had an influence on other people and incorporated this influence within it" (*Love as Passion* 133). Thus, passionate love relationships are time-bound and founded on the relationship between an individual's impact on another. There is the time before and the time after subjects interact.

Chapter 6.3 Repetitions and Oscillations

In addition to time, repetition and memory are integral to the performance and function of music and passionate love. Repetition and memory are foundations of musical practice. To learn and practice musical performance, one must repeat technical motions over and over again, not only to fix the memory of such movements in the brain but also in the body, in the "muscle memory." Frith frequently relates musical order and form to repetition and greater connections to musical meaning. Repetition also relates to the unfolding of meaning and human subjectivity. Repetition creates the self in a continual either/or logic which marks out the excluded from "normative matrices" making the marked the inferiors and this deeply rooted. Structures of human subjectivity are related to motions of form and repetition. This process is always shifting as in "permanent slippage along a long front of positions" (Haraway qtd. in Middleton, *Voicing* 130). In love songs, repetition is not just musical, it is also at the core of the operation of the system of love. If we understand emotions, including love, to be part of a narrative structure, to have semantic structure, then repetition and memory are inexorably linked.

Proust is concerned with ideas of memory, forgetting and remembering. From Swann's first hearing of the Sonata, Proust describes the efforts of the mind as it attempts to fix the sounds in memory. This fixing in mind is necessary to gain an understanding of the music. "[T]he simple act of listening to music is always shown to involve some kind of repetition, and never more so than when the character of Charles Swann hears works performed at the Verdurins' salon" (Holden 17). Speaking to the important place of music and emotion in his novel, Proust engages in an extended description of Swann's first hearing of the Sonata at the Verdurin salon:

> Doubtless the notes which we hear at such moments tend, according to their pitch and volume, to spread before our eyes over surfaces of varying dimensions, to trace arabesques, to give us the sensation of breadth or tenuity, stability or caprice. But the notes themselves have vanished before these sensations have developed sufficiently to escape submersion under those which the succeeding or even simultaneous notes have already begun to awaken in us. And this impression would continue to envelop in its liquidity, its ceaseless overlapping, the motifs which from time to time emerge, barely discernible, to plunge again and disappear and drown, recognized only by the particular kind of pleasure which they instil, impossible to describe, to recollect, to name, ineffable—did not our memory, like a labourer who toils at the laying down of firm foundations beneath the tumult of waves, by fashioning for us facsimiles of those fugitive phrases, enable us to compare and contrast them with those that follow. (294)

There is much to unpack from this long passage, but what is interesting is that Proust describes an aural experience through metaphors of other senses: smell, sight, and touch. It grasps both the body and soul and threatens, perhaps, to carry all away in the "tumult of waves"; however, the labourer is working away to fix "those fugitive phrases" in the mind, like the wax tablets of the Greeks. Music anchors the fleetingness of time.

In the experience of love, memory, and repetition constitute the lover's repertoire must be compared with what has come before. For theorists such as Luhmann and Lacan, love is not an emotion, but a response to the sensate environment. Amorous subjects, existing in the closed environment of passionate love, respond to information stimuli based on experience and

knowledge. Many theorists point to the role of imagination as critical to the development of the emotion of love. Writing on Proust, Singer states:

> Love having been defined by various Romantics as sympathetic identification by means of imagination which makes both sympathy and identification impossible in love. . . . His entire narrative is designed to prove that . . . imagination subsumes the beloved within the lover's fantasies and personal needs. The prolonged efforts by which the lover seeks to understand what the beloved is like are constantly defeated by imagination, which distorts the particular qualities he or she may have. (186)

In many ways, this dependence on imagination and fantasy aligns the connections among pleasure, repetition, and imagination.

Memory haunts lovers. The track "We Used to Wait" is wholly absorbed with memory. The words of the chorus, "We used to wait for it," are repeated over and over, twenty-one times over the course of the track, and the final moments of the song find Win Butler singing, "Hear my voice screaming / Sing the chorus again." This makes it seem as if the song is stuck, with the band continuing to wait for something that will not return. The ideas of the fantasy and memory run deep within the practice of passionate love and music. Memory is something that can betray and emphasize the time-bound nature of passionate love. Writing on Swann's troubled relationship with Odette, Proust states:

> all his memories of the time when Odette was in love with him, which he had managed until now to keep out of sight in the deepest part of himself, deceived by this sudden beam of light from the time of love which they believed had returned, had awoken and flown swiftly back up to sing madly to him, with no pity for his present misfortune, the forgotten refrains of happiness. (qtd. in Holden 24)

Perhaps the protagonist, like the character of Swann, is stuck in memory, remembering "forgotten refrains of happiness" and a time when love was slower and less painful. The music plays on the need to convey the idea that there is or was a possible time when true love and meaning is possible. Again, returning to both Lacan and Luhmann, amorous subjects must believe that love is possible. Amorous subjects can attribute failed love and regret to a failure of communication.

Memory is troubled by the necessity of forgetting. Passionate love is dependent on information structures such as memory, but also on forgetting. Passionate love is serial. Deleuze puts it this way:

> When we ask how the signs of love are to be interpreted, we seek an instance by which the series may be explicated, the indices and the laws developed. Now, however great the role of memory and of imagination, these faculties intervene only on the level of each particular love, and less to interpret its signs than to surprise them and gather them up, in order to support a sensibility that apprehends them. The transition from one love to another finds its law in Forgetting, not in memory; in Sensibility, not in imagination. Actually, intelligence is the only faculty capable of interpreting the signs and explicating the series of loves. This is why Proust insists on the following point: there are realms in which the intelligence, supported by sensibility, is richer and more profound than memory and imagination. (72)

Thus, selective forgetting is critical to the continued operation of the system of passionate love. As discussed in Chapter Two, for Luhmann the signs of love are temporal and have a narrative structure. Picking up again on Hesmondhalgh's use of the concept of narrative history is useful in placing importance on time, memory, and forgetting in discussions of emotion.

It is critical to understand, however, that memory and narrative structures of time and passionate love are not bound by linear/Chronos time. This understanding of memory and time is also crucial to Luhmann's model of a narrative structure for passionate love. Cultural critic John Frow offers a means of understanding how models of memory must not be aligned with concepts of linear time or of memory as something that is fixed and unchangeable. He argues models of memory and the mind, which use the idea of an inscription (the wax tablet) or storage and retrieval (the archive and the library), do not account for either time or forgetting. Frow suggests a different model, one he names "textuality." He asserts that narrative is essential to thinking about memory, and the critical difference between a narrative model of memory and those dependent on ideas rooted in the fixed inscription is that narrative can be reversed, is repeatable, and can change. Thus, the action of memory and forgetting requires a very different engagement within human subjectivity and broader culture.

In this lengthy passage Frow outlines his model of textuality:

> My figure, then, is that of the logic of textuality: a logic of autonomous narrative order and necessity which takes the form of structural symmetry and the reversibility of time. In Borges' stories this logic is manifested in a number of recurrent motifs: that of the *symmetry* (the reversibility) between duelists, between hero and traitor, between detective and criminal, and the spatial symmetries and mirror-images that organize stories' *mise-en-scene*; the motif of the *labyrinth* (spatial, textual, or conceptual—the concept of infinity, or that of the *mise-en-abyme)* a structure which is at once fully determined and yet, because of its complexity, necessarily indeterminate; and the motif of destiny, the "future as irrevocable as the past," the textual time which is always-already written but also, because it is endlessly

> repeated, always reversible. Such a logic of textuality is of course in no way restricted to Borges's stories. In one way or another it is common to all texts, both "fictional" and "non-fictional." (154)

Time is integral to Frow's multidimensional model of textuality as memory. This model takes place in time and allows for shifts and changes, and can be repeated and mutated. Reversibility versus retrieval as a conceptualization of memory aligns with Luhmann's model of social systems. In Luhmann's systems theory, subjects are not automatons but, as with living organisms in biological systems, change position and "being" according to stimuli. Thus memory, forgetting, and time are integral to the system because subjects within the system must react and act according to the elements within the system. This action is not merely "cause and effect." Luhmann's approach to human subjects allows for differences in reactions, for missed connections and change.

Frow delves further into explicating his model of memory, writing:

> *Reversibility* is here opposed to *retrieval*. The time of textuality is not the linear, before-and-after, cause-and-effect time embedded in the logic of the archive but the time of continuous analeptic and proleptic shaping. Its structure is that of any dynamic but closed system, where all moments of the system are co-present, and the end is given at the same time as the beginning. In such a model the past is a function of the system: rather than having a meaning and a truth determined once and for all by its status as event, its meaning and its truth are constituted retroactively and repeatedly; if time is reversible then alternative stories are always possible. Data are not stored in already constituted places but are arranged and rearranged at every point in time. Forgetting is thus an integral principle of this model, since the activity

> of compulsive interpretation that organizes it involves at once selection and rejection. Like a well-censored dream, and subject perhaps to similar mechanisms, memory has the orderliness and the teleological drive of narrative. Its relation to the past is not that of truth but desire. (229)

Memories are not stored away like boxes in the archive, fixed in position and order. Instead, memories are always constituted on the fly, ready to be "arranged and rearranged at every point in time." Love songs provide a space for the working and reworking out of memory in narrative or textual time. The time before the present is unclear in "We Used to Wait"; it is the time of paper letters and "Before the flashing lights settled deep in my brain"—so in the past. While time, punctuated by the continually ticking clock of the hi-hat, continues to pass throughout the song, listeners are stuck in this past.

Frow makes an essential link between memory and desire. For Frow, memory and forgetting are actions rooted in desire and not the retrieval of fixed elements in the mind, and the act of forgetting is integral to the act of remembering. The actions of memory and forgetting, with and including the added dimension of time, are essential to passionate love. Proust's work reflects the ways human subjects must contend with these elements. Reflections on the cyclical motion of desire and the interaction between desire and time, memory and forgetting, are visible in Luhmann's work, as well as that of Lacan and Žižek. In his reflections on Proust's *Search,* Benjamin gets to the heart the ways memory and time are entangled:

> His true interest is in the passage of time in its most real—that is, intertwined—form, and this passage nowhere holds sway more openly than in remembrance within and aging without. To follow the counterpoint of aging and remembering means to penetrate the heart of Proust's world, to the universe of intertwining. It is the world

> in a state of similarity, and in it the *correspondances* rule; the Romantics were the first to comprehend them and Baudelaire embraced them most fervently, but Proust was the only one who managed to reveal them in our lived life. This is the work of *la memoire involontaire*, the rejuvenating force which is a match for the inexorable process of aging. (“Image” 211)

Thus, though this passage works explicitly on the idea of aging, it makes clear the relationships between all these elements to get at the heart of music’s relationship to passionate love. Swann’s experience of the little phrase is one which demonstrates the knowledge of moving through time. Each meeting of the little phrase charts another point along his relationship with Odette. At the same time, the way Swann hears and experiences the little phrase changes. While the structure of the music stays the same, Swann himself is changed and hears the elements differently. It is not “remembering” that is taking place, despite the English title, but rather search. The little phrase is a little piece of narrative time, and through it, we can unwind a whole story and remembrance. The music acts as a piece of information retrieval.

In “We Used to Wait,” the subject of the love letter returns again and again—the letter never sent, the letter never received, and even the letter purloined. Letters are a locus of anxiety for lovers. And this is the anxiety of the message received, understood, or not understood. Contemporary amorous subjects continue to experience the media of communication as central to the experience of love. Recorded messages, such as letters, voice messages, and even text messages, are a cause of anxiety. For the protagonist of “We Used to Wait,” the speed of these messages, through devices such as instant messaging and mobile phones, has increased the expectation of a response. In his *A Lover’s Discourse*, Barthes has an entry entitled “Waiting.” The agony of the unknown fate of the lover is almost unbearable. Did the beloved get the

message? Did it go astray? Was it received and rejected? The anxiety is a kind of horror to the lover. Barthes writes:

> Like desire, the love letter waits for an answer; it implicitly enjoins the other to reply, for without a reply the other's image changes, becomes *other*. This is what the young Freud explains so authoritatively to his fiancee: "Yet I don't want my letters to keep remaining unanswered, and I shall stop writing you altogether if you don't write back." Perpetual monologues apropos of a loved being, which are neither corrected nor nourished by that being, lead to erroneous notions concerning relations, and makes us strangers to each other when we meet again, so that we find things different from what, without realizing it, we imagined. (159)

The experience of the letter is also an experience of time. It is an experience which centres the anxiety of communication technology. Kittler relates passionate love to communication technology, writing: "The word love is sent forth, is received, is sent out again by the receiver, picked up again by the sender, etc., until the amplifier reaches the point that, in studies of alternating current, is called oscillation amplitude, and in the contemporary discourse is called love" (*Discourse* 53). The communication system of passionate love is related to technologies of recording and transmission.

The amorous subject/protagonist of "We Used to Wait" sees writing a letter as a solution to the communication difficulty presented by his current situation. He sings:

> I'm gonna write a letter to my true love / I'm gonna sign my name / Like a patient on a table / I wanna walk again / Gonna move through the pain.

However, later he states: "But I never wrote the letter / I never wrote my true heart I never wrote it down.

This song, “We Used to Wait,” isn’t merely a lament about a letter never written, or the problems of a single relationship, but rather a lament for the very demise of passionate love itself. The crux of the communication problems in “We Used to Wait” is that the system of communication, that of writing a love letter, has been lost. The lover does not wish he wrote a letter, but rather the tragedy centres on the fact that this form of communication was never actually available.

As textual memory or narrative emotion, the song builds an intense feeling of nostalgia, one which plays the supposed negative aspects of technology and immediate gratification of contemporary society against the ability to wait. An elaborate interactive web-based video, *The Wilderness Downtown*, was developed as a joint project between Google Creative Lab and Chris Milk and released alongside the single (Milk). At its release, the video was hailed as technologically revolutionary because of the way it exploited the possibilities of HTML5. Viewers are invited to enter the address of their childhood home. Through the use of Google Maps and Google Street View, cinematic experience is created from what is presumably one’s childhood home. At the end of the video, one is invited to fill out a virtual postcard with a note to their younger self. This postcard is saved in a kind of postbox, and these notes were also used to populate postcards that were used as visuals during *The Suburbs* tour. The experience leans heavily on feelings of nostalgia and memory and deftly hooks into the themes of the song. While some studies (Fauteux) have focused on the way this video provided a revolutionary and ground-breaking use of the technologies of videos, less attention has been paid to the ways the video draws explicit attention to themes of time and relationships. While the focus of this discussion is only on the audio track, the video presents a number of fascinating pathways into a reflection on passionate love. As discussed previously in this chapter, memory plays a role in passionate love, and playing on a listener’s memories of youth is a call back to beginnings of the narrative of

emotion. The experience of love is tied to the act of forgetting and remembering within the context of time. Love is successive, and to experience a new love, one must both remember and forget the previous relationship. “We Used to Wait” does not refer specifically to the need to forget and remember in the stark terms expressed by Proust. However, the song centres on a nostalgic vision of time in connection with purity and veracity in emotion. The verse “Now our lives are changing fast / Now our lives are changing fast / Hope that something pure can last / Hope that something pure can last” pulls at the challenge of finding authentic and pure love in a society saturated by technology.

In the authentic world, as expressed by this song, passionate love requires a stretching of time and a return to waiting, even with the potential pitfalls of the message not received. Benjamin writes:

> We know that in his work on Proust described not a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it. Yet even this statement is imprecise and far too crude. For the important thing to the remembering author is not what he experienced, but the weaving of his memory, the Penelope work of recollection. Or should one call it, rather, a Penelope work of forgetting? Is not the involuntary recollection, Proust’s *mémoire involontaire*, much closer to forgetting than what is usually called memory? (“Image” 202)

“We Used to Wait” is engaging in “Penelope work” in terms of creating an understanding of passionate love for contemporary amorous subjects. Subjects, in terms of psychoanalysis, are again engaged with the creation of the “screen of fantasy” to keep passionate love in place, the idea that if we returned to an earlier time, before digital and mobile technologies, love would be more pure and more successful. The problem lies not with the impossibility of love itself, but

with communication technologies. Singer, writing on Proust, suggests: “The more the desire advances, the further real possession recedes. So that its happiness, or at least absence of suffering, can be found, it is not satisfaction, but rather extinction of the desire, that one must seek. We try to see the one we love, but we should do our best not to see her, since forgetfulness alone brings about the extinction of desire” (196). Though Singer is commenting on Proust’s writing techniques, there is application to the song “We Used to Wait” and its expression of nostalgia for something that never was.

The nostalgic look back to the time of the letter and when “We Used to Wait” is amplified in performances on tour for *The Suburbs* album. As this track is performed, images of letters from Win and Will Butler’s grandfather Alvino Rey are projected on a screen at the back of the stage. Letters also appear in the *Wilderness Downtown* video and viewers could sign up to receive a postcard in the mail. However, the idea that “true hearts” and truth in love could be expressed in writing is a false remembrance. Barthes writes: “What obstructs amorous writing is the illusion of expressivity: as a writer, or assuming myself to be one, I continue to fool myself as to the effects of language: I do not know that the word ‘suffering’ expresses no suffering and that, consequently, to use it is not only to communicate nothing but even, and immediately, to annoy, to irritate” (98). In passionate love a real connection of souls, a purity of passionate love, is impossible, but this impossibility is screened and hidden. This song and others that follow this pattern create a semantic and affective framework which keeps the fantasy intact.

Chapter 6.4 Conclusion

In the experience of listening to a love song, we are in the time of love. Love songs perform the time of love. Temporality, repetition, memory, and forgetting are all integral to the practice of passionate love and music. Proust repeatedly returns to descriptions of Swann's affective and emotional responses to hearing the Sonata at different stages of his relationship with Odette. While the structures and notes of the music stay the same, Swann experiences it as both the same and different. The Sonata both releases and contains moments in time. Tracking Proust's "little phrase" provides a pattern for this functionality. Luhmann ties passionate love to a sense of the temporal. In psychoanalysis, time is less a specific topic. Still, ideas of the experience of the subject are heavily tied to the experience of a narrative in the form of cultural objects. Love songs such as "We Used to Wait" are expressions of the integral role symbolic media take informing the system of passionate love. "In the most general terms, music shapes meaning, defines nostalgia, programs the way we age (changing and staying the same)" (Frith). These songs speak of time, and nostalgia and echoes of longing for a sense of fixedness are caught within the music itself. "We Used to Wait" opens a space where amorous subjects can experience nostalgia and experience the push and pull of time, feeling both loss and hope for passionate love. Luhmann links the demise of passionate love in contemporary society to communication media in the closing chapter of his work. He suggests that as the systems break down, so does the possibility the is hope that love will exist. If lovers are unable to hope that they might breach the chasm of communication between lover and beloved, the desire that lovers can connect, then the whole system will collapse or entropy.

Chapter 7.1 Terrible Love: Terror, the Inhuman, and Music

But I won't follow you
Into the rabbit hole
I said I would but then I saw
Your shivered bones
They didn't want me to
It's a terrible love and I'm walking with spiders
It's a terrible love and I'm walking in
(The National, "Terrible Love")

Love songs are productive material which reinforce cultural conditions for passionate love through the use of semantic devices. Passionate love is not derived from natural feeling or emotion, but from a series of communicative episodes. Amorous subjects must continually reconstitute themselves in relation to a series of desired objects. However, the beloved becomes a figure of dread at the point of the breakdown of relationship and the act of sex. This chapter discusses the inhuman in the guise of the uncanny and the challenge presented by sexual activity. Both of these topics open spaces for terror where communication holds the possibility of dread.

Chapter 7.2 Nighttime, Music, and the Uncanny

Numerous love songs take for their subject hauntings, ghosts, and spectres. Both Proust and Cave describe how a piece of music can attach itself to an amorous relationship and continue to "haunt" the lover, even after the relationship has ended. The music itself seems to conjure these ghosts and set the body of the former beloved before the lover. Why do songs seem to haunt lovers? What might be at the heart of this proliferation of bodies when the night is no longer the time of possibility for lovers, but rather a time of terror and dread. Ghostly love songs point to the horror of the amorous relationship, the undead lovers, the ones who refuse to die. These undead lovers continue to haunt long after the death of the relationship itself, and these undead bodies are at once familiar, but at the same time twisted and repulsive. No matter how much we might wish to suppress the memory of the relationship, it returns. The theme of the revenant, or ghost, is one that returns and returns in connection to love in many works of art. This chapter will draw on ideas of the uncanny, or "*das Unheimliche*," to work through the Arcade Fire song "Ocean of Noise" looking at the connections between the figures of ghosts and the uncanny in love and music.

On the gramophone, Kittler wrote: "Media always already yielded ghostly phenomena" (*Gramophone* 22). Edison's initial vision for the use of his gramophone had little to do with the possibilities for musical entertainment. It was instead as a piece of office machinery and, most fascinatingly, the recording of voices of family members as a form of remembrance after death. Through recordings, the dead maintain the ability to speak. Ghosts proliferate in media. Peters also finds the gramophone continues to be a source of ghostly phenomena containing spirits: "The phonograph presented a human voice without a human body. The human soul, the breath,

had taken up residence in a machine" (161). In recorded sound, there is always already a dislocation of bodies. We hear the voice, breath, and even bodies, but there is nothing to hold.

Kramer takes this idea even further to suggest all music, not only music captured by media, is haunted by the musical revenant. He defines a revenant as "a spectre, a ghost, a phantom, one who haunts, who returns, who walks again. The revenant appears to point at a known lack or point out one unknown. It embodies a condition of loss, self-division, or desire that it may both worsen and alleviate, invest with either regret or acceptance" (*Franz* 261). If music and sound can reference bodies that are missing, give voice to the dead, and act as a means of connecting the living to the dead, what does it mean when the sound remains, but the beloved is gone? As discussed in the previous chapter, Deleuze suggests that we can only transition from one love to another by forgetting. In passionate love, memory can be the enemy of the amorous subject. The former beloved must be forgotten if one is to love again, yet the body/soul of a lover can never be entirely expunged from the memory banks and insists on rising again. Cave states: "the Love Song holds within it an eerie intelligence all of its own" (*Secret*). This eeriness may be located in music's ability take on a role that is both familiar and distant, to address the uncanny, the abomination that is the beloved, in a way that language alone cannot. It is music's aural status that allows these glimpses.

In *Search*, Proust's uses the "little phrase" as a means of reflecting and illustrating the relationship between Swann and Odette. It provides a useful example of the connections between music, passionate love, and the uncanny. For Swann, even after their relationship has ended, the "little phrase" is never entirely uncoupled from Odette. As he encounters it, again and again, Swann's experience perception and enjoyment of the music is changed. It haunts him, like a

ghostly body. The music conjures not only the apparition of Odette but also of himself as a kind of doppelganger. Holden writes:

> For Swann, this reappearance of “the little phrase,” and concomitantly of all the toughest and feelings associated with it, is a deeply upsetting experience. In fact, it leaves him cleft in two: “And Swann saw, motionless before that relived happiness, a miserable figure who filled him with pity because he did not recognize him right away, and he had to lower his eyes so that no one would see they were full of tears. It was himself” (Proust qtd. in Holden). Freud, of course, has suggested that the encounter with one’s double is an example of “the uncanny.” However, if the return of “the little phrase,” repressed in Swann’s mind for so long, does produce a sense of the uncanny or *unheimlich* then at the same time it results in something altogether more canny or *heimlich*. Its performance here, at the Marquise de Saint-Euvert’s soiree, occasions a kind of homecoming. (25)

For Swann the music conjures a ghostly double, his former self, and the ghostly presence of the couple, he and his beloved together. The sight of this ghostly couple after they have parted has made it apparent that this joining as one being was false right from the beginning. Reverence for the beloved has changed to horror. The lover, now a dupe, is filled with self-loathing. The secret, that fact that knowing another, even in love, is an illusion, is out in the open.

The idea of the uncanny, or the *unheimlich*, was taken up by Freud in an essay by the same name in 1919. In this work, Freud works through a number of threads, acknowledging that the critical point of the horror of the *unheimlich* is that what was supposed to remain hidden comes out into the open. The *unheimlich* is a sensation or moment of falling out of the normal order of things. The uncanny is a result of the failure of the veil of fantasy triggered by some

kind of encounter, and these moments provide glimpses of things repressed, a momentary regression or breakage in the unity of the subject. The uncanny makes appearances throughout Western literature and music. For example, Schubert's *Die Doppelgänger,* a song telling the story of seeing one's double, is an expression of the uncanny.

In *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema*, Žižek convincingly demonstrates how moments of the uncanny in film expose what human subjects would rather repress. In matters of love, the uncanny, that which refuses to be suppressed or forgotten, exposes the rickety framework of the system of passionate love and the horror of the Real. Luhmann does not deal with the idea of the uncanny, or indeed something named "haunting," or any ghostly apparition. However, in Luhmann's work on love, there is an increasing level of what could be termed terror as the work progresses chronologically. Luhmann's terror shares a kinship with the terror named by Lacan. This terror is a feeling of dread related to the failure of the amorous subject to find a perfect match. Both Luhmann's theories on passionate love and Lacanian psychoanalysis locate this terror in amorous subjectivity. In each method, this is expressed as the gulf between amorous subjects has grown so vast that subjects will remain isolated forever.

In the music of Arcade Fire, sound and voice are frequently coupled with references to sight, the unseen, and night. Night makes a frequent appearance in their music and across all their albums, sometimes as a foil for the day. The ideas of night and ghosts have troubled the history of love. Night and day speak not only of the metaphor of reason and unreason/emotion, but to a very real tie, at least during certain periods, to night as (re)productive. Things happen in the dark that do not during the day. Night can be dangerous, lacking in light, full of terrors, but also the space of pleasure and time. Ghosts might walk at night. Kramer spins out his discussion around the central theme of "revenant." He offers the idea or framework of ghosts as a means to

access the forces of desire, the issues of musical originality/citation and as a means to explore the idea of subjectivity. "A revenant is a spectre, a ghost, a phantom, one who haunts, who returns, who walks again. Such visitations may be ghastly, of course, but they may also be genial, beguiling, seductive; the only things they all have in common are an aura of ambivalence and an attraction to lack. . . . It embodies a condition of loss, self-division, or desire that it may both worsen and alleviate, invest with either regret or acceptance" (*Musical* 261). From the above quotation, we can see Kramer's attraction to the revenant idea concerning both music and the idea of subjectivity. Music is ghost-like in its connection to memory or nostalgia, and in this particular study, Kramer suggests that all music is haunted by both the composer and the cultural milieu from which it originates. Music speaks, but for whom and from where? The existence of the musical revenant is what allows music to play a role in creating the subject, in a way, according to Kramer, that is more powerful than language. For the amorous subject, it is the voice that can call these musical voices into being as a means of bracketing, or as something that does not belong, or as something expected that does not arrive.

The figure of the subject experiencing abjection or horror "at the state of things" is a familiar one in the music of Arcade Fire. Their music frequently deals with feelings of alienation and the familiar growing unfamiliar, including feelings of dislocation related to amorous relationships. Unbridled joy makes a rare appearance in the music of Arcade Fire—there's always a worm in the apple or something has gone amiss, and as we have seen in previous chapters, love relationships are frequently viewed through the lens of nostalgia and loss. The *Reflektor* album contains numerous songs concerned with the visual, with lyrics dealing with sight, reflections, and things hidden, and often featuring a protagonist dealing with anxiety and the annihilation of love. From the unifying force of the story of Orpheus, which appears in song

and sculptural form, to repeated references to the visual, both seeing and unseeing and feelings of alienation, in lyrical and musical content. These songs deal with the anxiety and angst present in any relationship, especially at the end or after a relationship has ended. Žižek writes: "The role of the Lacanian real is, however, radically ambiguous: true, it erupts in the form of a traumatic return, derailing the balance of our daily lives, but it serves at the same time as a support of this very balance. What would our daily life be without some support in an answer of the real" (*Looking Awry* 29). These encounters are traumatic, and we will inevitably repeat these moments again and again.

Arcade Fire's song "Ocean of Noise" presents an interesting angle on the horror of desire and amorous relationships and echoes Proust's sketching of love as a horror. Singer writes: "Proustian love provides very little happiness and a great deal of pain. It is what Baudelaire called 'an oasis of horror in a desert of boredom,' its momentary joys arising from a world of emptiness and issuing into a nightmare of mental anguish" (191). "Ocean of Noise" is haunting not because it is a story of a breakup, or breakdown of an amorous relationship, but because of the inevitability of the failure. It opens with the sound of thunder and rain, with the sound of something that sounds like a radio tuning, then the snare drum takes up the steady staccato of raindrops it will keep throughout the track. Butler comes in with the lines of the verse: "In an ocean of noise / I first heard your voice / Ringing like a bell / As if I had a choice, oh well!" It later returns in a slightly changed form: "In an ocean of noise / I first heard your voice / Now who here among us / still believes in choice? Not I," with the "not I" line echoed by other male voices. These lines are coupled with a trance-like melody, a sound of resignation, rather than meditation or soothing. The delivery is flat, with the emphasis on the "oh well" and "not I" a leaning in and release. Time, the music invokes the sound of the ocean and/or a storm; however,

this sound can be heard both diagetically, as actual storm sounds, and metaphorically. The bass chords in the piano give the sense that the protagonist is not in control, despite what the lyrics say. He is up against the power and will of nature. This song does not speak of an out-of-control, animal desire, but rather the inevitability of the course of love, possibly controlled by an external force.

The idea of force or will of an external other is echoed in other aspects of this track. It is no coincidence that the lyrics reference the sound of the beloved's voice as being like a bell. In one sense, it is the sound of a bell cutting through "an ocean of noise," but it is also a reference to being summoned as one trained to respond in the way as a servant or even an animal. Thus, the response to the beloved or the amorous relationship, in this case, is not a matter of being bewitched or fascinated by the beloved, but compelled by a force beyond. The desire for the beloved is not pleasant or even wanted. In an interview with *Pitchfork* after *Neon Bible* was released, Win Butler reveals that growing up he spent time sailing and being close to the ocean. In answer to interviewer Amanda Petrusich's question whether "the ocean represents a lack of control," Butler answers: "Yeah, in a way. I have this image of being on the ocean at night—feeling that you're being moved by a wave, but not being able to see it. The natural fear in a situation like that, the sense of everything being beyond your control—it's a self-preservation instinct or something. It's a different kind of fear." The coupling of the idea of fear of a loss of control with a romantic relationship has taken on a sinister cast. Žižek states: "What we get here is an uncanny subject who is not simply another human being, but the Third, the subject who stands above them in . . . of real human individuals—and the terrifying enigma is, of course, what does this impenetrable subject want from us?" (*How to Read* 41) Thus in passionate love

the feeling of a terrifying and inhuman lover, the loss of control, and the feeling of being at the mercy of an other, outside the beloved, is a pattern that is repeated.

The interplay between voice and sound draws attention to the location of bodies as a source of sound, particularly in the case of recordings. The title of this track, “Ocean of Noise,” and the difficulty the protagonist has in locating the beloved, pushing back against the relenting “ocean of noise,” is the central theme. Furthermore, the very idea of noise versus message is core. In communication theory, noise is characterized as a sound that is unwanted or unneeded in the relay of messages. The juxtaposition of noise, challenges in an amorous relationship, and references to violence work together to express a sensation of terror. The beloved is not a refuge from the deluge of empty noise but is a response to a signal. Middleton locates a degree of the uncanny in the voice as with the voice we are already missing a body. He writes: “This voice . . . is a place where the phenomenal world extends into a noumenal margin, so it holds out the hope of embodying before our ears, finally a transcendental object” (*Voicing* 254). A human voice is evidence of a body, a body that is caught up in the symbolic matrix and a body that can be desired. However, this desire that is not ours, but, according to Lacan, is the Other’s. This confusion of desire, bodies, and the location of sound is at the heart of how music eases the pathways of amorous communication as well and at the same time lets us see the problems. As Žižek suggests for film, “when we look through the cracks we see the dark other side where hidden forces run the show.” (*Pervert’s Guide)* “Ocean of Noise” tugs at this fear.

For Luhmann, there is difficulty in demonstrating the personal versus the impersonal. The friction between the personal and the impersonal creates a *constitutive difference* which creates information in the context of passionate love. Luhmann writes:

> It is not much of an exaggeration to say that this difference can be experienced in *every* social relationship: impersonal relationships are “only” impersonal relationships. Personal relationships are overburdened by the expectations that one will be in tune with the person, and this often dooms such relationships to failure—which in turn only serves to intensify the quest for them and makes the inadequacy of exclusively impersonal relationship all the more apparent. (*Love as Passion* 162)

The setting apart of the beloved becomes important, as does the opening of a personal or intimate communication channel, but this is difficult to achieve, particularly in a public setting. One needs to transmit personal information, but not too much as to be weird by “oversharing.” One needs to clarify the exclusivity of the relationship.

In “Ocean of Noise” the protagonist turns to lies or stories as a form of self-preservation, a way to shore up the idea of a unified and autonomous self threatened by a breakdown of the imaginary. He twice sings the lines: “You’ve got your reasons / And, me—I’ve got mine / But all the reasons I gave / Were just lies to buy myself some time.” These lines are sung across the widest range and reach the highest notes in the melody, emphasising the word “lies.” The “lies” one tells to sustain the relationship begin to unravel, revealing that what was imagined to be there, a chance to find a connection with another, is false. Desire is not satisfied. This echoes the Lacanian sense of lack. Mansfield writes: “The tension between the endless desire that is the source of human motivation and the hopeless demands that fail to appease it, is the very heart of the human tragedy, according to Lacan. We feel desire only because the imaginary has escaped us because we are lost in the symbolic” (46). The song is not a lament for lost love or the courtly love song as outlined earlier, but the opening of a wholly different traumatic space. The safety of the imaginary is threatened, and terror is located in the possibility of this loss.

In this track, the music constantly pulls like waves against the lyrical content, breaking down the clarity of message and making resistance a challenge. Near the end of the track, the voice is overtaken in the mix, washing the lover back into the imaginary and the perpetual motion of desire. The safety of the imaginary is invoked with the words: "I'm gonna work it out." The uncanny nature of the song is emphasized by the subject's momentary shift to the unfamiliar territory when disconnected with the imaginary. The "return" in the music is emphasized by a musical shift in the last verse. The sounds of the storm are gone, and the steady rain of the snare drum recedes into the mix as a wordless chorus of voices, brass, and strings take up a countermelody in the background, continuing alone after the protagonist and rhythm section end, conjuring images of a kind of heavenly chorus. The world is back in order.

Chapter 7.3 Love and Sexuality

You always fall
for what you desire
or what you fear.
(Arcade Fire, "The Well and the Lighthouse")

A track on the *Reflektor* album has the unmistakably sexually graphic title of "Porno." However, despite the title, it's a remarkably unsexy piece of music. Instead of "sexy music," it is a diatribe against pornography, it scolds both "boys" caught up in "selfish shit" and women for wearing too much makeup. While it seems this track intends to criticize the ubiquitous presence of pornography and call for greater veracity and balance of roles in sexual relationships, the results are at best tepid, and at worst anti-feminist. Critics such as Wilson have called out Arcade Fire's propensity for lecturing their listeners on a wide range of topics, and this track comes across as not only preachy and but also unsettling.

The challenges presented by "Porno" pull at Luhmann's pairing of the codification of love with the rise of moral feelings: "The paradoxical codification of amour passion is followed by an insistence on moral feelings, which takes account of and incorporates the bourgeois reading public" (47). What can this unease tell us about how music entrains the practice of passionate love but also exposes frictions? The symbolic structures in music work to determine the coordinates of our fantasy space, a structure in part created through the representation of sexual activity in music. There is a fragile balance between reality and fantasy dimension in our sexual activity. Žižek aptly suggests that though ". . .sexuality seems to be about bodies, it's not really about bodies, it's about how bodily activity is reported in words" (*Pervert's Guide*). This section will examine "Porno" against the tension between sex, pornography, and passionate love as explicitly expressed in Arcade Fire, and indie generally. This music tells us something about

how reality constitutes itself concerning both sexual activity and the highly gendered regimes which construct male and female subjectivity within this system.

As discussed in a previous chapter, music can signal and display the marks of the body. These connections can be made through musical references or metaphors for bodily motion, but more powerfully this takes place in connection with the voice. The presence of a voice invokes a body and can call attention to a lack of body. Susan Fast suggests it is difficult to separate musical utterances from the bodies making them. As listeners, we interact with the bodies of performers. Thus, music forces a kind of intimacy with human bodies. She writes: "Sound touches us, physically. It connects us with the body from which it is coming. It is an intimate form of human contact" (131). Middleton has focused on the ways the human voice opens particularly intimate pathways: "singers stand naked, their bodies not mediated by external instruments" (*Voicing* 94). Middleton suggests that such display is coded as feminine and sees the correlations of voice-body-sex-woman-display-prostitute.

Performance techniques involving breath and voice can conjure the feeling of intimacy and voyeurism, even amid a crowd. The introduction of the microphone into popular music performance changed vocal performance techniques (Frith, *Pleasure* 129). Frith uses the example of the "crooners" of the 1940s to illustrate his point. The microphone enabled a breathy vocal delivery that would be impossible without amplification. These techniques have become so commonplace in popular music they almost go unnoticed, except when they do. "Porno" is such a case. At the outset of the track, there is a close-miked long exhalation accompanied by words spoken under the breath, "right here, right here, right here," and many incomprehensible words and sounds that do verge on what might be considered stock sounds from a pornographic film. The inhalations and exhalations of breath, all uttered by Win Butler, and the breathiness that

returns at several points throughout the track are among the more unsettling elements of "Porno." It is unclear whether these elements are meant to sound sexy or to parody sexual content from other genres. However, the performance of breath is connected to the body and the performance of sexuality. In the context of indie music, sounds of bodies, such as inhalations, are used to invoke authenticity and veracity of the performed emotion; using these same techniques to invoke authenticity of sexuality is discomforting.

Subjectivity involves complex relationships between bodies and governs how we see and encounter our bodies and the bodies of others. Both Lacan and Žižek focus on the ways subjectivity is formed through vision, whether it is the disjointed and broken sight of one's self, the illusion of a unified self reflected from mirrored surfaces, or the way we see text and moving images. The voice, too, is a powerful site for the production of subjectivity. We enter the symbolic world through language, a language that is first produced through only voice. It is this voicing which also propels and divides the subject from the body. A human voice equals the presence of a human subject, and in music, the impact of the voice is heightened.

The presence or absence of melody, the techniques and marks of voice, the gestures and timbre, and so on, call attention to the voice in a way that speech does not. It is, therefore, crucial to be sensitive to the methods used in the composition of music. In "Porno" the presence or absence of melody, the spoken words, the sound of breath are deliberately calling our attention to the voice as emanating from a human body. It is a body that seems desirous. We hear the voice but are denied access to the body. This quotation from Middleton gets to the heart of the matter:

> Just as photographic and filmic images offer, it would seem, access to a reality that is in fact always elsewhere and is therefore at the same time with-held, so a recorded voice promises a body we can never hold, opening up a gap between desire and

> object that can never be closed. But this reveals what was always already there (albeit remediated, amplified, doubled): "the moment we enter the symbolic order, an unbridgeable gap separates forever a human body from 'its' voice." The voice acquires a spectral autonomy, it never quite belongs to the body we can see.
> What, in performance, normally covers over this gap was in any case only a mask, a masquerade, which is now just given a new and added powers (like the photograph, the recording cannot lie—which means that it lies more convincingly; like the photograph, it is both lifelike and already dead and gone). (*Voicing* 95)

In "Porno" it is the recorded voice that is at stake.

"Porno" is one of two tracks that were modified and reused by Win Butler and Owen Pallet in the soundtrack for the film *Her*. The storyline of the film revolves around the story of a male protagonist, Theodore Twombly, a writer in the "final stages" of a divorce. In the course of the film he falls in love with the artificial intelligence system, the OS1, he has purchased to help him write. The OS1 comes with a female voice he names Samantha ("Her"). "Porno" is the basis of the music heard during a sex scene. It is a sex scene with no actual intercourse, where the male lover is making love to a machine. The room is dark, amplifying the interplay of voices. We are not distracted by visual clues. The voices speak of embodied experience, penetration, yet we know this is impossible. It is disorienting. The music is complicit in this. Like much of the music in the film, it is also unhinged from the solid ground of melody. The confusion is one of bodies and voices. This brings us to the question of how Butler's and Chassagne's voices interact within this track and the ways these voices transgress or reinforce the structures of passionate love.

Sexual activity is represented in music in the register of the voice. This is where we find the noises or imitation of the vocalizations of sex. That is, it relates not only to sexual activity but also to gender relationships. Middleton, following on the work of Julia Kristeva and Kaja Silverman, suggests the voice is the critical sexualizing force and as such has an essential relationship with phallic power. In her work on the role of the female voice in cinema, Silverman forcefully argued for the connection between the voice, the oral cavity and the vaginal cavity, and gendered subjectivity. She extends Lacan's "mirror stage" theories, that is an infant's experience of seeing their reflection in a mirror and recognizing themselves only as a unified whole for the first time, to the idea of the "acoustic mirror." Lacan suggests subjects only ever see themselves or know themselves as "mirrored," as the idea of subjects as a unified whole is an illusion. Silverman argues the way women's voices are controlled and deployed in cinema reflects our subjectivity and is a means of reinforcing and safeguarding male subjectivity and phallic power.

Middleton finds that unlike cinema there is a strong link between body and voice in music and there is not the same connection between image and voice. Thus, the operations of gaze and reflection are present, but are super concentrated in the voice and the acoustic realm. Middleton suggests:

> What is important here is not only the parallels in the role of voice and gaze—both act as mirrors, playing out the dramas of reflection, identity, and difference that construct subject and their others—but also the differences—the "acoustic mirror," as it has been called, loops back to the ears of the vocalizing subject in a narcissistic short-circuit—and the interplay between them. (*Voicing* 96)

In the case of music, Middleton suggests the familiar trope of the voice as a representation of the inside, therefore, has a particular closeness to the body, noting that the voice, with "its site of production—mouth, throat, vocal tract—is associated with a range of sexing tropes. As an apparatus that organises the passage of energy from inside the body to outside—desire as articulated air—this site bears obvious comparison to sexual organs" (*Voicing* 93). Thus, the voice and its relationship to both language and the body is a powerful way sexual activity can be represented in music. Mansfield writes: "The subject is merely a fragment of a dynamic field of endless incompletions and disjunctions. The individual body is the hardness which makes this subjectivity appear in its illusory separation" (44). Furthermore, by utilizing both breath and whispered spoken word, the sound becomes "marked," that is, with particular emphasis on the delivery as something falling outside the typical techniques used in other songs. By leading off the track with the whispered under-the-breath spoken words coupled with breathing, Win Butler is calling attention to his body and creating a space where the listener is no longer a member of the audience, but a voyeur, a witness to an intimate scene. It is horrifying.

Win Butler's voice dominates this track, subduing and overpowering Chassagne's voice. Chassagne is only heard in the background and in answer to Butler, and Butler's voice controls her involvement. This action seems to be in opposition to the tenor of the lyrics, which imply the protagonist is available and willing to please her sexually and emotionally, with lines expressing the ways he is unlike other "little boys" and further emphasizing the idea of a couple. However, the lack of Chassagne's vocal and bodily involvement is troubling. She does not express her desires or signal her pleasure. The "I'm over it" response only shores up and keeps safe male phallic power and subjectivity. He is reflected and reinforced by the woman/beloved (in this case played by Chassagne). In the role of the beloved, Chassagne is inaccessible and distant. The

sense of distance is created and reinforced by miking techniques which give the sense her voice is coming from a distance. This mystifying and masking of Chassagne's involvement echoes the conceptualization of woman as a "black box" and inscrutable. On sexuality, Singer writes: ". . . he thinks the facts of sexuality reveal that true penetration and possession must always elude the lover. Even if a man has sexual intercourse with a woman, he has not penetrated her except in a trivial sense pertaining to male and female anatomy. . . . For no sexual act can deprive a person of his or her separateness" (189). The division of pleasure along vocal lines and the reinforcing of sexual roles within "Porno" make it challenging to view it as transgressive and undermine what might be efforts on the part of the band to challenge contemporary structures of passionate love and sexuality.

The lyrics of "Porno" are rife with communication problems. The lover repeatedly attempts to open a communication channel with the beloved, but fails, for example, "I've got to find you / Before the line is lost." and "Before the breakup / Comes the silence / I'm talking to you / You say you're over it / But I know." Passionate love and sexual union are thwarted by interference from external sources, internalized influence, and the beloved herself. Win Butler's figure of the lover attempts to solve amorous communication problems by intervening with the beloved. He calls for her to remove makeup from eyes, and find a place for the lovers alone where communication and sex can take place with more veracity. Arcade Fire's use of the pornography as a mark of something that is fake and harmful to the expression of true feelings heightens this "setting apart" as a means of expressing the "rightness" of the lover's feelings. As with "We Used to Wait," this track sets up a pattern that love is conditional on communication and that external forces, especially in the form of technology or media, are the cause of disruption and frustration of amorous communication.

In "Porno," the lover and beloved assume and affirm traditional power structures in regards to gender; however, at the same time these structures are undermined by Butler's vocalizations. The beloved is "forced" to acknowledge the lover. Luhmann suggests the connection between lovers has nothing to do with the success or failure of the sex or romantic relationship itself. Passionate love as a social system is functional, and power structures between genders are a reflection of the needs of the system. However, to loop back to Lacan, if a voice is the source of logos, then a search for the true voice, including in passionate love, is a quest for the acquisition of control. Thus, the way the sounds of the lover and beloved are used within this song is at tension with the aim of the lyrics. The music itself is of no help, neither confirming nor denying the integrity of the lover's intent, nor clarifying the intentions of the song. Win Bulter's vocalizations open a dilemma as the vocalizations at the opening of the track are more in line with expected feminine expression.

To illustrate the complicated tension between vocal performance, gender, and power dynamics, Middleton explores eighteenth-century castrati performance practice and the theories of castration and phallic power in psychoanalysis. Through this example, Middleton demonstrates questions of gender and vocal practice are complicated: "Within this perspective, women's quest to subvert or appropriate phallic power can never reduce to the question, who does the washing up-—or who plays guitar" (*Voicing* 97). Win Bulter's vocalizations contain several interconnected and complex threads which play on gender roles, both gesturing to male hegemonic power, as well as engaging in more transgressive vocal practices. For example, Bulter's vocalizations at the opening of the track are coded as feminine, while his overpowering of Chassagne's voice is masculine. However, as much as thesevocalization it can be heard as transgressive, there remains in "Porno" deeply engrained gender and sexual roles. Butler's

dangerous position, taking on a feminine role at the opening of the track, is absent through the remainder of the song. For much of the song, the male protagonist/lover remains in a traditional vocal role, and the woman/beloved is returned to the state of "castration."

The predominance of women using vocalized sex sounds in pop music is in keeping with the performance practice in pornographic movies, where female vocalizations are needed as "proof" of female pleasure (Williams). Unlike men with the obvious erection and inevitable "money shot," the only representational "proof" of the woman's climax and pleasure is in the voice (Williams). Kapsalis and Corbett suggest male pleasure is represented chiefly as a "frenzy of the visible," while feminine pleasure can be thought of as of a "frenzy of the audible" (103). They add another further sonic contrast, suggesting: "Men's pleasure is absolute, irrefutable, and often quiet, while women's pleasure is elusive, questionable, and noisy" (104). This classification and enforcement of gendered sexual roles is played out over and over again in pop music. Women's vocalizations are frequently a representation of encoded feminine sexuality. Men, in a masculine position, remain in control of their vocalization and are restricted to straight singing or speaking, or adhere to a stylized musical form, such as melismas. This feminine "frenzy of the audible" has been well-documented by theorists such as Silverman concerning film. The highly gendered universe of music performance makes this imbalance, the vocal, out-of-control woman, and the silent, in-control man, a cause for concern. Again, "Porno" does little to stretch the information system of passionate love. Codes and standards are kept in place.

For Lacan, there is nothing natural about the sexual act. It's never simply about "doing it," nor is it a question of sexual success. Encounters with others through the sexual act is itself traumatic because, as Žižek suggests:

> . . .sexuality is the domain in which we get closest to the intimacy of another human being, totally exposing ourselves to him or her, sexual enjoyment is real for Lacan: something traumatic in its breathtaking intensity, yet impossible in the sense that we cannot ever make sense of it. This is why a sexual relation, in order to function, has to be screened through some fantasy. (*How to Read* 49)

It's not that sex doesn't happen, but that it is never pure ecstatic abandonment, or can never be experienced as pure Real, and as Žižek suggests, can never be understood. All representations therefore fail. The moment we attempt to understand sex, to pin it down, to fix the experience in the sonic of music, we are outside it as pure experience, and it ceases to be itself. Thus, there is no way to experience the thing itself without a "symbolic fiction known as reality" (Middleton, *Voicing* 107) raising the possibility that we can only meet the sexual act through the intervention of fantasy. It seems then that one of the reasons there may be so much music connected to sexual activity is because of its function as the "screen of fantasy."

Arcade Fire's references to pornography allow us to dig deeper into ideas of sexuality and subjectivity to draw connections between this individual song and the broader system of amorous relations constructed and maintained by music. The voice becomes a feedback loop, a key to letting your sexual partner know that they are "doing it right." In music, sexual activity can be represented through an attempt to mimic the sounds, or through a musical interpretation of the physical movements of the body. These can be encoded into the music. Music always both fails in the use of language and succeeds when it is ambiguous enough for anyone to talk up a subject position, to be possessed by the musical revenant. It is like Barthes' *Lovers Discourse* when you say "I recognize that," but even further if there is a bodily response. The ideas of the

"porno" and sexuality are at work on multiple levels. Žižek suggests there is a "lesson of pornography":

> The lesson of pornography is thus more important than it may appear: it concerns the way in which jouissance is torn between the Symbolic and the Real. On the one hand, jouissance is "private," the kernel which resists public disclosure (look how embarrassing it is to use when our intimate modes of enjoyment, private tics, etc., are publicly disclosed); on the other hand, however, jouissance "counts" only as registered by the big Other; it tends in itself towards this inscription (from public boasting to a confession to one's closest friend). (Žižek, *Plague* 179)

Thus, sex requires reporting and music is a method of such inscription which both reports and instructs.

Arcade Fire's "Pornography" is puzzling in its prohibitions on pornography and its appeals to enjoyment. This song reveals that in the context of indie music, amorous subjects are no more free to express sexuality than is evident in any other genre of music, or in pornography itself. The fact that sexuality is highly codified is recognized by Žižek, as he writes: "The next paradox of pornography, following logically from this 'complementarity' between narrative and act, is that this genre, which is supposed to depict the most spontaneous of all human activities, is probably the most codified, down to the most intimate details. . ." (*Plague* 226). Following the rules or not following can both result in disaster and the sexual act is never something entirely in the ecstatic dimension. There are always already lines between the three matrixes. The Lacanian problem with the sexual relationship is starkly evident. The sexual relationship doesn't exist because it can never be fully realized. As with music, we are always in the role of an observer looking on. The amorous subject in "Porno" longs for a time and place where sexual expression

can be freely and truthfully enjoyed, but we all know it was never there and is impossible. All genres of media expressing passionate love and sexuality are highly codified. Luhmann makes this explicitly clear in his working through the system of passionate love. Without the code and regulations, passionate love would not exist:

> If someone claims to feel *plaisir* there is no point in claiming the contrary. In the case of *plaisir* the subject requires no criteria to make certain it is experiencing *plaisir*, but rather can be sure of itself in a sort of self-referentiality bare of evaluative criteria. In other words, here there is none of that fateful duality of authentic and merely feigned love which otherwise had been such an intriguing topic of social intercourse with regard to the behaviour of *others*. (*Love as Passion* 87)

In Luhmann's writing on passionate love, sexuality is perhaps less complex and less of a concern than for Žižek and Lacan. For Žižek love is indeterminate because we can never meet the needs of our desire.

In the entry for "Porno" in the accompanying booklet for the *Reflektor* album, the images are entirely composed of human eyes. While the entire album of *Reflektor* is connected to "seeing," this track is particularly caught up with issues related to seeing. The obsessive references to vision, sight, and seeing can be tied to the friction between what is known and unknown, what is seen, and what cannot be seen. Sexual desire and sexuality have the potential to expose the gap between the amorous subject and big Other, and there is always the potential for trauma. Žižek states we can experience love as trauma, writing: "being loved makes me directly feel the gap between what I am as a determinate being and the unfathomable X in me that causes love" (*How* 44). The track "Porno" is as much about the gap and the trauma of the impossibility of ever knowing the beloved as it is a critique of pornography and contemporary

society. References to removing makeup are linked to seeing, the beloved's makeup is a barrier to seeing and hearing. Win Butler sings: "You take the makeup / Off your eyes / I've got to see you / Hear your sacred sighs." Lacan writes: "To enjoy a body when there are no more clothes leaves intact the question of what makes the One, that is, the question of identification" (*On Feminine* 6). Thus the concepts and patterns transmitted in this track only hide that fact that "full enjoyment" and "full knowledge" is impossible.

The lack of knowledge about what a lover knows of the beloved is not caused by pornography or a lack of free communication, but it is an impossibility. The illusion of that the possibility exists keeps the system of passionate love functioning. It allows the paradox of passionate love to be sustained. Luhmann suggests:

> what one is looking for in love, in intimate relationships, is first and foremost *the validation of self-portrayal*. It is not so much a question of the lover's overestimating or even idealizing the beloved. The beloved, who feels continuously called upon to be better and continuously experiences the discrepancy between this and reality, tends to find this rather unpleasant, at least in the long run. If self-portrayal as the "formation" of one's own individuality is freed from social control, i.e. is made somehow contingent, it in particular will need a social foundation. (*Love as Passion*165)

The lover in "Porno" is interested in self-validation and repeatedly calls on the beloved to fulfill his needs, vowing that "You can cry I won't go / You can scream, I won't go." Ultimately this is not a song of petition or favour from the beloved, but a jagged and jarring song about the inevitable end of a relationship, and the unfathomable and unbreachable distance between lovers.

At its heart, the track "Porno," like many of Arcade Fire's love songs, locates the problem with contemporary, passionate love as a problem with technology and communication. Win Bulter's line, "Got to find you before the line is lost," again returns to the use of technology as intertwined with amorous communication. The lover pins the problem on issues with the lines of communication and the construction of expectation, with a world constructed by "little boys and their porno." This amorous subject is in an impossible space. Full enjoyment is desired, smooth and easy access to the thoughts of the beloved is desired, but both are ultimately frustrated. At the same time, both lover and beloved speak of a possible world where they can escape from all these communication problems—unrelenting eighth notes. The harsh electronic beats against the lyric "never know what we know" sung by both Win Butler and Chassagne are reinforced by Chassagne singing the line "this is their world where can we go?" and enable the continuation of the narrative that both amorous and sexual fulfillment would be possible in an alternate world.

"Porno" works to support the ideal of love and sex as perfect communication where forces external to the lovers are the cause of difficulties in connecting and in complete communication between lovers. The purity of motive (i.e., selflessness in sexual pleasure) and in fully satisfying the beloved would be possible in an alternate environment, free of the problems of pornography and communication difficulties and where the full desires of the beloved could be known. Finally, and most disturbingly, the "blame" for the demise of the relationship rests with the beloved. It is her silence, her lack of vocalization, and her refusal that are the block. Win Bulter sings: "You say love is real / Like a disease / Come on tell me please / I'm not over it / I'm not over it." Thus, problems are rooted in a refusal to communicate. The use of the stereotypical role for the beloved as gatekeeper and receiver of amorous messages falls in line in

the semantic system of passionate love. Luhmann writes: “by virtue of the freedom it offers, love is all the more bound to its own semantics and to its inherent clandestine goal: sexual enjoyment. An awareness of these problems is clearly manifest in the literature and literary discussions of the seventeenth century, where it finds expression in the form of suspicion, exposure or candid frivolity” *(Love as Passion* 45). While this track might be initially read as a demonstration of male feminist interventions into a problematic space, it fails. The semantic structures of passionate love are ultimately reinforced and remain centred on male sexual enjoyment.[57]

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[57] Middleton points to the ways the use and characterization of the female voice has ties to the place of women within the music industry. He writes: “The bodily locations and representations of popular voices situate them in an irreducibly gendered universe. Vocality is always sexualized, and this quality comes to us through the screen of gender differences. . . . The question of how women’s subordinate roles within the music industry and the social relations of popular music production can be addressed is indeed a vital one, alongside the equally important, and interlinked, question of how the stereotypes governing female participation can be countered” (*Voicing* 91).

Chapter 7.4 Conclusion

The tracks “Ocean of Noise” and “Porno” expose the structures of the communication system of passionate love. Both place problems in passionate love relationships as being outside the relationship itself. For “Ocean of Noise” it is some unnamed and uncanny external force, while in “Porno” the problem is located in pornography and sexuality. However, both tracks work to support the paradoxical notion that passionate love is dependent on a unique set of communications with the inner subjectivity of another amorous subject, and at the same time, gesture to the impossibility of breaching the boundaries of another subject. Each track reinforces the conceptualization of passionate love as a system of communication through emphasis on voice and the ability to hear and see clearly. The lover in each of these tracks, portrayed at what seems to be the end point of the narrative arch of a relationship, seeks to regain a lost unity with the beloved.

In contemporary love, amorous subjects not only have to locate a subject with whom to share an intimate world, but this intimacy extends to the sexual relationship. Sexual relationships must also generate information and evidence of an intimate and unique connection between subjects and this need for intimacy between subjects produces even higher pressure on the work the information system of passionate love must do. The pattern which runs through many of Arcade Fire songs is not that amorous subjects cannot find partners, but that efforts to meaningfully sustain relationships are repeatedly thwarted. Writing on passionate love in contemporary times, Luhmann states: “The tragedy is no longer that the lovers fail to find each other, but rather in the fact that sexual relationships produce love and that one can neither live in keeping with it nor free oneself of it” (*Love as Passion* 160). Thus, for contemporary amorous

subjects, symbolic media provide a reflection and pattern of love as something subjects are compelled to engage in, but liable to fail.

Chapter 8.1 Conclusion

Music forms a key element within the contemporary system of the information system of passionate love. As was demonstrated throughout this study, music does not give information in the sense of telling individual amorous subjects what to do in the context of a unique love relationship; instead, music plays a role in the teaching of the codes and structures so that information can be interpreted. Music enables communication between lovers. Moreover, music can play an active role in the formation of our amorous selves. It creates the pathways and channels which help us to identify and form the feelings related to love and to hook into the narrative arch of passionate love relationships through a process of normalization. Patterns of love songs, such as the courtly love song, the break-up song, and even songs related to confusions in communication, work to shore up the structures of the system of passionate love. Psychoanalytic approaches to the amorous subject also point to music as a means of reinforcing cultural structures related to passionate love. Various mechanisms related to desire, fantasy, and the terror of the Real keep the engine of the system running.

Love songs create a functional space for the construction of the amorous self through the organization of time, memory, and the drawing up and upon the codes of passionate love. Engaging with music is a way subjects can gather the parts of fractured selfhood to allow subjects, at least for the length of a song, to feel unified. The amorous subjects to experience the illusion of unitary wholeness within passionate love and the amorous subject can conceptualize themselves and fit themselves within the system. Songs focus desire and call the beloved into being. As both Lacan and Žižek suggest, subjects must maintain a belief in the integrity of the system to continue to work within it. The amorous subject's perception of the desire of the Other for them is part of the agreement for working within the system. The music of Arcade Fire as

discussed in this study acts as a system of entraining for contemporary amorous subjects as relationships are played out within the context of a track.

Kramer suggests songs have a particular relationship to memory. They can play a role in the conceptualization of modern subjectivity by allowing for both a perception of unity as well as a kind of “role-playing” that enable subjects to be part of an other’s narrative. He cites this as a potential reason for the number of love songs dwelling on thwarted desires, defeated romance and lost love. He writes:

> The dormer of mirrors is a locus of what might be called the deconstruction of everyday life, the innumerable small dislocations of mind and body that disclose one’s subjectivity to be infinitely divisible. In remembrance and self-reference, in desire and discomfiture, the self is forever liable to get lost amid the wilderness of its own identities. Like the figures in the dormer wings, it multiplies indefinitely, each of its avatars simulating all the others without one standing firm as the others’ origin. (*Musical* 258)

Kramer’s use of the idea of the dormer mirror echoes Lacan’s mirror, but instead seeing the image of a whole self, the subject is faced with an infinite number of multiple selves. Kramer suggests these fractured reflections which indicate an absence of one true authentic self. While Kramer is discussing the issue of authenticity and the myth of the original music composition, the idea of the multiple self is useful in relation to music and amorous subjectivity. Kramer also draws attention to the unique power of melody in the creation and circulation of desire writing: “melody has become the Western trope of self-expression par excellence. When played or, especially sung “with feeling,” a melody can seem to make another subjectivity nakedly present to the listener, who may respond with an equally immediate sense of involvement-—absorbed,

aroused, captivated, desirous" (*Musical* 278). But this response also robs us this same subjectivity as: "Each voice becomes all voices—not as an abstract or sentimental testimony to common humanity, but as a force dispossessing the listener. These voices break the shell of subjectivity. They are not to be heard in the ear, but felt in the throat" (*Musical* 281). This points to the challenging nature of love songs and amorous subjectivity and the terror of the Real, pulling at the veil that covers the absence, and the knowledge of the impossibility of love.

Music is not a singular monolithic form of communication; every song operates within an existing communication system. Thus, each Arcade Fire song communicates in a multitude of ways, tapping into a multitude of social systems. The communication/information in the music does not force feeling, but performs multipart action, hooking into existing structures of communication, allowing listeners to, to quote Cave, "let love in." Proust and Cave both point to the necessity of passionate love as source material for artistic production. Love is productive, formulating ourselves as part of a social system. However, for Proust, as for Luhmann, Lacan, and Žižek, passionate love is not an emotion and the beloved is not a soulmate, but actors within the network of the system of love. Meaning is held within the code, the thesaurus of amorous figures, and put into use to enable communication between amorous subjects. Media become pathways to the object of one's affection, causing Kittler to suggest: "The telephone conversation occupies the middle ground between the rendezvous and the love letter" (*Gramophone* 56). Love songs enable and support amorous communication and the interpretation of information.

The breakdown of the bonds of the church and the family and the increasing sense of isolation and individuality has resulted in the need for a complex series of codes as well as an understanding and idea of a beloved. On this fact, Luhmann writes:

> Such demands were bound to affect and change the semantics of intimacy. The more individual the personal element was conceived of as being, the more improbable it became that one would encounter partners *possessing the characteristics expected*. The initiation in and justification of the choice of a partner were thus no longer able to rely on such characteristics, but were instead transposed onto the symbols of the medium of communication, i.e. onto both the reflexivity of love and the history of the development of the social system for intimate ties. (*Love as Passion* 134)

Thus, the focus of contemporary love is on the communication itself, the answer of the desired subject, and the interaction and interpretation of the signs and signals they emit. Žižek asks: "is it not obvious that there is something dreadfully violent about openly displaying one's passion for and to another human? Passion by definition 'hurts' its object, and even if its addressee gladly agrees to occupy this place, he or she cannot ever do it without a moment of awe and surprise" (*How* 102). The communication between amorous subjects is always fraught, and the desires and demands engendered by the system itself are never met. Love songs both point to and participate in the problems within the system, keeping up the fantasy and exposing its structure, increasing and relieving anxiety. Love songs form a vital part of the social system of passionate love.

Luhmann closes out *Love as Passion* with a pessimistic view of the future of passionate love as a social system, fearing that contemporary subjects will become so isolated, so focused on themselves, that belief in interpersonal interpenetration will become impossible as the system will not be able to meet the necessary complexity. It is fitting to end with snippets of lyrics from the Arcade Fire track "Reflektor": "Trapped in a prism, in a prism of light / Alone in the darkness, darkness of white / We fell in love, alone on a stage / In the reflective age," and later "Now, the signals we send, are deflected again / We're still connected, but are we even friends? /

We fell in love when I was nineteen / And I was staring at a screen." As we move into an environment increasingly saturated by media and technology, what does the future hold? Arcade Fire's music continually criticizes digital technologies and contemporary society as a cause of societal breakdown.

As more and more communication is mediated through devices, customized and delivered through platforms, and impacted by artificial intelligence, it would seem the amorous becomes increasingly tangled up with machines, calling into question whether machine bodies will take on a greater role in interpersonal interpenetration. Pettman see the ways "compulsive and incessant communication occurs almost exclusively within the architectures, vectors, and protocols provided by Silicon Valley and its financial affiliates. This further complicates the relationship between personal feelings and public expression (which is in fact pre-privatized) ("Love Materialism" 14). Thus, not only is passionate love entangled with machines, but increasingly moderated by the machinery of capitalism, which increasingly moderates the public and private loves of human subjects. Despite this, Pettman suggests humans will not be "uploaded to a machine," stating "Human cognition, as Kant already understood, is always a combination of physical things, perceptions, and intangible imaginations. Our species-being (inflected through cultural orientation) emerges from this interface; and the dialectic isn't going anywhere, as long as we continue to exist at all" ("Love Materialism" 22). Thus, new patterns and complexities must emerge in the system of passionate love.

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