

Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého

Intertextuality in Selected Texts of Hozier's Songs

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Tereza Viletová

Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Palackého

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala sama a uvedla veškeré použité podklady a literaturu.

v Olomouci dne _____

podpis

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Abstract

Name and Surname: Tereza Viletová

Department, faculty: Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts

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This thesis will analyse seven selected songs from the Irish singer Hozier using theory of intertextuality and allusion. The first chapter of this thesis gives an overview of theories of intertextuality by various authors and of approaches to allusion as an intertextual device. The following chapter introduces the author, what and who influences his art and briefly presents his work. The third chapter is concerned with the analysis of the selected songs and how allusions to Greek mythology and *Inferno* presented in them are used. The aim of the analysis is to explore how the allusions affect the understanding of the lyrics and make the meaning behind the song more profound.

Key words: analysis, intertextuality, allusion, Hozier, Greek mythology, *Inferno*, Dante Alighieri, Ovid, *Metamorphoses*

Anotace

Název v češtině: Intertextualita v textech vybraných Hozierových písní

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá analýzou sedmi vybraných písní irského zpěváka Hoziera za využití teorie intertextuality a aluze. První kapitola této práce představuje přehled teorií intertextuality od různých autorů a přístupů k aluzi jako k nástroji intertextuality. V následující kapitole je představen autor, čím a kým je jeho tvorba ovlivněna, a je zde stručně popsáno autorovo dílo. Třetí kapitola se zabývá samotnou analýzou vybraných písní a jak aluze na řeckou mytologii a *Inferno*, které se v nich objevují, ovlivňují chápání textů a jak prohlubují význam písní.

Klíčová slova: analýza, intertextualita, aluze, Hozier, řecká mytologie, Peklo, Dante Alighieri, Ovidius, Proměny

Table of contents

Introduction	1
1. Intertextuality and Allusion as its Manifestation	4
1.1 The Intertextual Network	4
1.2 Allusion as an Intertextual Device	8
2. The Work of Hozier	13
3. Intertextual Relations and Allusion in the Selected Texts	15
3.1 Greek Mythology in Hozier	15
3.2 Dante's Inferno in Hozier.....	22
Conclusion.....	29
Resumé.....	31
Bibliography.....	32
Primary Sources	32
Secondary sources	32
Web Sources.....	33

Introduction

Since publishing his debut single, “Take Me to Church”, in 2013 the Irish singer and songwriter Hozier has kept his image as a skilled vocalist and an artist-activist until the present day. His unmistakable voice combined with political activism reflected in his verses and lyrics since the very beginning are probably the very reasons for his popularity. “Take Me to Church” itself reached second place on the Billboard Hot 100 chart, and stayed on the chart for 41 weeks. “Too Sweet” (2024), a song which was released as this thesis was in the process of being written, took the first place on the same chart.¹ The third chapter of this thesis introduces the artist and his work, the inspiration he finds in jazz and the African-American influence in music, the general themes in his songs such as politics, as is displayed in “Jackboot Jump” (2019) or “Swan Upon Leda” (2022), religion and religious resistance as shown in “Take Me to Church”, or grief, love, passion as well as sex.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how intertextuality and allusion develop and deepen the otherwise explicit messages in selected songs written and performed by Hozier. Although this author alludes to many topics, including other literary, musical and poetic works such as Nina Simone’s work or Seamus Heaney’s poetry, this thesis focuses mainly on the analysis of allusions and intertextuality connecting his work to Greek mythology and Dante Alighieri’s *Inferno* which served as a source of inspiration for Hozier’s album released in August 2023.

The first chapter of the thesis focuses on the theoretical background and gives a brief overview of the development of intertextuality and its understanding in literature. It mentions Julia Kristeva who introduced the first theory of intertextuality in the 1960s, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin’s dialogism and Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralist approach to language. With this theory, Kristeva coined the term *intertextuality*, the notion of which, however, developed and changed over time. According to Kristeva, all texts are interconnected in the never ending, ever-developing intertextual reality. Both Kristeva and Roland Barthes dismiss the author as the ultimate influencer of the text’s meaning. Barthes shifts the responsibility of creating a meaning to the reader, claiming that he or she can view the entirety of the intertextual reality and assign the writing any possible meanings emerging from it. Nevertheless, the dismissal of the author as the creator of meaning is not corresponding with the approach of this thesis, as it is with intention that the songs are crafted as intertextual, or even as the political

¹ “Hozier Chart History,” Billboard, accessed June 16, 2024, <https://www.billboard.com/artist/hozier/>.

and activist messages in Hozier's songs such as "Swan Upon Leda" come by default with an aim set by the author and therefore with a desired meaning to be spotted and understood by the listeners, whom the author aids for example by adding descriptions to songs or by explaining his motivations in interviews.

Shifting from the post-structuralist focus on play and pleasure in writing, Gérard Genette, a structuralist theorist, uses a more specified set of terms – intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality – all of which are hyponyms of a newly coined term *transtextuality*, which describes any kind of relation between one text and a previous one. Whereas intertextuality is merely the presence of one text in another.² According to Genette, intertextuality can be realised, besides other devices, by allusion.

Allusion is one of the common literary devices used for realising intertextuality. Allan H. Pasco published his book *Allusion: A Literary Graft* in which he discusses the meaning, use and characteristics of allusion, comparing it with other literary devices such as allegories and plagiarism. While plagiarism works, in simple terms, as one author exploiting the work of another, allusion is making use of another work in a way that leads the reader to the source, using it to develop the meaning of the work at hand. The line between plagiarism and allusion can often be quite blurry, as Pasco says: "[u]nfortunately, it is not always so easy to decide whether plagiarism has occurred. The key rests in whether the subsequent text has gained more from a source through unacknowledged repetition or whether it has used the source as an element in a new creation that would be enhanced by the reader's recognition of the previous creation."³ Pasco uses analysis of allusions in various literary works to determine the difference between allusion and other devices.

While Pasco and many other scholars (and this thesis as well), focus on literary allusion, that is allusion from one literary work referring to another literary work, there can be many other versions of allusion, some of which appear even in Hozier's work, as has been mentioned. Stephanie Ross attributes the preference of literary allusion over other types to the fact that poetry is one of the art forms which uses allusion the most. According to her, allusion "enriches"

² Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 101.

³ Allan H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1994), 45.

the work at hand by the reference to a previous one by providing “a richer context within which to be viewed.”⁴

Irwin, in his article addresses the intention with which the author uses the source texts and whether or not he or she wants the reader to be aware of a source being used in the first place. The opposite situation is when readers see allusions where the author did not intend them to be, this he calls an “accidental association”.⁵ Accidental associations do not lack value simply because they are not tied to the authorial intent, however Hozier’s work provides a wide range of intentional intertextuality and allusions specifically and he often aids his listeners in finding them by revealing his intention, either through interviews or self-published videos, as it was in the case of the *Unheard* EP (2024).

The analysis in this thesis is leaning on the theory introduced in the first chapter while taking into consideration the context of both the artist’s work in general, of the text, or more specifically lyrics, at hand and of the alluded to text. The songs which are analysed for the allusions to Greek mythology are taken from the author’s second album *Wasteland, Baby!* (2019), “Sunlight” and “Talk”, and a 2022 single “Swan upon Leda”, which allude to the myths of the fall of Icarus, Orpheus and Eurydice, and the rape of Leda respectively, captured in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*. The context enriched by the alluded to texts helps determine the narrators’ characters, their attitudes or even deepens the message from the protagonist to his addressee or from the author to the audience.

Unreal Unearth is an album from 2023 and is heavily inspired by *Inferno* written by Dante Alighieri in the 14th century as part of the *Divine Comedy*. *Inferno* describes Dante’s journey through Hell, with Virgil being his guide. Hozier reflects this journey in this album and explores the themes of darkness and light, loss and grief. The aim of the analysis of four songs on this album – “Francesca”, “Eat Your Young”, “Too Sweet”, and “Unknown / Nth” – is, similarly as for the analysis of the allusions to Greek mythology, to see how the instances of intertextuality inserted intentionally by the author affect the context of the alluder, the text at hand.

⁴ Stephanie Ross, “Art and Allusion,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40, no. 1 (1981): 59, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/430353>.

⁵ William Irwin, “What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 287, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432325>.

1. Intertextuality and Allusion as its Manifestation

This chapter focuses on presenting the theoretical background of intertextuality and allusion as its device. It gives an overview of some key authors and theorists, such as Julia Kristeva who introduced the theory of intertextuality, Roland Barthes or Gérard Genette. It briefly looks into the various approaches to and understandings of allusion presented by such scholars as Irwin, Alfaro or Pasco and others.

1.1 The Intertextual Network

To understand intertextuality, it is important to describe the crucial points in the development of the theory, starting with Bakhtin, Saussure and Kristeva and noting down some of the other significant views, namely those of Barthes and Genette. Genette's terminology is to be the one this thesis will resort to in its analysis; his definition of intertextuality is limited to the use of plagiarism, quotation and most importantly allusion, on which this thesis focuses further and approaches it as a device used in the texts of the selected songs. However, both intertextuality and allusion have been and still are undergoing analyses and commentaries of many scholars and critics. Therefore, it is impossible for this thesis to debate every theory and input and will only give the general overview of the ones which most serve its purposes.

According to Allen, theory of intertextuality works with the approach that “[w]orks of literature ... are built from systems, codes and traditions established by previous works of literature” and that said systems, codes and traditions “are crucial to the meaning of a work of literature.”⁶ In other words, the meanings of all texts, as stated in various ways in the theories which this thesis will briefly describe in order to provide a general overview of the literary approach which it uses for its analysis, are affecting each other – any meaning of a text relates to meanings of other texts in the intertextual network and each text becomes a part of the intertext.

When Julia Kristeva coined the term *intertextuality* in the second half of the twentieth century, she found the basis for her theory in Mikhail Bakhtin's work. This theory of intertextuality emerges during the transitional period from structuralism to the post-structuralist movement in France. Post-structuralism, unlike structuralism to which it is often regarded as a

⁶ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.

response, rejects the ultimate power of the author over the meaning of a text. Post-structuralist theorists regard meaning in texts as ununified and emphasise uncertainty in literature. Their understanding of intertextuality reflects this attitude.

Moreover, in her article “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept”, Alfaro even goes back to the ancient writers and points out similarities between their approaches and the contemporary views on intertextuality, and gives an overview of the attitude towards literature in history. For example, the understanding of the Bible as it was in the Middle Ages, can be regarded as intertextual: “the words in it pointed ... to the objects in His other book, the Book of Nature, but, in addition, the things signified by those words had a spiritual sense as well”.⁷ During the Renaissance period, writers regarded previous works as something ready to be rewritten or imitated and reinterpreted. Alfaro notes that in their works “[t]he textual past is always present through quotations or allusions” and, as is fitting for intertextuality and the emphasis on the cultural reality in which texts appear, that they “perceive ... the globality and infinite potentiality of the culture in which their own discourses are inscribed, rather than their debt to previous writers”.⁸ Furthermore, Jonathan Culler, an American structuralist, brings attention to Aristotle and his *Poetics* and its importance in connection to theory of reading and emphasises the necessity of viewing the literary system as a whole when analysing a literary work.⁹

However, the roots of Kristeva’s intertextuality mostly stem from Ferdinand de Saussure’s structuralist theories in linguistics. De Saussure described a system of language (langue) which consists of signifiers and their signified, which are, simply put, concepts represented by the concrete signifiers manifested for example as words; the meanings in language come from differences between signs. This theory is focused on the differences and relationships between signs rather than the concepts they are referencing; this approach helped lay the foundations for the development of theory of intertextuality.¹⁰

The Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin introduced the idea that any text is dialogical – a reproduction and reflection of pre-existing texts (or rather, in this case, speeches), which are all affected by the social and the cultural. María Alfaro describes Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism in

⁷ María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept,” *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 269–270, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41054827>.

⁸ María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept,” *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 270.

⁹ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 97.

¹⁰ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.

her article on intertextuality as follows: "... whereas Saussure dichotomizes the individual and the social, Bakhtin assumes that the individual is constituted by the social, that consciousness is a matter of dialogue and juxtaposition with a social 'other'."¹¹

In her works "Word, Dialogue, Novel" (1966) and "The Bounded text" (1966–67) Kristeva introduces her own philosophy on the system of texts and language by interpreting and further developing the theories of de Saussure and Bakhtin and coins the term *intertextuality*. She claims that the "meaning" in a text is dependent on and intertwined with the meanings of other texts which are part of a social and cultural reality. She dismisses the influence of the author on the meaning and emphasises the importance of the system of signs in which all texts exist. To fit the post-structuralist thinking, her theory of intertextuality views language as an expression of plurality, uncertainty or desire. This approach mostly dismisses the possibility of an original text with one stable meaning, being left with only parts of the intertext – interwoven and referencing one another.

It might be necessary to point out the fact that due to the complexity and the rather multidisciplinary nature of Kristeva's intertextuality, the understanding of it has been evolving and eventually started to be used in its simplest sense as one text relating to another text from the past. Because of that, Kristeva later introduced another term, *transposition*, which substitutes intertextuality in its former intended use.¹² Genette's integration of the term into his own theory would be the proof and reflection of this terminological evolution and, to not create confusion in labels of literary devices described and used in this thesis, intertextuality will be approached in the way it was described by Genette.

Roland Barthes is another critic to have a similar view on the author in connection to his or her work. In his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), he shifts the focus from the author as a God, a creator, to the reader who has the possibility of seeing the whole of the interwoven signs and the signified taken from the web of literature (or as he calls it, *writing*) and therefore can find multiple meanings in the work at hand.¹³ It is also of use to mention that Barthes points out the difference between the "work" and the "text". For him, they are not one and the same, rather the text is the unstable, playful sign within the work, from which the reader

¹¹ María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept," *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 274.

¹² Gregory Machacek, "Allusion," *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 524, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501719>.

¹³ Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.

may interpret different meanings. As he puts it: “a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author.”¹⁴

Kristeva’s and Barthes’s use and understanding of intertextuality is rather post-structural, focusing on uncertainty, pleasure, desire and play, making intertextuality a rather abstract concept. However, structuralist theorists also integrate intertextuality into their theory and analysis. The French literary critic Gérard Genette aims to define intertextuality in a way which can be better applicable to textual analysis. In a series of works titled *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (1982), *The Architext: An Introduction* (1979), and *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987) he introduces the term *transtextuality* of which intertextuality is a subcategory. This transtextuality is “everything, be it explicit or latent, that relates one text to others.”¹⁵ For its close resemblance with the post-structuralist intertextuality, which has been described in this chapter, Allen calls transtextuality “intertextuality from the viewpoint of structural poetics”.¹⁶ Genette argues that meanings of literary works are derived from *architexts* – already existing texts which determine the readers’ understanding of certain themes or genres. This understanding, which is similar to the Kristevan understanding of the signification of the cultural, then helps develop and affect the meaning which is to be interpreted from works relating to these architexts.¹⁷

In Genette’s theory of transtextuality, there are five categories in total: intertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality, and hypertextuality. These categories often overlap in practical analysis. Indeed, according to Genette himself every text is hypertextual by default.¹⁸ Hypertextuality, similarly to intertextuality, is a term used for a literary work which resembles another, metaphorically following in its steps and developing its meaning – that is, if we are to consider a set meaning in a work. Intertextuality would then stand for taking parts from other, pre-existing works and using these parts in a new work. Genette’s intertextuality is manifested by plagiarism, quotation, or allusion.

¹⁴ Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.

¹⁵ María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept”, *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 280.

¹⁶ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 98.

¹⁷ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge, 2000), 100.

¹⁸ María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, “Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept”, *Atlantis* 18, no. 1/2 (1996): 281.

1.2 Allusion as an Intertextual Device

The literary device of allusion is surely one which is widely used by authors and therefore, one which sparks a lot of academic interest. Many scholars and critics have given their ideas and academic views on what an allusion is, how it functions and what it looks like. Since allusion is one of the devices which trigger intertextuality according to Genette's intertextual theory, it is important to note down some of the general understandings of allusion and its function and how it affects the literary work.

This section aims to define the literary device which will be a leading point of this thesis, using Allan H. Pasco's *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (1994) and also William Irwin's "What Is an Allusion?" which give quite a detailed explanation of allusion and its nature in art as well as the role of the author and the reader in the process of creating and identifying allusions. Initially, it considers the presence and use of allusion in art forms other than literary. It mentions also Gregory Machacek's essay which describes the two ways in which readers and critics can analyse allusions, as well as Carmela Perri's psychology-influenced view on the trope of allusion.

As noted in Perri's "Knowing and Playing: The Literary Text and the Trope of Allusion", allusion has a special power, as it "invokes 'the other', something actually existing outside the alluding text".¹⁹ The author uses a rather psychological approach in this article, which is not to be necessarily dismissed, although literature does not have a "mind" to be studied. After all, Kristeva herself, when she was weaving her theory of intertextuality, was inspired by the psychological. The justification for such approach is given when the author references Freud claiming that "literature knew . . . everything that he did"²⁰ in the sense that the "*content* of literature contained derivatives of the conflictual and forbidden".²¹ In this Freudian psychology-oriented approach which Perri takes here, the significance of the trope of allusion is that it is one of the mechanisms of the preverbal primary process which means that

¹⁹ Carmela Perri, "Knowing and Playing: The Literary Text and the Trope Allusion," *American Imago* 41, no. 2 (1984): 117, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303587>.

²⁰ Carmela Perri, "Knowing and Playing: The Literary Text and the Trope Allusion," *American Imago* 41, no. 2 (1984): 117, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303587>.

²¹ Carmela Perri, "Knowing and Playing: The Literary Text and the Trope Allusion," *American Imago* 41, no. 2 (1984): 117–118, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303587>.

literature is the representation of this primary process and the unconscious.²² Therefore, literature is not or does not have “a mind” but is rather a reflection of a mind.

The general idea of allusion is that it is an indirect, discreet or covert reference to a previous work. Indeed, not only a *literary* work, as allusions can be used in other forms of art also. Stephanie Ross published an article, “Art and Allusion”, which draws attention to this fact: “I believe that philosophers and critics hold two illusions about allusion. First, when we think about allusion we wrongly confine ourselves to literary allusion. Perhaps because poetry is the most condensed of arts.”²³ As noted in the brief overview of theories in the previous section, one of the important components of intertextuality – of which, as mentioned, according to Genette allusion is a device – is the cultural and social reality in which the work exists. Any form of art can indeed be a part of this cultural reality, and of course this cultural reality contains more than art only. Pasco also mentions this in his book on allusion: “Literature may allude to myth, as in Joyce’s *Ulysses*, to archetypes, as in Melville’s *Billy Budd* or *Moby Dick*, to historical events or persons, as in Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities*, or to one or more elements of specific literary, religious, or philosophical works.”²⁴ In addition to that, Irwin simply states in his article that “allusions can and do occur outside of literature.”²⁵ It is important to not forget the fact that allusion is not exclusive to works of literature and can be found in other art forms, although literary allusion is the one at the centre of this thesis as it deals with allusions to previously written works – this thesis considers the Greek myths alluded to in the lyrics as literature as they are taken from *The Metamorphoses*.

Besides the fact that allusion does not necessarily have to be only literary, another question comes in connection to the discreetness. The logical assumption would be that for allusion to function, it would mean it needs to be recognised, spotted by the reader. When an author uses another author’s work in a discreet way, he or she would possibly be plagiarising – using another person’s work and displaying it as their own. Pasco states it as follows: “Plagiarism consists of equal, nonmetaphorical terms, and when it is successful, the text in hand does not suggest a source. Quite the contrary, because successful allusion must suggest

²² Carmela Perri, “Knowing and Playing: The Literary Text and the Trope Allusion,” *American Imago* 41, no. 2 (1984): 118–120, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26303587>.

²³ Stephanie Ross, “Art and Allusion,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40, no. 1 (1981): 59, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/430353>.

²⁴ Allan H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1994), 7–8.

²⁵ William Irwin, “What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 294, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432325>.

something else, it must be recognized before it can add to the effect of the story.”²⁶ The recognition and use of allusion require the active presence of the author and the reader. Additionally, for the reader to recognise and understand the allusion, he or she needs an intertextual background which is similar enough to that of the author. Machacek supports this argument when he paraphrases Perri, Ben-Porat, and Garner: “... if the reader does not share a literary tradition with the alluding author, no form of marker will serve to evoke the source text”.²⁷

Allusion might cause some confusion (and it has happened before²⁸) when it comes to the intention with which it is used. It is not always possible for readers or critics to be sure whether or not they are dealing with allusion inserted into the work at hand by the author, or if they are creating a certain connection to a previous work without being intentionally prompted to do so. This is when the author must be taken into consideration. A position which slightly contrasts with that of Barthes is assumed by Irwin in “What is an Allusion?” when it comes to the role of the author. Unlike Barthes, he suggests that authorial intention is of importance when it comes to discovering and interpreting an allusion. He writes: “Allusions, then, to be understood and interpreted correctly must accord with authorial intent.”²⁹

The reader may also be able to find allusions where the author did not necessarily intend to put any. However, the interpretations which are independent of authorial intention and only dependent on the reader (and his or her intertextual reality) would not be considered allusions by Irwin, merely “accidental associations”.³⁰ Although this position does not deny the importance of the reader and influence of intertextuality on the perception of the work. As Irwin continues on accidental associations: “Allusion is only one element of intertextuality, and as long as we do not misrepresent associations as allusions there can be much value in them.”³¹ It can be assumed that allusion wants to be discovered and that is it put in the work for the selected

²⁶ Allan H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1994), 9.

²⁷ Carmela Perri, “On Alluding,” Ziva Ben-Porat, “The Poetics of Literary Allusion,” Richard Garner, *From Homer to Tragedy: The Art of Allusion in Greek Poetry*, paraphrased in Gregory Machacek, “Allusion,” *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 534, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501719>.

²⁸ Allan H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Canada: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1994), 44.

²⁹ William Irwin, “What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 295, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432325>.

³⁰ William Irwin, “What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 295, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432325>.

³¹ William Irwin, “What Is an Allusion?,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59, no. 3 (2001): 295, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/432325>.

audience. It needs to be assumed that discovery is the goal set for the reader by the author to avoid plagiarism.

Machacek in his “Allusion” focused on the terminology connected to allusion and its use. He points out that certain terms may have the connotation of secondary or lesser quality, a mere imitation of previous authors.³² He aims to define a more specific terminology, dividing allusion between *learned or indirect reference* and *phraseological adaptation*, where learned or indirect reference would be represented by a “roundabout reference” to a previous text while the phraseological adaptation would be presented as a play on words, rewording of the writing of another author. Nevertheless, both these terms can be generalised by *allusion*, therefore they are used only briefly in this thesis.

Machacek addresses the use of the term *intertextuality* as well. His explanation as to why the term has been used as simply an interrelation between literary texts is that allusion or echo seem too brief and would be therefore inadequate for works which are more profoundly connected to previous texts. He proposes to “use *intertextuality* in the broadest way, to refer to all possible forms of textual interrelation, diachronic or synchronic”.³³

Additionally, Perri in “Knowing and playing” uses the terms *alluder* and *alluded to* in order to describe the two (or more) related texts. Alluder is the term used to mark the “new” text which refers to a previous text through allusion. This previous, referred to text is then the alluded to.

Considering that the main focus of this thesis is analysis, it is important to note down the possible ways of analysing allusion. In “Allusion”, Machacek uses two terms: *synchronic* and *diachronic intertextuality*. Diachronicity and synchronicity are two possible approaches to analysis of allusion or intertextuality. Diachronic analysis focuses on the development of the meaning of the allusion, what the phrase may have meant in the original text and throughout history versus what it means now. Synchronic analysis is focused on the meaning of the phrase in one given time and this is the approach to the analyses which shall be carried out within this thesis.

³² Gregory Machacek, “Allusion,” *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 522, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501719>.

³³ Gregory Machacek, “Allusion,” *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 525, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501719>.

The main goal of this thesis is to use the theoretical background noted in the two sections above and look at how allusion and intertextuality are used in the selected texts of Hozier's songs. It will describe what meaning the allusions carry in the context of the verses with regard to the text which they are alluding to and how they may enrich, in the case that they do, the theme or plot of the text.

2. The Work of Hozier

This chapter focuses on introducing the artist, and what influences and inspires his work. It presents an overview of his professional work since his debut and discusses the topics often present in his songs.

Hozier's debut single titled "Take Me to Church" came out in 2013 and set the standard for the type of music he was to deliver to his audience since then. Over the next few years, this song gained Hozier a number of nominations and awards and is still today his most streamed song on both YouTube and Spotify. A year later, Hozier's first album is released and since then two more – *Wasteland, Baby!* and *Unreal Unearth* in 2019 and 2023 respectively – and four EPs – *From Eden* (2014), *Nina Cried Power* (2018), *Eat Your Young* (2023), and *Unheard* (2024).

The author often uses themes of religion and mythology in his songs, as well as love, sex, or grief and loss. He often reflects his views on the state of the world; this can lead to interpretations in his lyrics of political or activist nature, although the artist claims he does not necessarily try to make a political song.³⁴ "Take Me to Church" is a song using the theme of religion, as the title already suggests, in which the narrator compares his lover to church or religion in general. A more specific approach is taken in "From Eden" where the singer assumes the role of an unreliable narrator and delivers the song from the Christian devil's point of view,³⁵ alluding to Genesis and the Garden of Eden. For some, his lyrics relating to Christianity could potentially seem blasphemous; such a reaction could be easily achieved with "Be", a song denying the existence of the afterlife and therefore both Heaven and Hell. "Cherry Wine" is a commentary on domestic violence, describing it from the point of view of the victim, who in the lyrics is a man, yet in the music video a woman. "Nina Cried Power" seems almost like an appreciation to songs of protest and to musical legends such as Billie Holiday or Nina Simone. These are only some of the songs which show the artist's activism being reflected in his work.

The author is open about taking inspiration from great singers. One does not have to go further for proof than to "Nina Cried Power". Hozier talks about this song in a video interview, discussing his "political" songs and how he as an artist is affected by those mentioned in this

³⁴ Hozier, "Hozier's *Wasteland, Baby!* Album Release Party," YouTube, March 2, 2019, 6:05, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-r2fLQkD7Q>.

³⁵ Hozier, "Hozier – Album Track by Track – From Eden," YouTube, October 4, 2014, 0:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pYmb184p6Bw>.

song.³⁶ Certainly, being Irish himself, other significant Irish artists inspire his work as well. After her passing in 2023, Hozier spoke about how Sinéad O'Connor's art and activism shaped his own path in the musical industry: "I am confronted by the difference between how I have benefitted from speaking my truth and the very different reaction that Sinéad got in her life of truth-telling. So, a huge amount is owed to her. [. . .] So, I feel that I'm walking a road that she absolutely paved."³⁷ In his latest EP *Unheard*, Hozier even uses the Irish War of Independence in "Empire Now" and likens the song and its content to the seventh circle of Hell, that of violence. Additionally, Hozier has been since the beginning of his career quite clear about taking inspiration from African-American music³⁸ which is audible in songs such as "Work Song", and has been influenced since youth by jazz, soul and blues.³⁹

It is undeniable that this artist's work is overflowing with references, allusions and commentaries. Despite this, at the focus of this thesis are going to be mainly the last two albums, *Wasteland, Baby!* and *Unreal Unearth* and the allusions and intertextual relations to Greek mythology and Dante's *Inferno*. Narrowing the analysis down to these two sources, the alluded texts, will adequately serve to a conclusion on how the intertextuality intentionally used as a device by the artist affects the context of the alluders.

³⁶ Q with Tom Power, "Hozier: 'Music is political no matter what,'" YouTube, September 19, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smAmUuLrXAY>.

³⁷ Barry Egan, "Hozier: I am on a road that Sinéad O'Connor paved at a great cost to herself," *Belfast Telegraph*, August 13, 2023, <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/entertainment/music/hozier-i-am-on-a-road-that-sinead-oconnor-paved-at-a-great-cost-to-herself/a1743527376.html?fbclid=IwAR17P1-n33rrleong3uJfmXame33ZJ-KBcgJqVsa0UVxVIHoTe-CELXFBp4>.

³⁸ Andy Greene, "Behind Hozier's Unlikely Rise," *Rolling Stone*, published January 29, 2015, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/behind-hoziers-unlikely-rise-60949/>.

³⁹ Laura Barton, "Hozier: The best vocalists I can think of are female," *The Guardian*, published July 31, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/jul/31/hozier-best-vocalists-female-take-me-to-church?fbclid=IwAR07QUY4o9WPMYS4w-hcE3rOde3vgLbPv_50wb9vRTInbQb4QqH7AgQE8V0.

3. Intertextual Relations and Allusion in the Selected Texts

Kristeva's theory of intertextuality states clearly that no text can exist in isolation, therefore every text is influenced by all previous texts. Intertextuality is innate to texts; however, it can be used by the author for his or her artistic benefit, be it by allusion or any type of reference. "Take Me to Church", Hozier's debut song, gave the listeners a taste of the artwork this artist would continue to publish since. Although he uses many sources, alluded to texts, to which he refers his listeners, this thesis focuses mainly on how the lyrics use Greek mythology and Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*.

This chapter will look at the selected texts and analyse the use of intertextuality and allusions in a similar fashion to Pasco's analyses in *Allusion*. It will consider the artistic intention with which intertextuality is used in the texts, the possible meanings of such references, and how they affect, widen or complete the verses and their message. Each selected song will be analysed separately, however occasionally they may be compared to one another in order to point out similarities or differences between the use of intertextuality and allusions. *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* has been used to give a set and stable definition of certain terms and themes occurring in the songs as well when necessary.

3.1 Greek Mythology in Hozier

Considering that myths have been for a large part preserved by oral tradition, there happen to be various versions of one and the same myth (Greek mythology specifically being objectively popular in media probably also contributes to the varying narratives). This thesis works with the versions as narrated by Ovid (as his *Metamorphoses* contains all the necessary myths which this thesis will refer to, also because it is arguably one of the most influential representations of Greek mythology and therefore represents the most widespread understanding of these stories), adding also *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* by David Leeming as another secondary source used in this section.

Greek mythology has been a great source of inspiration in western literature and poetry. Hozier's western listeners – meaning the listeners who share a more significant portion of his intertextual background, literary tradition or the cultural as described by Kristeva, can therefore be assumed to notice the intentional use of intertextuality in this author's texts. The author often keeps his allusions clear and right on the surface of the verses, making the intended impression

available to a larger part of his audience – this he achieves especially by using names of the characters from the myths he alludes to.

In “Sunlight”, the thirteenth track on his second album *Wasteland, Baby!*, the author mentions Icarus in the third verse. This is a direct allusion to the myth of the fall of Icarus. However, that is not the first allusion to Greek mythology in this song. The very first verse already introduces another mythological figure – an acolyte.

After introducing the narrator as a person who avoids the light, a theme which is prevalent throughout the entire song, the following lines read:

“But whose heart would not take flight
Betray the moon as acolyte”.⁴⁰

The connection of “acolyte” to the moon alludes to the devotees to the Greek goddess Artemis, who followed her on her chase. Artemis, as the *Companion* states, “was sometimes associated with the moon”⁴¹ and therefore serves as a direct opposite, a balancing counterweight to her brother Apollo, who in turn is understood as the “god of light and sometimes specifically the sun.”⁴²

One of the myths this particular verse could be alluding to is that of Artemis punishing one of her acolytes, Callisto, for betraying the goddess by breaking her vow of chastity. Ovid describes Callisto as feeling shame and guilt and the actions described in this myth resulted in her being banished by the goddess (called Diana, not Artemis in *The Metamorphoses*, since Ovid was Roman).⁴³

Through the entire song, the repetition of the word “sunlight” can be observed, creating almost a chant or a prayer-like atmosphere, which adds to the relation of the light to divinity:

“A soul that’s born in cold and rain
Knows sunlight, sunlight, sunlight
And, at last, can grant a name
To a buried and a burning flame

⁴⁰ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks Limited, Spotify.

⁴¹ David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 31.

⁴² David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 23.

⁴³ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 43–47.

As love and its decisive pain
Oh, my sunlight, sunlight, sunlight”.⁴⁴

Additionally, the narrator seems to be using this word to address another person, the object of this song, possibly his lover:

“I have been lost to you, sunlight
And flew like a moth to you, sunlight, oh, sunlight”.⁴⁵

Furthermore, the narrator equals the love of the addressee to sunlight, at first simply stating that his or her “love is sunlight”⁴⁶ and follows it by repeating the same statement, this time deviating from the pattern and using the statement in an adversative clause, foregrounding the transition between the positive and the negative.

Ferber’s *Dictionary of Literary Symbols* has an entry about the sun, stating that it is “so overwhelming a phenomenon and so fundamental to earthly life”.⁴⁷ While the word sunlight in this song does objectively refer to a beginning of something, or as a source of life or fuel for something (“your love is sunlight”⁴⁸ might be suggesting that the love is something keeping the narrator alive), it can be argued that the adversative clause presents it as a damaging power, especially if the aforementioned myth of the fall of Icarus is taken into consideration.

Icarus and his unfortunate fate are described in the eighth book of *The Metamorphoses*. To escape Crete, Daedalus, Icarus’ father, creates wings of wax and plans to fly from the island. He warned his son to not fly too close to the sun as to not melt his wax wings:

“And if you fly too high the flames of heaven
Will burn them from your sides.”⁴⁹

Nevertheless, Icarus does not heed his father’s warning which results in him falling to his death:

“By this time Icarus began to feel the joy
Of beating wings in air and steered his course
Beyond his father’s lead: all the wide sky

⁴⁴ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released March 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁴⁵ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released March 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁴⁶ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released March 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁴⁷ Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (New York: Cambridge University press, 1999), 209.

⁴⁸ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released March 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁴⁹ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 212.

Was there to tempt him as he steered toward heaven.
Meanwhile the heat of sun struck at his back
And where his wings were joined, sweet-smelling fluid
Ran hot that once was wax. His naked arms
Whirled into wind; his lips, still calling out
His father's name, were gulfed in the dark sea.”⁵⁰

In *Sunlight*, the third verse alludes to this very myth, and as stated before, makes the connection all the more obvious for the listener by using the very name of the character, but also by further specifying the exact scene which the author intends for his audience to be reminded of by including the imagery of wings, melting wax as well as the sea:

“Each day, you'd rise with me
Know that I would gladly be
The Icarus to your certainty
Oh, my sunlight, sunlight, sunlight
Strap the wing to me
Death trap clad happily
With wax melted, I'd meet the sea
Under sunlight, sunlight, sunlight”.⁵¹

If these allusions are to be combined with the co-text of this song, their possible intended effect may be discovered. The author possibly uses the contrast of the life-giving sunlight to the murderous power of the scorching sun which can destroy him like it did Icarus, all the while equating it to love. A possible interpretation resulting from this analysis would lead the listener to imagine the narrator as someone who fell in love with a person so deeply, he is willing to be destroyed by it. The severity of these dangers is carried by the allusions to the myths: starting with the betrayal of the ways he knows – the moon, the darkness – for the sunlight-lover, and ending with the welcomed possibility of a “happy death” brought unto him by the same person (“Under sunlight” could potentially mean that the narrator's “fall” would be in the hands of the addressee); in the same way as Callisto felt shame and guilt when she broke her vow and how Icarus was full of joy right before his fatal fall. The attribution of this destructive action to the

⁵⁰ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 212.

⁵¹ Hozier, “Sunlight,” released March 2019, track 13 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

lover could also be interpreted in the form of an abusive relationship. The loving attitude of the “victim” would correspond with a previous Hozier’s song “Cherry Wine”.

In a similar way as in the thirteenth track, “Talk”, the ninth one on *Wasteland, Baby!*, opens with an allusion to a well-known myth; calling the listener’s attention to it by mentioning names of some of the figures in it. The first verse states:

“I’d be the voice that urged Orpheus
When her body was found
I’d be the choiceless hope in grief
That drove him underground
I’d be the dreadful need in the devotee
That made him turn around
And I’d be the immediate forgiveness in Eurydice
Imagine being loved by me”.⁵²

This verse is an alluder to the myth of Orpheus, a skilled musician, who finds his beloved bride dead. Ovid captures this myth in the tenth book of *Metamorphoses*:

“While walking carelessly through sun-swept grasses,
Like Spring herself, with all her girls-in-waiting,
The bride stepped on a snake, pierced by his venom,
The girl tripped, falling, stumbled into Death.”⁵³

Orpheus sang of his grief to Hades and his wife Persephone in the Underground where they rule. Upon hearing his song of heartbreak, they allow Orpheus to take his bride Eurydice back to the world of the living, granted that he does not turn to see if she is following him out of the Underworld. He, however, fails at this task, which results in Eurydice being sent back to the world of the dead; yet she forgives him immediately:

“The poet, fearful that she’d lost her way,
Glanced backward with a look that spoke his love –
Then saw her gliding into deeper darkness,
As he reached out to hold her, she was gone;
He had embraced a world of emptiness

⁵² Hozier, “Talk,” released March 2019, track 9 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁵³ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 269.

This was her second death – and yet she could not blame him
(Was not his greatest fault great love for her?)
She answered him with one last faint ‘Good-bye,’
An echo of her voice from deep Avernus.”⁵⁴

Being familiar with this myth then, looking through the first verse should effortlessly bring up the connection between the alluded to text and the alluder at hand. The “... dreadful need in the devotee / That made him turn around”⁵⁵ talks about the fatal mistake of Orpheus looking back and causing Eurydice to die again. “I’d be the immediate forgiveness in Eurydice”⁵⁶ describes the bride’s forgiveness and lack of blame. The protagonist of this song relates himself to these traits and qualities, suggesting that he will be so devoted to the object of his fancy that he would not put any blame on him or her, yet “loving” so profoundly that he could unintentionally send the lover to death.

While this interpretation may seem complete, it is necessary to note that the author himself elaborated on the use of this allusion at the album release party. He stated that the protagonist of this song is an unreliable narrator whose intentions are to use these “lofty notions of true love” and “mythical language”⁵⁷ with the sole intention to seduce the addressee. This context is crucial for understanding how the alluded to text affects the meaning of this song, especially in relation to the remaining lines. The narrator’s true intentions are revealed in the chorus, where he admits to talking “refined” so that the addressee does not recognise his goals. The allusion here serves as a tool to develop the narrator’s character and in connection to the context provided by Hozier paints him almost as “pretentious”.⁵⁸

The last song which will undergo an intertextual analysis in this section is “Swan Upon Leda”. The very title itself is an allusion to the myth of Leda. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* captures the myth only briefly in the story of Arachne: “... then Leda on her back beneath / The swan ...”⁵⁹ The general understanding of the myth is that Leda, a queen of Sparta, was another victim of Zeus who raped her. The *Companion* explains it exactly in that way: “Zeus came to Leda in

⁵⁴ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 271.

⁵⁵ Hozier, “Talk,” released March 2019, track 9 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁵⁶ Hozier, “Talk,” released March 2019, track 9 on *Wasteland, Baby!*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁵⁷ Hozier, “Hozier’s Wasteland, Baby! Album Release Party,” YouTube, March 2, 2019. 20:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-r2fLQkD7Q>.

⁵⁸ Hozier, “Hozier’s Wasteland, Baby! Album Release Party,” YouTube, March 2, 2019. 20:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-r2fLQkD7Q>.

⁵⁹ Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1958), 150.

the form of a swan and raped her as she walked along a lake.”⁶⁰ The negative understanding of this act is present even in Hozier’s song – this will be explored further in the analysis.

The allusion to Leda’s rape is, in accordance with Machacek’s understanding of allusion, very local and brief in this piece, as it appears merely twice in the song besides the title:

“The swan upon Leda
Empire upon Jerusalem”,⁶¹

“The swan upon Leda
Occupier upon ancient land”.⁶²

The juxtaposition of these lines serves to equate the rape of Leda to occupation and, since stated explicitly, Jerusalem and the conflict on which state gets to claim it. It might be important to foreground the fact that “swan upon Leda” depicts a violation of a woman and therefore, directly connects such violence to occupation and even war conflicts. To come back to Irwin’s insisting on the importance of the authorial intent being taken into account when it comes to the presence or interpretation of allusion, it is necessary to note that this relation between abuse of authorial power and violence on women is something even the author wants his audience to be aware of as he gives the source of his inspiration in the description of this song upon publishing: “Egyptian journalist and author Mona Eltahawy once referred to the global systems that control and endanger women as the world’s ‘oldest form of occupation.’”⁶³ He then continues to make a connection between the released song and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and the protests in Iran.

The listeners who are more familiar with the genealogy of the Greek heroes and protagonists might also think of Helen of Troy, a child which came from the rape of Leda.⁶⁴ If the allusion to Leda and the swan was to be analysed into more depth, the fact that this action resulted in the birth of Helen of Troy who indirectly causes the Trojan war,⁶⁵ may be interpreted

⁶⁰ David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 237.

⁶¹ Hozier, “Swan upon Leda,” released October 2022, *Swan upon Leda*, Island Records, Spotify.

⁶² Hozier, “Swan upon Leda,” released October 2022, *Swan upon Leda*, Island Records, Spotify.

⁶³ Hozier, “Swan Upon Leda,” song description, YouTube, October 26, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eOwzx_7iNBo.

⁶⁴ David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 237.

⁶⁵ David Leeming, *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 1.

as a suggestion that one conflict leads to another, ending in a cycle – violence, in this case on women, will lead to more violence. Whether or not this was the author’s true intention in his play with intertextuality, it is certain that here he uses allusion to deepen the meaning of the two lines and in a manner particular for him inserts a political message into his poetry.

3.2 Dante’s *Inferno* in Hozier

Although the relations and references between Dante’s *Inferno* and Hozier’s *Unreal Unearth* would be more hypertextual rather than intertextual according to the criteria set by Genette, this thesis will use the term intertextuality and call the relations intertextual. Although Genette’s terminology would label the following as hypertextuality rather than intertextuality, the two are similar enough to be often interchangeable. Therefore, this thesis will regard the references in *Unreal Unearth* as allusions, no matter whether the texts should be viewed as hypertextual or intertextual.

To ensure the analysis communicates the role of the intertextual relations between the texts as effectively as possible, it is necessary to briefly summarise *Inferno* in advance. Written by Dante Alighieri in the 14th century, *Inferno* is an allegorical poem and the first book of the entire *Divine Comedy* describing Dante’s descend into and journey through Hell with all its circles, followed by an ascend at the other side of the world which is followed by the climb through Purgatory in the following book; the whole time in Hell he is guided by the ancient poet Virgil. Before entering Hell, the protagonist finds himself lost in darkness, terrified by three beasts – leopard, lion and a she-wolf, representing lust, pride and greed respectively – who stop him from climbing a mountain to the light. The light and darkness in this poem symbolise, to put it in the simplest way, the “good” and the “bad”. These themes of light and darkness take place in *Unreal Unearth* as well. The very first verses of *Inferno* state that Dante has lost his way:

“Halfway along our journey to life’s end
I found myself astray in a dark wood,
Since the right way was nowhere to be found.”⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 7.

This confusion on how to continue on one's journey is the general theme of Hozier's album as well⁶⁷, starting with the darkness entered in the first two songs and followed by the description of the world's greed in "Eat Your Young" and "Damage Gets Done" leading to "Unknown / Nth" and the confusion after betrayal to the last song "First Light" describing the new light after this journey through darkness.

Hell is divided into nine circles, each of which is designed to hold sinners of different kinds and the deeper to the centre of the earth, the more severe the sin. Hozier gives away which songs represent which circles in various interviews and videos. The point of this analysis is to observe how the relationship between the album and the poem possibly affects or deepens the context of the songs rather than to find whether the relations are even present or which song relates to which circle. The very title of the album may be conveying the message that Hell is not a real place on earth, which is something the author himself mentions in an interview,⁶⁸ therefore *unreal* and *unearth*. The poem is merely an inspiration for the album and Hozier does not urge his listeners to rush to read it in order to understand his new record.⁶⁹ Based on that, it can be assumed that the singer does not take on a metaphorical journey through Hell, rather reflecting his experience and exploring how Dante's idea of sins can be observed in this modern world.⁷⁰

The album opens with two songs, "De Selby (Part 1)" and "De Selby (Part 2)", which are not assigned to any of the nine circles. Similarly, *Inferno* does not immediately start with Dante entering Hell, therefore this opening of the album mirrors that of the *Comedy* – that is, including the theme of darkness. In the author's words, "De Selby (Part 1)" is a "song that reflects on darkness, and the falling of night"⁷¹ in which this darkness is "something that is very freeing".⁷² The first song holds certain significance when it is put into contrast with the rest of the artist's work, as it is the first song on his albums which has lyrics in Gaelic. These lyrics

⁶⁷ Chicks in the Office, "Hozier Opens Up About Dropping His First Album in 4 Years," YouTube, August 20, 2023, 12:15, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModQP7shZPM>.

⁶⁸ Chicks in the Office, "Hozier Opens Up About Dropping His First Album in 4 Years," YouTube, August 20, 2023, 16:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModQP7shZPM>.

⁶⁹ Chicks in the Office, "Hozier Opens Up About Dropping His First Album in 4 Years," YouTube, August 20, 2023, 16:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModQP7shZPM>.

⁷⁰ Chicks in the Office, "Hozier Opens Up About Dropping His First Album in 4 Years," YouTube, August 20, 2023, 12:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ModQP7shZPM>.

⁷¹ Hozier, "Hozier – De Selby (Behind The Song)," YouTube, August 18, 2023, 0:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3GVayXeFVY>.

⁷² Hozier, "Hozier – De Selby (Behind The Song)," YouTube, August 18, 2023, 1:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3GVayXeFVY>.

carry the notion of change and metamorphosis⁷³, which can be seen as the focus of both *Inferno* and *Unreal Unearth* – both of them describe a journey through difficult circumstances and coming out on the other side of them.

The following paragraphs of the analysis will highlight four specific songs – “Francesca”, “Eat Your Young”, and “Unknown / Nth” – and comment on the lyrics and how they reflect the sins assigned to the circles for which they take place on this record; one more song which, to paraphrase the singer, almost took the place of that which eventually did make it to the record,⁷⁴ will be mentioned briefly for comparison.

“Francesca” is a song alluding, even by the title itself, to the second circle of hell, the circle of the lustful, depicted in the fifth canto of *Inferno*. The singer seemingly takes on the role of Francesca da Rimini who before her death was married to Gianciotto Malatesta and, as her character narrates in *Inferno*, fell in love with her husband’s brother Paolo.⁷⁵ Both Francesca and Paolo were murdered by Malatesta, as Francesca recounts:

“Love chose a single death for both of us.
Caïna waits for him who took our lives.”⁷⁶

Caïna is a part of the ninth circle where those who betray their relatives are freezing.⁷⁷

Francesca and her lover are placed to the second circle and tossed around in a hurricane. The very first verse of “Francesca” alludes to this:

“My life was a storm since I was born
How could I fear any hurricane?”⁷⁸

Hozier uses the story of Francesca and Paolo’s tragic love to describe his attitude towards a, presumably past, lover. He uses the allusion to deepen the message in the song by having his audience know that at the end, there will be suffering not just of heartbreak but for the fact that

⁷³ Hozier, “Hozier – De Selby (Behind The Song),” YouTube, August 18, 2023, 2:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3GVayXeFVY>.

⁷⁴ Hozier, “Hozier – Unheard (Behing The EP),” YouTube, April 19, 2024, 0:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYzI7Bn0lAc>.

⁷⁵ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 53.

⁷⁶ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 53.

⁷⁷ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 329.

⁷⁸ Hozier, “Francesca,” by Hozier & Jennifer Decilveo, released 2023, track 4 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

this love was in some way unacceptable. This is reflected, to a listener who is aware of the allusion, in the chorus:

“Though I know my heart would break
I’d tell them “Put me back in it”
I would do it again
If I could hold you for a minute
I’d go through it again”⁷⁹

as well as in the last few lines:

“I would not change it each time
Heaven is not fit to house a love like you and I”.⁸⁰

Another song whose allusion to the circle it mirrors is presented in the title is “Eat Your Young”. The fourth circle, of the gluttonous, is the one this song takes its basis on, with the singer exploring the point of view of one of the sinners again. Hozier states in an interview for Genius, that this song is a play with a narrator he does not identify with, but who idealises these damaging actions and enjoys exploiting others for his own gain from a position of power.⁸¹ The motif of food and eating, alluding to the sin, is presented repetitively in the lyrics:

“I’m starving, darling
Let me put my lips to something
Let me wrap my teeth around the world”,⁸²
“I wanna smell the dinner cooking”,⁸³

or

⁷⁹ Hozier, “Francesca,” by Hozier & Jennifer Decilveo, released 2023, track 4 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸⁰ Hozier, “Francesca,” by Hozier & Jennifer Decilveo, released 2023, track 4 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸¹ Genius, “Hozier ‘Eat Your Young’ Official Lyrics & Meaning | Genius Verified,” YouTube, September 22, 2023, 0:36; 3:44, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjQMUK4IQvs>.

⁸² Hozier, “Eat Your Young,” by Daniel Tannenbaum, Sergiu Gherman, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Craig Balmoris, Daniel Krieger, Peter Gonzales, Stuart Johnson, Tyler Mehlenbacher, released March 2023, track 6 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸³ Hozier, “Eat Your Young,” by Daniel Tannenbaum, Sergiu Gherman, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Craig Balmoris, Daniel Krieger, Peter Gonzales, Stuart Johnson, Tyler Mehlenbacher, released March 2023, track 6 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

“Crumbs enough for everyone
Old and young are welcome to the meal”.⁸⁴

Hozier combines the allusions to gluttony with his activist views, calling to attention violence on children, in the interview he mentions armed violence specifically, as well as the differences in incomes,⁸⁵ and the standard of living – if the line “Crumbs enough for everyone” is to be interpreted that way. The combination of the surface message in this song given by this unreliable narrator with the allusion to *Inferno*, works to move this piece from simple commentary or criticism, to actual condemnation, as the artist assigns a circle of Hell, and therefore a form of punishment as well, to the behaviour displayed.

“Too Sweet”, a song released in 2024, could have taken the place of the one analysed above on *Unreal Unearth*. This song takes a different approach to the sin of gluttony as this protagonist is not necessarily described as putting others at disadvantage and rather simply enjoys indulgence of various kinds. In the first verse he seems to be enticing the addressee to the life he himself is living:

“Don’t you just wanna wake up dark as a lake
Smelling like a bonfire, lost in a haze?”⁸⁶

The chorus describes the tendency to indulge best as the protagonist states:

“I take my whiskey neat
My coffee black and my bed at three”.⁸⁷

As Hozier explains in his “Behind The EP” video to *Unheard* which features the song at hand, the protagonist “... enjoys overindulging and rejects discipline”.⁸⁸ In contrast with “Eat Your Young”, this song does not have to be necessarily interpreted as a criticism, but possibly as an

⁸⁴ Hozier, “Eat Your Young,” by Daniel Tannenbaum, Sergiu Gherman, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Craig Balmoris, Daniel Krieger, Peter Gonzales, Stuart Johnson, Tyler Mehlenbacher, released March 2023, track 6 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸⁵ Genius, “Hozier ‘Eat Your Young’ Official Lyrics & Meaning | Genius Verified,” YouTube, September 22, 2023, 0:18, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjQMUK4IQvs>.

⁸⁶ Hozier, “Too Sweet,” by Daniel Tannenbaum, Sergiu Gherman, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Daniel Krieger, Peter Gonzales, Stuart Johnson, Tyler Mehlenbacher, released March 2023, track 6 on *Unheard*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸⁷ Hozier, “Too Sweet,” by Daniel Tannenbaum, Sergiu Gherman, Andrew Hozier-Byrne, Daniel Krieger, Peter Gonzales, Stuart Johnson, Tyler Mehlenbacher, released March 2023, track 6 on *Unheard*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁸⁸ Hozier, “Hozier – Unheard (Behind The EP),” YouTube, April 2024, 0:28, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYzI7Bn0lAc>.

exaggerated enjoyment. The sin of gluttony here is delivered in an almost light, unserious manner.

“Unknown / Nth” plays with words to imply the ordinal number “Ninth”⁸⁹, for the ninth circle of Hell, where the treacherous are placed; specifically, those who betrayed someone who trusted them, as opposed to the eighth circle, where there are those who betrayed someone who had no reason to trust.⁹⁰ In the centre of the world, to the deepest point of the *Inferno*, Dante places Lucifer, a fallen angel, chest deep into ice, devouring betrayers with his three mouths.

The theme of betrayal is portrayed as soon as in the first verse, where the protagonist informs of his ignorance to the lies present in this relationship:

“I ignored the vastness between all that can be seen
And all that we believe
So I thought you were like an angel to me”.⁹¹

The repeated liking of the addressee in the song to an angel is arguably not coincidental, considering that Lucifer (who betrayed God) is a fallen angel. His predicament as described in the *Comedy* is alluded to in the following line:

“Where you were held frozen like an angel to me”.⁹²

This is a “roundabout way”⁹³ of describing the state in which Dante finds Satan in the ninth circle:

“The emperor of the empire of despair
Rose from mid-chest above the ice all round”.⁹⁴

Similarly, the devouring of Judas, Brutus, and Cassius is being alluded to by the image of the remains of the protagonist’s heart being stuck between the addressee’s teeth in the third verse:

⁸⁹ Hozier, “Hozier – Unknown / Nth (Behind The Song),” YouTube, July 18, 2023, 0:40, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRghTG-2blQ>.

⁹⁰ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 3.

⁹¹ Hozier, “Unknown / Nth,” released June 2023, track 15 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁹² Hozier, “Unknown / Nth,” released June 2023, track 15 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁹³ Gregory Machacek, “Allusion,” *PMLA* 122, no. 2 (2007): 526, accessed November 27, 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25501719>.

⁹⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Alma Classics Ltd, 2015), 353.

“You called me ‘angel’ for the first time, my heart leapt from me
You smile now, I can see its pieces still stuck in your teeth”.⁹⁵

By this the protagonist, however, identifies himself with the sinners-betrayers, as it is his heart that is being chewed in the same manner as their shades. The singer said in the “Behind The Song” video that “... we’re all gonna break somebody’s heart or betray somebody or hurt somebody.”⁹⁶ The allusion to the ninth circle, the fallen angel, and the sinners makes the meaning of a simple heartbreak more profound to a listener who is aware of the intertextual relation and helps him or her realise also the identification of the protagonist with the sinners.

Similarly as the allusions to Greek mythology discussed in the previous section, the allusions to *Inferno* help the listeners who are aware of them find a more profound narrative hidden behind the surface of the lyrics. Although the addition of the context of the alluded text does not make for an extreme difference in interpretation, it indeed serves to enrich the context of the alluder at hand, as shown by the analysis above.

⁹⁵ Hozier, “Unknown / Nth,” released June 2023, track 15 on *Unreal Unearth*, Rubyworks, Spotify.

⁹⁶ Hozier, “Hozier – Unknown / Nth (Behind The Song),” YouTube, July 18, 2023, 2:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRghTG-2blQ>.

Conclusion

This thesis briefly introduces intertextuality and allusion as its device while drawing on the theory coined by Julia Kristeva on intertextuality, who based her theory on Bakhtin and his theory of dialogism, which is the relation between the individual and the social, and on de Saussure's structuralist linguistics. Another theorist concerned with how texts affect each other is Roland Barthes. One of the main points of Barthes's theory is that the meaning of the text is dependent on the reader in the first place, moving the focus away from the author. Gérard Genette later introduces *transtextuality*, which entails various relations between texts – this stands close to Kristeva's intertextuality. Genette, however, treats intertextuality as a category of transtextuality along with hypertextuality, paratextuality, metatextuality, and architextuality, and views allusion, along with plagiarism and quotation as an intertextual device.

There are various approaches to allusion, whether it is viewed as literary or in any other field. Generally, this thesis treats allusion as the literary device which relates one text, the alluder, to a text previous, the alluded text. The theories of Pasco, Irwin and Machacek are mainly considered in the analysis conducted in this thesis, along with Genette's. The object of the analysis are allusions which serve as devices to manifest intertextuality intentionally employed in the selected songs. The allusions studied in this thesis intertextually relate the songs to Greek mythology and to Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*.

The analysis approaches the selected seven songs through the lens of theory of intertextuality and observes the allusions presented in them. The artist behind these songs is the Irish singer Hozier who debuted in 2013 with his song "Take Me to Church". The singer's work often uses allusions to various topics, such as religion, or politics as it can be observed in "Be", the tenth track on his Hozier's second album, *Wasteland, Baby!*, or "Nina Cried Power" in which the author pays tribute to previous musicians whose work was in some way politically inspiring.

Three of the songs which were analysed in this thesis – "Sunlight", "Talk", and "Swan Upon Leda" – were in some way alluding to Greek mythology, specifically to the myths of Icarus, Orpheus and Leda. The remaining four songs – "Francesca", "Eat Your Young", "Too Sweet", and "Unknown / Nth" – were alluding to Alighieri's *Inferno*, a 14th century poem which was the main inspiration behind Hozier's latest album *Unreal Unearth*.

The aim of this thesis was to see how these allusions affect or deepen the meaning of the lyrics in the artist's songs. The analysis showed that these intertextual relations serve to give

a more profound understanding of the protagonists' or even the singer's attitude, as was shown in songs such as "Sunlight", in which the protagonist identifies with Icarus and compares his lover to the Sun, sunlight and therefore to Apollo. Another example would be "Eat Your Young", in which the author sings from the point of view of a glutton. The allusion to the third circle of Hell presented in this song is used to move the song from a simple "role-play" to a criticism, or even condemnation of the actions described.

Aside from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Alighieri's *Inferno*, the analysis also leans on *The Oxford Companion to World Mythology* and *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, to describe certain elements such as the Greek gods, Artemis and Apollo, which helps the analysis to lean more on the myths behind them which the song "Sunlight" is alluding to, or the nature of the relationship between the swan and Leda, which the singer uses to draw a connection between violence on women and abuse of power and, indeed, occupation. The allusions presented in the seven selected songs show that the artist uses intertextuality intentionally to enrich the context of his songs and to give the lyrics a new depth to be observed and enjoyed by the listeners who succeed at recognising their intertextuality.

Resumé

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo zanalyzovat úmyslné využití intertextuality za použití aluzí. K tomu byla využita teorie intertextuality Julii Kristevy, která se opírá o dialogismus Michaila Bachtina a strukturalistický přístup Ferdinanda de Saussura, a teorie o aluzi jakožto literárním postupu, především od autorů jako Allan H. Pasco, William Irwin nebo Gregory Machacek, které jsou vyloženy v první kapitole práce. Dalším hlavním teoretikem, jehož výzkum tato práce využívá, je Gérard Genette, který považuje aluzi za nástroj intertextuality.

Tato práce se zaměřuje na tvorbu irského zpěváka Hoziera, který se v roce 2013 proslavil písní „Take Me to Church“. Autor ve svých písních často využívá aluze a jejich pomocí se odkazuje například na politiku, náboženství, nebo jiné umělce. Jeho tvorba se do jisté míry vyznačuje také aktivismem či kritikou, což je patrné i v písních vybraných k analýze, konkrétně „Eat Your Young“ a „Swan Upon Leda“.

Cílem práce tedy bylo dokázat, že autor úmyslně využívá aluzi a intertextualitu k tomu, aby prohloubil význam či sdělení ve své tvorbě pro ty posluchače, kteří tyto aluze zachytí. Analýza se soustředila předně na aluze, které odkazují na řeckou mytologii a *Inferno* (také *Peklo*), první část *Božské komedie* od italského spisovatele Dante Alighieriho. Konkrétně byla analýza provedena na sedmi písních, z nichž tři odkazovaly na řeckou mytologii – šlo o „Sunlight“, „Talk“ a „Swan Upon Leda“ – a čtyři na *Inferno* – „Francesca“, „Eat Your Young“, „Too Sweet“ a „Unknown / Nth“.

Ve třetí kapitole se ukazuje, že mýty, na které tyto vybrané písně odkazují, jsou mýtus o Ikarovi, o Orfeovi a o Lédě. V druhé části této kapitoly pak písně odkazují na druhý, třetí a devátý kruh pekla. Díky aluzím autor vytváří určitou kritiku politickou i sociální. To se týká písní „Swan Upon Leda“ a „Eat Your Young“, ve kterých srovnává násilí na ženách s okupací a odsuzuje bezohlednou chamtivost a podobně. Také díky nim vyjadřuje, a také umožňuje posluchači odhalit či hlouběji pochopit postoj buď svůj vlastní, nebo postoj protagonisty v dané písni, jako tomu je například v písních „Sunlight“ nebo „Unknown / Nth“.

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