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Indie Rock Poetry: Arctic Monkeys' *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*
Indie Rocková Poezie: Album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* kapely Arctic
Monkeys

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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V Praze dne 7.1. 2023

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Permission

Souhlasím se zapůjčením bakalářské práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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Abstract

The following thesis creates an academic discourse in order to prove that the lyrics on Arctic Monkeys' debut album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* (2006) should be considered as literature and referred to as indie-rock poetry. The argument in favor of the lyrics being literature is based on the theoretical framework proposed by Terry Eagleton, Stanley Fish and Anthony Easthope: literature is a construct, with literary value being impossible to identify in universal terms. Literary value exists within an interpretative medium, in the context of which the value can only be artificially assigned. To prove that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* has literary value, the thesis functions as an interpretive medium within which the value is assigned. It begins by presenting Eagleton's and Fish's notions about the nature of literary value, supported by Easthope's idea of the denouncement of literary value as a concept. It is then supported by the notion of the vanishment of the split between high culture and popular culture, which makes the academic study of *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* possible, since it is an item of popular culture. The next chapter provides a sociocultural framework for the literary analysis of the lyrics in the later chapters. It introduces the notions of indie culture, northern English identity and rock poetry, as well as outlines the criteria that constitute literary value for the context of this thesis: an effective use of literary devices with regards to content and form with the aim of depicting the feelings and experiences of a specific generational and regional group, as well as portraying certain qualities which make it possible to connect the lyrics to indie culture, northern English identity and rock poetry. The remaining chapters provide a detailed analysis of the selected lyrics from the album, focusing on content and form, demonstrating the effect that the use of literary devices has, as well as showing how the lyrics connect to indie, northern English identity and rock poetry, forming a new category of indie-rock poetry. The thesis concludes with

the statement that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are literature, since all of the aforementioned criteria of literary value are fulfilled. Selected parts of lyrics are used for analysis, whereas the full text of the analyzed lyrics is included in the appendices for possible further references.

Key Words: Indie-rock poetry, Northern England, British culture

Abstrakt

Bakalářská práce vytváří akademický diskurz s cílem dokázat, že texty skladeb na debutovém albu Arctic Monkeys *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* (2006) by měly být považovány za literaturu a označovány jako indie-rocková poezie. Argument ve prospěch považování textů za literaturu je založen na teoretickém rámci navrženém Terry Eagletonem, Stanley Fishem a Antony Eastopem: literatura je konstrukt, přičemž literární hodnotu nelze univerzálně identifikovat. Literární hodnota existuje v rámci interpretačního média, v jehož kontextu lze hodnotu pouze uměle přiřadit. S cílem dokázat, že *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* má literární hodnotu, funguje předkládaná bakalářská práce jako interpretační médium, v němž je tato hodnota přiřazena. Práce nejprve představuje Eagletonův a Fishův pohled na podstatu literární hodnoty, podpořený Eastopeovou kritikou literární hodnoty jako konceptu. To je následně podpořeno tezí o neexistujícím rozdílu mezi kulturou vysokou a populární, umožňující akademickou studii o albu *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* jako dílu populární kultury. Další kapitola pak poskytuje sociokulturní rámec pro literární analýzu textů v následujících kapitolách. Představuje pojmy jako indie kultura, severoanglická identita a rocková poezie a nastiňuje kritéria tvořící literární hodnotu v kontextu této práce: efektivní využití literárních prostředků s ohledem na obsah a formu s cílem zobrazit pocity a zkušenosti specifické generační a regionální skupiny, stejně jako ztvárnění určitých vlastností umožňující propojit texty s indie kulturou, severoanglickou identitou a rockovou poezií. Zbývající kapitoly poskytují podrobnou analýzu vybraných textů z alba *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* se zaměřením na jejich obsah a formu, demonstrují efekt, který má použití literárních prostředků, a také ukazují, jak se texty pojí s indie, severoanglickou identitou a rockovou poezií a tvoří novou kategorii indie-rockové poezie. Práce konstatuje, že vybrané texty jsou literaturou, neboť v jejich

případě dochází ke splnění všech výše uvedených kritérií literární hodnoty. K analýze jsou použity vybrané části textů, přičemž jejich plné znění je zahrnuto v přílohách práce.

Klíčová slova: Indie-rocková poezie, Severní Anglie, Britská kultura

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1. Introduction

“Anticipation has a habit to set you up / For disappointment in evening entertainment but”¹ are the opening lines of *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not* (2006) – the debut album by the British four-piece indie-rock band Arctic Monkeys, formed in 2002 in the suburban region of High Green, Sheffield, Northern England.² These lines may reflect the fans’ anticipation of the album’s release since Arctic Monkeys were among one of the first bands that managed to build a solid fan-base and gain popularity through social media, without the support of a major label as well as prior to the release of their debut album.³ *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not* became the fastest-selling debut album in the history of the UK at that time.⁴

Apart from the unique energetic garage-indie-punk-rock infused music, the album is notable due to its lyrical content. The lyrics depict British youth culture with very detailed, vividly realistic imagery and observation, portraying teenage life in Northern England in the early years of the twenty-first century. Ironically, sarcastically and earnestly Alex Turner – the band’s front man and lyricist – romanticizes the nightlife culture that implies going out, alcohol, violence, love-interests, and more. The central aim of the following thesis is to demonstrate that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not* should be considered as literature and, more specifically, referred to as indie-rock poetry.

The thesis, however, is not concerned with identifying the best suitable universal term for “literature” and using it as a criteria to argue that the lyrics on the album are literature. According

¹ Alex Turner, “The View from the Afternoon,” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc, Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

² Ben Osborne, “The View From The Afternoon”, in *The Arctic Monkeys: Whatever People Say They Are... That’s What They’re Not* (London: Omnibus Press: 2013), Apple Books.

³ Laura Barton, “The question: Have the Arctic Monkeys changed the music business?,” *The Guardian*, October 25, 2005, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2005/oct/25/popandrock.arcticmonkeys>.

⁴ David Browne et al., “100 Best Debut Albums of All Time,” *Rolling Stone*, July 1, 2022, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-lists/100-best-debut-albums-of-all-time-143608/whatever-people-say-i-am-thats-what-im-not-153170/>.

to literary theorists Terry Eagleton, Stanley Fish and Anthony Easthope, such a task is impossible since literary value cannot be defined in universal terms. Instead, literary value can only be assigned, which means that in order to prove that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are literature, a certain academic discourse has to be created and the criteria which constitute literary value for the context of the thesis should be clearly outlined. The thesis aims to create such academic discourse, in the following manner.

Chapter 2 introduces the central theoretical framework on which the essence of the thesis is based: Terry Eagleton's notion of literature as construct, in which literary value does not exist by itself in universal terms, since it tends to rely on multiple sociocultural factors that cannot be universally reliable, since they are bound to change. Thus, according to Eagleton, literary value can only be assigned artificially. This is supported by Stanley Fish's notion of "interpretive communities". Fish argues that the central concept of literature is not the text, but the interpretation, which provides the theoretical basis for this thesis being an interpretative medium within which literary value is assigned to the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*. The discussion is concluded with Anthony Easthope's denouncement of literary value as a concept, since he believes that the assignment of such value has lost its meaning. Since the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are a popular cultural item, the chapter is concluded with a discussion about highbrow, middlebrow, lowbrow and nobrow culture and the postmodernist approach to these categories, which admits that the split between popular and high culture has vanished, as suggested by Anthony Easthope. This creates the possibility for the study of *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* as an item of popular culture from an academic perspective.

Even though literary value does not exist in universal terms, it can be assigned. In the context of the thesis, literary value is constituted by an effective use of literary devices in order to emphasize a strong northern regional identity, authentically and honestly depicting the experiences and feelings of youth culture while demonstrating ways in which the lyrics are part of indie culture. In order to make this connection evident, Chapter 3 introduces the aforementioned concepts of indie culture, northern English regional identity and rock poetry, which is later used as a framework necessary for the literary analysis of the lyrics. All of the three elements are combined in the conclusion of this chapter, which serves as a justification for referring to the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* as indie-rock poetry. Indie culture is perceived as valuing authenticity, intimate and local character. This is linked with the creation of a strong northern English identity in the case of these lyrics and, in the end, is also joined by the key aspect of rock poetry – the emphasis on social realism and the depiction of experiences and feelings of a specific generational group.

Chapter 4 elaborates on this framework by performing a literary analysis of the content of selected lyrics from the album, focusing on the effective use of irony, sarcasm and vivid imagery in order to achieve authenticity, create a strong regional identity and depict the experiences and feelings of teenagers in the style of rock poetry. This chapter clearly demonstrates that the combination of the effective use of literary devices and the belonging to the aforementioned categories, as a result, proves that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are literature.

Chapter 5 focuses on the formal aspects of the album's lyrics. By using Terry Eagleton's and Charles Olson's notions about form and content, the chapter demonstrates how form is a continuation of content and analyzes the uses of lineation, enjambment, anaphora and epiphora, as

well as ways in which these literary devices are essential for conveying the same messages and meanings, proving that the lyrics are literature since the effect they create relies on the use of literary devices. The mere presence of such formal devices is seen as a literary performative act according to Derek Attridge, which also proves that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are literature.

2. Literature as Construction—*Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* As Literature

The following chapter introduces the key notions from literary theory and cultural studies of the twentieth century that will be used as the theoretical basis for arguing that the lyrics on the album *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* by Arctic Monkeys should be considered as literature. The first section deals with Terry Eagleton's reflections about what constitutes the value of literature; Stanley Fish's notion of the influence of interpretive communities on literature; and Antony Easthope's denouncement of literary value as a concept. The second section deals with the discourse about high and popular culture in connection with so-called highbrow, middlebrow, lowbrow and nobrow culture, emphasizing the vanishing of the border between high and popular culture. This entire thesis aims to open a discourse about the album's lyrics, and this chapter forms an interpretive medium in the context of which, according to Eagleton and Fish, the lyrics on the album may exist as literature either from the viewpoint of an interpreter (or in Fish's term the "interpretive community"⁵) or from the viewpoint of academia.

2.1. The Denouncement of Literary Value: Eagleton, Fish, Easthope

Terry Eagleton's *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, lays the foundation for creating an academic discourse that argues in favor of the literary quality of Alex Turner's lyrics. Eagleton summarizes his views on the role of literary theory thus:

Rather than simply providing new methods for the study of literary works, [this study] asks about the nature and function of literature and the literary institution. Rather than simply supplying us with yet more sophisticated ways of tackling canonical texts, it inquires into the very concept of canonicity. Its aim is not just to help us to see what literary works mean, or how valuable they are; instead, it queries our commonsense notions of what it is to "mean" in the first

⁵ Antony Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), 46.

place, and poses questions about the criteria by which we evaluate literary art.⁶

In other words, the basis of Eagleton's approach to literary theory in itself undermines the notion that there can be one direct answer to the question of what constitutes literature, since he argues that the task of literary theory is to pose questions about the very essence of terms and concepts, linked with literature. Essentially, Eagleton goes on to argue that since the value judgments by which the term "literature" is constituted are historically variable as well as very closely related to specific social ideologies,⁷ "there is no such thing as a literary work or tradition which is valuable *in itself* [...] 'Value' is a transitive term: it means whatever is valued by certain people in specific situations, according to particular criteria and in the light of given purposes."⁸ In other words, it is practically impossible to clearly state the universal meaning of literary value since the criteria by which value is assigned by authorities are unreliable and limiting due to ever-changing social and cultural circumstances.

To demonstrate his point, Eagleton illustrates the relationship between ordinary language discourse and the deviation from the norm as a criteria to define literariness as used by the Formalists⁹: "Even the most 'prosaic' text of the fifteenth century may sound 'poetic' to us today because of its archaism."¹⁰ This example clearly demonstrates the unreliability of language as one of the possible criteria of literary texts, since meaning and discourse are bound to change over time. The point is emphasized further when Eagleton claims that "Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist."¹¹ This serves as the basis for one of the key ideas of Eagleton's *Literary Theory* in

⁶ Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), viii.

⁷ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 14.

⁸ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 10.

⁹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 4.

¹⁰ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 4.

¹¹ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 9.

viewing literary theory as being closely related to current politics and ideology: “from Percy Bysshe Shelley to Norman N. Holland, literary theory has been indissociably bound up with political beliefs and ideological values,”¹² which refers back to the point of how the question of what is and isn’t literature is closely bound to the time in which it is read:

The point is whether it is possible to speak of “literary theory” without perpetuating the illusion that literature exists as a distinct, bounded object of knowledge, or whether it is not preferable to draw the practical consequences of the fact that literary theory can handle Bob Dylan just as well as John Milton. My own view is that it is most useful to see “literature” as a name which people give from time to time for different reasons to certain kinds of writing within a whole field of what Michel Foucault has called “discursive practices”, and if anything is to be an object of study it is this whole field of practices rather than just those sometimes rather obscurely labelled “literature.”¹³

It is, however, possible to assign literary value which would be valid in a specific academic discourse, since such a discourse in itself may be considered as an “interpretive community.”¹⁴ Eagleton’s idea, in that way, may be paraphrased: the quality of ‘literariness’ does not come from within the actual work of art itself, but rather from the value each reader assigns to it. As he puts it: “one can think of literature less as some inherent quality or set of qualities displayed by certain kinds of writing all the way from *Beowulf* to Virginia Woolf, than as a number of ways in which people *relate themselves* to writing.”¹⁵ This clearly hints at the importance of the influence of the interpretation, which may define if something is or isn't considered possessive of the quality of literariness, which will also be discussed further in the context of a different author: Stanley Fish.

¹² Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 169.

¹³ Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction*, 178.

¹⁴ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 46.

¹⁵ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 8.

Antony Easthope, in his *Literary into Cultural Studies*, while discussing the nature of literary value, refers both to Eagleton and Stanley Fish as “the most powerful proponent of literature-as-construction,”¹⁶ with Fish’s arguments mainly conveyed in his work *Is there a Text in This Class?* Fish argues that “literature and literary value does not exist except as what the community imagines it to be because in the first place the text has no material identity.”¹⁷ In other words, the central concept in literature according to Fish is not the text, since it has no identity, but the interpretation. The text cannot exist without “interpretive communities.”¹⁸ This idea connects well with the approach of Eagleton, who believes that “literary value is only an effect of its institutional construction.”¹⁹ Fish, however, perceives a closer connection between the text and the interpretive communities. As Easthope remarks in his analysis: “texts are stable because, though constantly subject to changes explained by nothing more than the passing of time, interpretive communities are stable.”²⁰ As a result, Easthope, reflecting on the question of literary value by using the ideas of the aforementioned thinkers, takes this argument further, claiming that the question of literary value has lost its meaning, since there can no longer be any literary value at all:

Since the magic of essence was the main reason why literature was preferred as the high cultural form, and the texts of popular culture correspondingly denigrated, literary value in my account loses its value. Redefined as it has been here, the aura of literature has been dispelled, or at least that was the intention. If literature consists merely of some texts that seem more able than others to give rise to a variety of readings across history, then they lose their hegemonic power. If they continue to function in a contemporary reading they

¹⁶ Antony Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), 45.

¹⁷ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 46.

¹⁸ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 46.

¹⁹ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 48.

²⁰ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 46.

can and should be studied alongside the texts of popular culture as examples of signifying practice.²¹

This section has outlined the key notions of literary theory of the twentieth century that are relevant to the current discourse of proving that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* should be discussed and analyzed as literature. The essence of literature, according to Eagleton, Fish and Easthope, is either constructed by institutions; only makes sense in the presence of interpretive communities; or does not exist at all, which allows for this consideration of Alex Turner's lyrics as literature by creating an academic discourse in the role of an interpretive medium. In fact, according to Fish, by creating such discourse in the first place, an interpretive community is being formed, which allows for the text to exist and be analyzed. In this way, the work of Eagleton, Fish and Easthope can be used as a theoretical basis for claiming that the lyrics on an indie-rock album can be considered as literature and analyzed as such, due to the unreliable nature of the concept of literary value. The next section of this chapter is focused on the vanishing of the border between high and popular culture, which is closely related with the instability of the notion of literary value and is equally relevant to the discussion of the lyrics on the album, since the lyrics are an item of popular culture.

2.2. Postmodernism in High Culture and Popular Culture

Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not is pop music. Pop music is popular culture. In order to demonstrate that popular culture items can be regarded as literature, it is necessary to outline what popular culture is and how the meaning of this term is affected by so-called high culture. This section argues that there is no split between popular culture and high culture. This is relevant to the investigation of the album lyrics, since it proves their potential literary merit.

²¹ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 58.

However, before diving into the discourse of high culture and popular culture, it is important to mention the very concept of classification of people into three categories according to their tastes and preferences in culture consumption: the highbrows, middlebrows and lowbrows, which appeared in the second half of the twentieth century.²²

Originally, linguistically based on the idea of tying “the size of one’s forehead to one’s cultural taste level,”²³ this typology “enabled people to tie cultural taste to something, namely educational level and degree of sophistication about the arts.”²⁴ In other words, this classification demonstrates the presence of an idea that some art can be perceived as more complex and sophisticated than others, and is therefore of higher value, which means that it can only be grasped by people of a specific level of education. As Russell Lynes summarizes: “the highbrows are the elite, the middlebrows are the bourgeoisie, and the lowbrows are *hoi polloi*.”²⁵ Dwight Macdonald introduces the concept of Masscult (Mass Culture) in opposition to High Culture and argues that “it really isn’t culture at all;”²⁶ that it’s a “parody of High Culture.”²⁷ He elaborates on this claim by quoting Clement Greenberg, specifying that Masscult “predigests art for the spectator and spares him effort, provides him with a shortcut to the pleasures of art that detours what is necessarily difficult in the genuine art” because it includes the spectator’s reactions in the work itself instead of forcing him to make his own responses.”²⁸ This hierarchical approach to the

²² Peter Swirski, Tero Eljas Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 25.

²³ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 25.

²⁴ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 25.

²⁵ Russel Lynes, “Reprint: Highbrow, Lowbrow, Middlebrow (1949)”, *The Wilson Quarterly* 1, No.1 (1976): 146-158, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40255171>.

²⁶ Dwight Macdonald, “Masscult & Middcult,” in *Against the American Grain* 3-75, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), 3.

²⁷ Macdonald, “Masscult & Middcult,” 3.

²⁸ Macdonald, “Masscult & Middcult,” 29.

division between the types of arts according to their presumed value is also reflected by Arthur Asa Berger:

Highbrows, to simplify matters, are elitists when it comes to the arts and are scornful of middlebrows, who have aspirations to a highbrow status as far as the arts and intellectual life in general are concerned. Both highbrows and middlebrows look down on lowbrows, who have no taste and lack refinement (at least according to the highbrows and middlebrows), but are nonetheless major consumers of popular or mass-mediated culture.²⁹

This collection of essays by Berger, in fact, is mostly dedicated to the nobrow culture – the fourth category of culture which, as Berger suggests, “effaces the boundaries between highbrow and lowbrow”³⁰ and is of key importance for the current discussion of the album’s lyrics. Before emphasizing it again in the following part of this section, it is, however, important to introduce the discourse of popular culture.

Herbert Gans begins his *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* by assigning high culture to the “educated”, pointing out that the mere concept creates a “cultural struggle”: “One of the longest lasting cultural struggles has pitted the educated practitioners of high culture against most of the rest of society, rich and poor, which prefers the popular cultures now, supplied mainly by the mass media and other consumer goods industries.”³¹ Gans mentions mass media in the beginning of his discussion of high culture, which shows how the two concepts closely co-exist and influence the meaning of one another. According to Gans, culture is connected to class. Gans uses the concept of “taste publics and cultures”³² and outlines the following types of culture: “*high culture, upper-middle culture, lower-middle culture, low*

²⁹ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 25.

³⁰ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 26.

³¹ Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture & High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 3.

³² Gans, *Popular Culture & High Culture*, 100.

culture, and *quasi-folk low culture*.”³³ The main feature of high culture is “its domination by creators and the elite social position of its users.”³⁴ This approach may also justify the adjective “high,” since it implies the hierarchical nature of classes in society.

Conversely, there is no single correct definition of popular culture that would satisfy and include all meanings that are hidden behind that combination of words. John Storey in his *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction* attempts to come up with a definition by offering six different approaches. To summarize his findings, popular culture can be seen as: 1) “culture that is widely favored or well-liked by many people;”³⁵ 2) “culture that is left over after we have decided what is high culture;”³⁶ 3) a ‘mass culture’ – commercial culture that is produced for mass consumption;³⁷ 4) a culture that originates from ‘the people’ and perceives itself as ‘authentic’ as opposed to being forced on ‘the people’ from above;³⁸ 5) “a site of struggle between the ‘resistance’ of subordinate groups and the forces of ‘incorporation’ operating in the interests of dominant groups,”³⁹ and, 6) the postmodernist approach to culture, which “no longer recognizes the distinction between high and popular culture.”⁴⁰

The variety of these proposed definitions of popular culture clearly demonstrates the complexity of the task of defining it. However, for the purpose of this paper it is necessary to focus on the second, fourth and sixth definitions. The second and fourth definitions attempt to construct the identity of popular culture by opposing it to high culture. As Storey points out, despite the fact that many accept this approach, it creates certain problems, since it requires some sort of criteria to define

³³ Gans, *Popular Culture & High Culture*, 95.

³⁴ Gans, *Popular Culture & High Culture*, 101.

³⁵ John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 2012), Apple Books.

³⁶ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

³⁷ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

³⁸ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

³⁹ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

⁴⁰ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

what high culture is. Although Gans's classification offers an insight into the justification of the term high culture, it would still be problematic to clearly define high culture in relation to all time periods. This is mainly because the term has proven to be rather unreliable due to its dependency on historical circumstances (similarly to Terry Eagleton's idea of literary value being "historically variable", as mentioned in 2.1.). Storey brings up the examples of William Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and film noir: the perception of the two authors and the film genre has drastically changed over time.⁴¹ A similar problem arises with the fourth definition, which heavily relies on the term "the people," which is rather problematic to define clearly as well.⁴² The term "authenticity" is, however, very much appropriate to indie culture, which the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are part of.

Finally, and most importantly, the sixth definition denounces the difference between high and popular culture. This approach is key for the purpose of this paper, since it allows for the analysis of the lyrics on the album in the context of an academic paper. This idea is further developed by Antony Easthope in his work *Literary into Cultural Studies* as well as Arthur Asa Berger when discussing nobrow culture. Easthope points out that it is "frequently argued that the split between high and popular culture — and the hegemonic effect likely from the superiority of high over popular culture — is vanishing in postmodern culture."⁴³ It is important to acknowledge the existence of such categories as high culture and popular culture along with the highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow culture, but despite the existence of such categories, the postmodernist approach claims that such typology is not relevant. In fact, Berger also acknowledges the vanishing of the split between the highbrow and the lowbrow by writing about the nobrow culture and its origin in the postmodernist

⁴¹ Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

⁴² Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, Apple Books.

⁴³ Easthope, *Literary Into Cultural Studies*, 100.

approach.⁴⁴ In his essay he quotes Fredrick Jameson's *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*:

the effacement ... of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School.⁴⁵

For the purpose of this paper, this postmodernist approach to culture and literature can be used to demonstrate that the lyrics on the album should be considered as literature, despite the fact that they can be categorized as popular culture. In fact, it is important to note that by applying this approach, there can be no need for the separate use of the terms high culture and popular culture, since there are no sufficient criteria that justify the need to differentiate between them.

This chapter has presented the key theoretical notions from twentieth century literary theory and cultural studies relevant for proving that the lyrics on the album have literary merit. The first section demonstrated the view that literary value is mainly an institutional construction, which heavily relies on the interpretive community, with a literary text being a rather unstable entity that is almost impossible to clearly define in universal terms. It has also been demonstrated how unreliable the criteria to define what is and what isn't literature have been, which led to the argument that literary value does not exist on its own, but can, however, be constructed and assigned by forming an interpretive medium (or, in Fish's terms, a community) which is essentially what this paper aims to do. The non-existence of the literary essence, as a result, leads to the next argument about the unreliability of the divisions between the highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow

⁴⁴ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 26.

⁴⁵ Swirski, Vanhanen (eds.), *When Highbrow Meets Lowbrow: Popular Culture and the Rise of Nobrow*, 26.

forms of culture, since these very categories are based on the concept of value in art. The aforementioned notions are used as a theoretical framework to argue that it is possible to claim that the lyrics on the album are literature. The next chapter will expand on the idea that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* belongs to popular culture – indie culture, specifically, with its emphasis on authenticity – while investigating the social and chronological background of the context with which the lyrics on the album are preoccupied.

3. The Cultural Framework

As the previous chapter demonstrated, literary value does not exist by itself, but is assigned by the interpretive community. Therefore, in order to prove that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are in fact literature, it is necessary to assign literary value to them. In the context of this thesis, literary value is conveyed in the relatability between the sociocultural background and the content and form of lyrics on the album, which is achieved mainly due to an effective use of literary devices. The further analysis of the lyrics in chapters 4 and 5, though mainly based on the identification and effects of key literary devices, cannot be complete without a connection to a broader cultural context. This chapter aims to create a cultural framework for a further detailed analysis of the lyrics, which essentially aims to prove that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* can be considered as indie-rock poetry. In order to do that, it is necessary to introduce several concepts: the first section of this chapter outlines the origins and key aspects of indie culture, with an emphasis on authenticity and the creation of a sense of community, which leads to the second section's discussion of the importance of the regional identity of the English North. The chapter is concluded with a discussion about what constitutes rock poetry in the relevant existing academic discourse. These three sections aim to justify the thesis's approach to the lyrics on *Whatever People I Am, That's What I'm Not* as indie-rock poetry, since, as will be shown in more detail in the following chapters, the album's lyrics possess all of the essential qualities of these notions.

3.1. Indie Culture

Indie-rock, a “subgenre of independent or alternative rock, featuring mainly white, male groups playing mainly electric guitars, bass and drums”⁴⁶ originated in the 1980s. Matthew Bannister, writing about indie guitar rock as a genre summarizes:

In the 1980s, indie guitar rock occurred all over the First World, from the USA to the UK to Australia and New Zealand, marked increasingly by a comparative stylistic homogeneity partly attributable to the recurrence of similar influences, mainly punk and 1960s white pop/rock, but also to the dissemination and globalisation of the alternative/avant-garde aesthetics of popular culture⁴⁷

In his cultural study of indie music Bannister suggests that, socially, the factors that were responsible for the original emergence of indie culture included a sense of betrayal, crisis, insecurity and a worsening of people’s lives, especially among young adults in the 1980s.⁴⁸ Bannister then goes on to suggest that indie culture was in huge part a counterculture that took its inspirations from the 1960s – an escapist strategy for finding inspiration in the past, displaying a countercultural ethos of resistance to the market:

As such, there was a tendency to either idealise the immediate past as a magical prelapsarian moment which contrasted favourably with contemporary trials and tribulations or denigrate it as a cause of present problems, and one of the main focuses was the 1960s. Groups from all parts of the social and political spectrum lined up to take a shot at the 1960s, and especially at its most visible manifestation – the counterculture. Punk rock got in first with its denunciation of ‘old hippies’, a theme essentially continued in GenX’s targeting of ‘boomer culture’. Even ‘the indie community saw what had happened to the Sixties dream ... the baby boomers’ egregious sellout’ (Azerrad, 2001, p. 7).⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Matthew Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock* (Farnham, United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2006), 57.

⁴⁷ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, 57.

⁴⁸ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, xvii.

⁴⁹ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, xvii.

The oppositional nature of indie culture is genuinely conveyed in its name. Linguistically the term “indie” was inspired by the way the music was being distributed – by independent labels. Wendy Fonarow in *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music* writes: “*Indie*, as a colloquial abbreviation of the term *independent*, reflects this community’s historic association with the products of small, independently owned record companies.”⁵⁰ Originally, the term “independent label” meant a record label that “utilized a distribution network that was not owned by one of the four major transnational corporations.”⁵¹ As a result, independent labels have a chance to have more control over their release schedules as well as the artists that they sign and the music that they release.⁵² This independent nature, firstly originated by means of record distribution, has influenced the style of overall artistic expression, forming a specific approach in writing music and lyrics. Fonarow summarizes the key features of this approach: “a lack of concern for popularity, an interest in autonomy and local character, the rejection of the large corporations based in London, and an emphasis on direct artistic expression above all else.”⁵³ Bannister conveys a similar point by quoting David Buckley: “Indie, by virtue of its very name, had a strong investment in difference, concerned with ‘what not to do’ (Buckley, 2002, pp. 78–9).”⁵⁴

The identity of indie culture is largely based on the opposition to the so-called mainstream, which is seen as fake, shallow, inauthentic, and above all commercial. Indie, on the other hand, strives for authenticity: it “sees itself as intimate, personal, urgent, and, most of all, meaningfully human in an age of faceless transnational corporations and synthetic sounds.”⁵⁵ The emphasis on

⁵⁰ Wendy Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 30.

⁵¹ Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*, 30.

⁵² Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*, 33.

⁵³ Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*, 35.

⁵⁴ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, 58.

⁵⁵ Fonarow, *Empire of Dirt: The Aesthetics and Rituals of British Indie Music*, 73.

the personal, intimate and local in indie culture contributes to the creation of a sense of community, through which, above everything else, a local identity can be conveyed, similarly to punk culture.⁵⁶ Bannister, despite not fully agreeing with the argument, points out that “Many studies of indie present it as authentically autonomous and unique, produced in isolated, marginal, local scenes, uncaptured by ideology, free of commercial and other pressures, but also of high culture elitism (Kruse, 2003, p. 1).”⁵⁷ Bannister emphasizes this by quoting Holly Cruse: “Recurrent in narratives of indie pop/rock is the conscious geographical and ideological positioning of the “peripheral” local sites and practices of indie music production and consumption in opposition to the “centers” of mainstream music production’ (Kruse, 2003, p. 1).”⁵⁸

Even though *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not* was released in 2006, it may be viewed as a cultural continuation of the indie tradition, not only, but mainly due to its lyrical content. As will be analyzed further in Chapter 4, the most crucial element of indie culture that the lyrics on the album possess is their belonging to the local, regional context, with its authentic representation and portrayal of local teenage life in Northern England. The context is very age and gender specific. This is what defines its authenticity and, as a result, demonstrates the close connection between the content of the lyrics and the album’s belonging to indie culture. This is also what, therefore, constitutes the literary value in the context of this thesis and is necessary to prove that *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not* is literature. The next section develops this argument further by focusing on the discussion of regional identity, since it is an important element that constitutes the lyrics’ authenticity, which emphasizes its belonging to indie culture.

⁵⁶ Gerfried Ambrosch, *The Poetry of Punk* (New York: Routledge, 2018), Apple Books.

⁵⁷ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, 57.

⁵⁸ Bannister, *White Boys, White Noise: Masculinities And 1980s Indie Guitar Rock*, 59.

3.2. The Role of Regional Identity for Authenticity in the Context of Indie Culture: England's Cultural North

The majority of the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* describe teenage nightlife in the Northern England of the mid 2000s. They are mostly concerned with, on one hand, a detailed realistic portrayal of nightlife and, on the other hand, the depiction of anxieties, thoughts and feelings of a young man in the context of going out. As will be demonstrated in more detail in the following chapters, the key qualities of the lyrical content on the album are authenticity and an emphasis on the local aspects of life, both from the geographical and the chronological perspective. The previous section outlined the key elements of indie culture, among which is an emphasis on the local small cities as opposed to large metropolitan centers. This section introduces the concept of England's Cultural North, which is essential for demonstrating how the lyrics on the album are germane to indie culture through their emphasis of the role of local regional identity. This is one of the features that constitute the literary value in the context of this thesis, which, as a result, helps prove that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* is literature.

Arctic Monkeys are originally from the High Green region in the suburbs of Sheffield,⁵⁹ which is a city in Northern England. This is where they have spent their teenage years, which were the first years of their artistic career as a band. Alex Turner's lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are inspired by the teenage nightlife of Northern England, which is where he comes from. The decision to categorize the region of Northern England as separate is motivated by both culture and economics. The two factors, however, are closely related. In a collection of essays about the economic development of England's North, Craig Berry and Arianna Giovannini

⁵⁹ Osborne, "The View From The Afternoon", in *The Arctic Monkeys: Whatever People Say They Are... That's What They're Not*, Apple Books.

point out that despite the fact that “the North is not a distinct economic space,”⁶⁰ the notion of a North-South divide does exist, and is inspired by the differences in factors like economic development, education and employment.⁶¹ Their book is an analysis of the Northern Powerhouse, which is the government’s strategy to economically boost the region of Northern England.⁶² Sheffield is, as the authors of the book point out, one of the two “key city-regions within the Northern Powerhouse,” along with Manchester.⁶³ The existence of this notion as well as the government’s strategy suggests that there is a unique economic nature of the northern region as opposed to the rest of England (mainly the South), with Sheffield being among the Northern cities.

From a cultural perspective, on the other hand, Northern England can be perceived as a separate space with a unique identity. Economic conditions and cultural realities are closely interconnected, with a strong influence between the two. Ralph Pordzik hints at this idea in his essay about the cultural identity of Northern England. He assumes that the aim of the northern sub-cultural scene in Great Britain that has been forming since the late 1970s, was “to challenge and punctuate the economic influence of the London based music industry and that it sought to make a valid ideological statement about regional forms of northern identity.”⁶⁴ The need to be identified as a separate region as opposed to the capital had an economic origin, as Pordzik demonstrates using the example of the seminal 1980s British band, The Smiths from Manchester:

Manchester itself, the regions’ capital, was at its lowest ebb in the late Seventies when Britpop started out as a new phenomenon: a vicious economic recession had hit the North harder than anywhere

⁶⁰ Craig Berry and Arianna Giovannini, “Introduction: Powerhouse Politics and Economic Development in the North,” in *Developing England’s North: The Political Economy of the Northern Powerhouse*, ed. Craig Berry and Arianna Giovannini (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) 4.

⁶¹ Berry and Giovannini, “Introduction: Powerhouse Politics and Economic Development in the North,” 6.

⁶² “The North. Made of Pioneers,” NPH – Northern Powerhouse, Accessed November 25, 2022. <https://northernpowerhouse.gov.uk/>.

⁶³ Berry and Giovannini, “Introduction: Powerhouse Politics and Economic Development in the North,” 15.

⁶⁴ Ralph Pordzik, “Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene,” in *Thinking Northern: Textures of Identity in the North of England (Spatial Practices)*, ed. Christoph Ehland (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2007), 326.

else. The city centre was a destitute site disfigured by boarded-up warehouses and abandoned office buildings when the Smiths released their famous first album in 1984, offering their listeners a bleak view of the real life behind the facades of glazed redbrick edifices that had once teemed with people at work but whose sightless windows now bore testament to a society that had given up on the future.⁶⁵

The Smiths' lead vocalist and lyricist Morrissey's writing technique is described as "creating layer upon layer of text within the restricted space of a short pop lyric that helps reconfigure this 'genre' as a testing-ground for the exploration of local registers and forms of life."⁶⁶ The Smiths may also be linked to indie culture. Morrissey constructs a form of regional northern identity with his lyrics, as does Alex Turner.⁶⁷

Pordzik also suggests that poorer economic conditions in the North as opposed to the capital in the South inspired the desire to create a unique cultural identity. He claims that the North was "badly in need of a new cultural input in order to look forward to the future."⁶⁸ In his essay, in order to consider the North as a separate cultural space, Pordzik uses Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopias as "culturally and socially related spaces in which local sites mix with wider political patterns or modes of life."⁶⁹ He regards the Northern as "such a heterotopia of culturally interrelated sites, i.e. a space in which divergent attitudes interact across a wide range of different meaning-systems."⁷⁰ Pordzik perceives the cultural Northern as a heterotopia through the analysis

⁶⁵ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 330.

⁶⁶ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 332.

⁶⁷ Morrissey is an example of a pop culture artist who has been perceived as an important figure in art due to his lyrics, having an "impact upon our culture as irreversibly dramatic as the asteroid which slammed into the surface of the earth some 65 million years ago" (Simon Goddard, preface, *Mozipedia*). His *Autobiography* was published by Penguin Classics <https://www.theguardian.com/books/shortcuts/2013/oct/13/penguin-classics-morrissey-autobiography> as were several other books in which his influence is investigated, among which are, for example, *England is Mine: Pop Life in Albion from Wilde to Goldie* by Michael Bracewell, *Mozipedia: The Encyclopaedia of Morrissey and The Smiths* by Simon Goddard, and the collection of academic essays *Morrissey: Fandom, Representations and Identities* edited by Eion Devereux, Aileen Dillane and Martin J. Power.

⁶⁸ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 330.

⁶⁹ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 326.

⁷⁰ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 325.

of Morrissey's lyrics in which he sees an example of "an imaginative space not yet fully corroded by the strictures of commercial practice"⁷¹:

In the lyrical space he offers, alternative versions of life are drawn up not so much to serve the interests of the North as a self-enclosed cultural space; rather, as Michel Foucault puts it, they are brought to life as sites so "different from one another that it is impossible to find a place of residence for them, to define a *common locus* beneath them all" (Foucault 1998: 239)⁷²

In other words, Pordzik shows how Morrissey constructs a notion of northern identity by creating an imaginative space with his lyrics, even despite presenting diverse settings. A similar principle of identity construction with the help of a lyrical imaginative space can be spotted in Turner's lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, as will be discussed in further chapters.

The notion of England's Cultural North, in the context of which a regional identity can be constructed with the help of lyrics as discussed by Pordzik, correlates closely with one of the key principles behind indie culture – the need to create a local, unique identity as opposed to the center, which may be the capital, the mainstream or simply anything that represents some form of a majority. In the context of this thesis, Alex Turner's lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are analyzed from the perspective of an imaginative lyrical space that creates a form of regional Northern identity, therefore fulfilling one of the main criteria for belonging to indie culture. This suggests that Turner's lyrics can be referred to as indie-rock poetry. The next section will introduce the notion of rock poetry, which justifies the term indie-rock poetry for referring to Turner's lyrics.

⁷¹ Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 341.

⁷² Pordzik, "Of Popular Spaces: Northern Heterotopias, Morrissey and the Manchester Britpop Scene," 341.

3.3. The Indie-rock Poet

The following section introduces the existing notions of rock poetry in the academic discourse. For the purpose of this thesis they are used as a basis to claim that the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* not only should be considered as literature, but in fact constitute a genre that should be known as indie-rock poetry. Like the previous sections in the chapter, this section aims to create a framework which justifies the category of indie-rock poetry as assigned to the lyrics on the album, and also creates a certain perspective from which the analysis of the lyrics in further chapters will be performed.

Robert Palmer, in his article *Poets Put Their Stamp on Rock Lyrics*, published in *The New York Times* in 1982, in which he discusses whether rock lyrics are poetry, refers to the lyrics of musician and poet Richard Hell as “rock poetry at its best – insightful, felicitously phrased, and to the point.”⁷³ The existence of Palmer’s article is sufficient to suggest that the question of whether rock lyrics can be considered as poetry existed almost as soon as rock music started to dominate cultural space. Palmer’s article also makes it clear that the term rock poetry had already been in use by that time. As Palmer points out, “rock critics began asking this question [whether rock lyrics are poetry] in the mid-60’s, when rock’s burgeoning self-consciousness first made both intentionally poetic rock lyrics and literate rock criticism possible.”⁷⁴

Roy Shucker in *Understanding Popular Music* further elaborates on the topic of rock poets. By referencing Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy*, Shucker claims that rock poets are seen in opposition to mainstream popular song lyricists: rock poetry is seen as “the authentic expression of popular experiences and needs, whereas mainstream popular music song lyrics are largely seen

⁷³ Robert Palmer, “Poets Put Their Stamp on Rock Lyrics,” *The New York Times*, June 1982, <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/06/20/arts/poets-put-their-stamp-on-rock-lyrics.html>. Accessed November 25, 2022.

⁷⁴ Palmer, “Poets Put Their Stamp on Rock Lyrics.”

in terms of mass culture arguments, and criticized for their banality and lack of depth.⁷⁵ Apart from the rock poet tradition of preferring authenticity over shallowness and banality, a great deal of focus is set on conveying the feelings of the lyrical subject. These feelings help to better present the experiences that each individual song describes, bearing similarity to a Romantic approach to literature. Simon Frith remarks that this particular form of rock lyrics is “akin to romantic poetry with lots of covert and obscure allusions.”⁷⁶

This refers back to the initial question, posed by Palmer, of whether rock poetry can be studied as literature. Shucker’s work, along with the writers that he references, are an “attempt to validate ‘rock’ in terms of established ‘art’ forms, elevating the role of the songwriter to that of an auteur figure with the ability to work in a recognisable high cultural mode.”⁷⁷

Another aspect that Shucker claims to be a defining feature of rock poetry is the social realism of the song.⁷⁸ He references Simon Frith: “a notion of lyrical realism asserts ‘a direct relationship between a lyric and the social or emotional condition it describes and represents’.”⁷⁹ In other words, an important feature of rock poetry, according to Schucker and Frith, is its ability to realistically convey certain aspects of life, experiences and conditions, which, as the following chapters will demonstrate, is one of the key lyrical aspects of *Whatever People Say I Am, That’s What I’m Not*. Motti Regev supports this idea by writing:

Rock music has been presented and conceived as the music which reflects and expresses the feelings and the spirit of a specific generational group. [...] At its core, rock music expresses this group’s negation of and resistance to its conditions of existence, against anything which is “square”: routine, expected, normative and conformist. In its sounds rock music expresses rage, alienation, anomie, anxiety, anger, fear. Yet, in response to the boredom that

⁷⁵ Roy Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), 146.

⁷⁶ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 147.

⁷⁷ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 147.

⁷⁸ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 147.

⁷⁹ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 147.

comes with affluence and to the uncertainty of the social and political situation, rock music is as well an expression of immediate hedonism: love, sex, dance, consumerism and driving offer a relief from boredom and anxiety. This is the “pop” side of rock music, which presents fun and pleasure as a rejection of the ethic of work and restraint, and as redemption from it.⁸⁰

That being said, it is clear that rock poetry can be perceived as an existing cultural category, which can be discussed in an academic discourse, since it bears easily identifiable qualities and features. The lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* possess the central qualities of rock poetry, as will be demonstrated in further detail in the following chapter.

This section has demonstrated that the identity of rock poetry is largely based around its opposition to mainstream pop lyrics, as Shucker suggests. Finally, this makes it possible to outline one common trait that all the three subjects of this chapter share – a reliance of the identity on the opposition to the majority. The shared features of indie culture, England’s Cultural North and rock poetry can be combined into a new category for the purpose of this thesis – indie-rock poetry which, in the case of *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, has a Northern English Identity. So this chapter has introduced the key notions that can be used as a framework for analyzing the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* from the perspective of indie-rock poetry, assigning literary value by demonstrating its belonging to the three areas outlined in this chapter. The following chapter is concerned with analyzing the lyrics of the selected songs from the album based on the common prevalent literary tropes that they share. The analysis is based on the framework, presented in this chapter, which is necessary for assigning literary value to the lyrics on the album and proving that they are literature.

⁸⁰ Motti Regev, “Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 35, no.1 (1994) 85-102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121245>.

4. Literary Devices in *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*

The previous chapter outlined the key aspects of notions such as indie culture, the northern English regional identity and rock poetry, creating the framework for the literary analysis of the lyrics in this and the following chapter. The aim of this chapter is to identify the main literary tropes that Alex Turner uses in lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* and analyze them based on the framework presented in the previous chapter. In this way, the literary analysis of the lyrics on the album with the reference to the framework from the previous chapter is the final element in the process of assigning literary value to *Whatever People Say I am, That's What I'm Not* since not only does it prove that the lyrics have value by being part of the cultural notions from the previous chapter, but also shows that the lyrics can be analyzed from a literary theoretical perspective. Specific literary tropes are used throughout numerous lyrics on the album in order to convey specific messages, develop recurring themes and create a strong time-period with an age- and gender-specific setting. This chapter contributes to proving that the lyrics on the album should be considered literature and, moreover, should be referred to as indie-rock poetry. The first section is dedicated to the use of sarcasm and irony in selected songs from the album: “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor”, “Fake Tales of San Francisco” and “The View from the Afternoon”. Irony is understood as a figure of speech that is based on “saying something other than what is understood.”⁸¹ Sarcasm is a “form of verbal irony that mocks, ridicules, or expresses contempt.”⁸² The second section aims to demonstrate ways in which the use of vivid imagery creates a strong northern English identity by analyzing “From the Ritz to the Rubble” and “Riot Van”.

⁸¹ *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “irony.”

⁸² “Sarcasm,” *Literary Terms*. Accessed December 20, 2022, <https://literaryterms.net/sarcasm/>.

4.1. Irony and Sarcasm: The Night Life in Northern England

In general terms, the majority of lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* create a unified setting. The album is dedicated to portraying the night life in Northern England of the early-mid 2000s, where the lyrical subject is presented as a male teenager. As Paul J Flanagan writes: “the content of the songs is very much rooted in the band’s local experiences of growing up in northern Britain, with songs about prostitutes, relationships and getting into fights with club doormen.”⁸³ The lyrics are preoccupied with conveying the feelings, remarks and observations of a northern English teenager in this setting. Sarcasm and irony are used as one of the most prominent literary devices to convey the teenage feelings of anger, boredom and lust, on one hand, and a desire to take risks going out looking for nighttime adventures on the other. British music journalist Matt Wilkinson, discussing the success of Arctic Monkeys’ debut single “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor”⁸⁴ from the album in his 2018 article for *NME Magazine* writes a concise summary of the song, which is also valid for the other lyrics on the album:

Confrontational, bitter and deftly sarcastic in its depiction of a snarly young tyke getting a nightclub brush-off, it heralded a major new songwriting talent in its opening six lines alone. He may wince at it these days, but ‘I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor’ is still the perfect encapsulation of what it is to be young, pissed, lusty, bored, angry and skint in modern-day Britain.⁸⁵

The lyrics on “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor” depict the feelings of teenage infatuation as well as the uncertainty and indecisiveness that comes with it. Through the prism of

⁸³ Paul J Flanagan, “‘A Certain Romance’: Style Shifting in the language of Alex Turner in Arctic Monkeys songs 2006 - 2018,” *Language and Literature* 28, no.1 (2019): 82 - 98. <https://journals-sagepub-com.ezproxy.is.cuni.cz/doi/full/10.1177/0963947019827075>. Accessed November 24, 2022.

⁸⁴ Released prior to the release of the album, “I Bet You Look Good On the Dancefloor” had instantly reached Number One in the UK Singles Chart <https://www.nme.com/blogs/nme-blogs/10-years-of-i-bet-you-look-good-on-the-dancefloor-the-full-story-of-arctic-monkeys-breakout-hit-763137>.

⁸⁵ Matt Wilkinson, “The Full Story of Arctic Monkeys’ Breakout Hit ‘I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor,’” *NME*, October 2018, <https://www.nme.com/blogs/nme-blogs/10-years-of-i-bet-you-look-good-on-the-dancefloor-the-full-story-of-arctic-monkeys-breakout-hit-763137>.

a sarcastic tone those feelings are conveyed in an effective and relatable manner – the narrative is built around addressing an unknown person, which the lyrical subject is fantasizing about, expressing his interest. The first stanza introduces the setting of the interaction between the two actors:

Stop making the eyes at me
I'll stop making the eyes at you
What it is that surprises me
Is that I don't really want you to⁸⁶

From the first stanza it is clear that the relationship between the two actors is dominated by tension and indecisiveness, but the realization that the subject of the lyrics has to do more with imagination than reality for the first time appears in the chorus of the song in which the central verb is 'to bet':

I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
I don't know if you're looking for romance or
I don't know what you're looking for⁸⁷

“Romance” in the second line of the chorus is used ironically since it is put in the middle of a nightclub setting, where people tend to come for entertainment rather than looking for something serious. The fact that the lyrical subject projects his interest onto an unknown person by placing them into the context of a night club in an imaginative way supports the use of irony and emphasizes the ridiculousness of the situation in which a lust-driven interest brings up questions about whether it may be romance or not. In this way, the chorus is also sarcastic, since it is presented in a manner of self-reflective mockery of one's own false and irrelevant expectations from an encounter with a person of interest. Turner, commenting on the album's lyrics for *NME* magazine points out: “I get the impression a lot of people imagine an evening scene when they

⁸⁶ Alex Turner, “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor,” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-i-bet-you-look-good-on-the-dancefloor-lyrics>.

⁸⁷ Turner, “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor.”

hear this song but it conjures up daytime images for me. “Lustful” is perhaps a good word to describe it.”⁸⁸

The sarcastic tendency, which is covertly implied in the chorus, is openly demonstrated in the thematic climax of the song, in which the true intention of the interaction between the two characters is finally revealed:

Oh, there ain't no love, no Montagues or Capulets
Just banging tunes and DJ sets and
Dirty dancefloors and dreams of naughtiness⁸⁹

Here, sarcasm is used to clearly state that there is nothing serious about this lustful interest by making fun of the situation. The sarcasm is conveyed through juxtaposing an allegory to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* with a realistic modern-day image of a nightclub with “banging tunes and DJ sets.” The function of this contrast is to make a clear conclusion that in this kind of a setting “there ain't no love.” This also demonstrates the literary merit of the lyrics, since the narrative is based around sarcasm, and the central aforementioned effects that are achieved are due to the use of this literary device.

Another effective use of sarcasm and irony is evident in “Fake Tales of San Francisco”. The lyrics depict a setting where an amateur band is playing a concert, with the lyrical subject heavily criticizing the bands' performance and image. As Joe Zadeh points out in his overview of the song's lyrics:

⁸⁸ Alex Turner, “Arctic Monkeys Debut Album In Their Own Words,” *NME*, May 10, 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20060519052117/http://www.nme.com/arcticmonkeys/ownwords>.

⁸⁹ Turner, “I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor.”

It [the song/lyrics] attacked the vacuous nature of what he [Turner] labelled as ‘cool bands’, and set to music his personal accounts from early Arctic Monkeys gigs, and working nights on the bar at Sheffield’s Boardwalk venue. To Turner, these were the bands that came on stage drenched in contrived identities, telling fake tales of San Francisco – an impotent cocktail of what they wished they were and what they thought the crowd wanted. Image, angle and attitude – gleaned amateurishly from whatever was hot that week, and delivered with the inevitable inadequacy of an afterthought.⁹⁰

In “Fake Tales of San Francisco”, irony and sarcasm are central literary tropes that convey the criticism of an amateur band. They prevail in the first stanza:

Fake tales of San Francisco
Echo through the room
More point to a wedding disco
Without a bride or groom
And there’s a super cool band, yeah
With their trilbies and their glasses of white wine
And all the weekend rockstars are in the toilets
Practicing their lines⁹¹

Sarcasm here functions as a device to emphasize the pointlessness of the band’s performance by essentially stating that even a wedding disco without a bride and a groom would have more meaning than the “fake tales of San Francisco” presented by the performing band. “Fake tales” functions as a sarcastic metaphor, symbolizing the inauthenticity and fake nature of the band from the perspective of the lyrical subject.

⁹⁰ Joe Zadeh, “Just One Song: ‘Fake Tales of San Francisco, *Clash*, July 2014,” <https://www.clashmusic.com/features/just-one-song-fake-tales-of-san-francisco/>.

⁹¹ Alex Turner, “Fake Tales Of San Francisco,” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-fake-tales-of-san-francisco-lyrics>.

The other lines from the stanza have the same function – to convey a negative perception of the band. Irony and sarcasm are a useful tool to do so in this case, since it allows for a concise and effective way to convey the message: the straightforward irony of “a super cool band” makes it obvious that the band is not good, but believes that it’s good, which adds up to the ridiculousness of their image; the mockery in “the weekend rockstars” devalues the amateur musicians’ attempts at sounding good by implying that they treat music as a hobby, since they only have time to perform at the weekends. Despite that, they perceive themselves as rockstars who are “practicing their lines” in the toilets, which is a double entendre. This line may refer to practicing lines from the songs the band is about to perform; at the same time it may refer to the use of drugs. The ambiguity resulting from the use of double entendre contributes to the sarcastic mockery of the bands, since both meanings emphasize the amateur nature of the bands. This creates a strong subjective view of those bands, also contributing to the creation of an authentic scene in a local setting.

The song’s lyrical climax occurs in the following lines, in which the sarcasm is accompanied by a word play based on an idiomatic English expression “love is blind,” serving the same purpose of devaluing the band that is performing in the club:

Yeah, but his bird said it’s amazing though, so all that’s left
Is the proof that love’s not only blind, but deaf ⁹²

By implementing an idiomatic expression in his sarcastic phrase, Turner increases the effectiveness of the transfer of his message. As Zadeh puts it:

In describing the band member’s girlfriend as inexplicably oblivious to how bad they really are, he reworks a classic poetic proverb – love is blind – to describe his new revelation – that love is deaf [...].⁹³

⁹² Turner, “Fake Tales of San Francisco.”

⁹³ Zadeh, “Just One Song: ‘Fake Tales of San Francisco.’”

Clearly these lyrics are also poetry because of the mere fact that the central message that they convey is only possible due to the use of sarcasm and irony: it relies heavily on the use of literary devices. The overall style of these lyrics is reminiscent of dramatic irony, “where a character speaks in such a manner that the audience or reader recognizes the limited or contradictory nature of his or her speech.”⁹⁴

“The View From the Afternoon” is another example of a song in which irony and sarcasm are central devices for conveying a self-reflective statement about the nightlife experience. The lyrics are written from the perspective of a person during the daytime, pondering the night experiences that are about to come in the evening. The first stanza begins by stating what this view from the afternoon consists of:

Anticipation has a habit to set you up
For disappointment in evening entertainment but
Tonight there’ll be some love
Tonight there’ll be a ruckus, yeah, regardless of what’s gone before⁹⁵

Even despite the previous unfortunate experiences, the lyrical subject is anticipating the “evening entertainment,” since there is a belief that “tonight there’ll be some love,” “regardless of what’s gone before.” The self-awareness of the first two lines is contrasted with the self-delusion of the next two lines, which then suggest that the two lines about the optimistic expectations are ironic and are put there to emphasize the desire to experience the nightlife numerous times even despite the unsatisfactory outcomes from the past. The irony here also functions as a support for the motif of gambling and taking risks. This motif is used to emphasize the mental mechanism with which, according to Turner, teenagers approach the culture of going out.

⁹⁴ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “irony.”

⁹⁵ Alex Turner, “The View from the Afternoon.” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

Elaborating on this message further, the middle section of the song introduces the following lines, which justify the use of irony in the beginning:

I wanna see you take the jackpot out the fruit machine
And put it all back in
You've got to understand that you can never beat the bandit, no⁹⁶

In this way the irony from the first lines is developed by presenting an analogy through comparing the desire to go out with the desire to gamble: despite the realization that it's impossible to "beat the bandit," the desire to "take the jackpot" and "put it all back in" is still present.

Apart from the irony, the use of sarcasm is also present in the song's lyrics. It's implemented in the second part of the song, as there is a sudden shift from depicting the feelings of anticipation to a more specific portrayal of what the nightlife experience leads to:

And she won't be surprised and she won't be shocked
When she's pressed the star after she's pressed unlock
And there's verse and chapter sat in her inbox
And all that is said is that you've drank a lot⁹⁷

The "verse and chapter sat in her inbox" is a sarcastic way to describe a text message that was sent to a girl that the lyrical subject is interested in. The sarcasm, again, emphasizes the ridiculousness of the situation since it conveys the idea that to the author of the text the content may have seemed clever and elaborate, hence the use of literary terms. However, realistically, the message of the text is only that the author "drank a lot." As a result, by using irony and sarcasm, the author suggests that despite the strong desire and anticipation to go out, doing so always leads to some sort of failure, but it is very difficult to escape this vicious cycle, since it is very addictive, like gambling. This makes the lyrics poetry because the use of these literary devices is central to portraying a detailed mental mechanism behind the youth culture of going out. The lyrics are

⁹⁶ Turner, "The View From The Afternoon."

⁹⁷ Turner, "The View From The Afternoon."

literature, since the authenticity of the depicted experiences is achieved through an elaborate use of literary devices.

The central use of irony and sarcasm in the three aforementioned songs from *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* demonstrate that the use of literary devices serves to depict experiences from a teenage life in northern England in an engaging manner. Sarcasm is used to comment on the feelings of lust, indecisiveness, mock local amateur bands as well as present a self-reflective remark about the motivations behind the desire to go out and experience the night life. This, apart from being an example of an elaborate use of literary devices to convey a message, also possesses a strong quality of authenticity and local character. The lyrics focus on describing the feelings and experiences of young people, which may be attributed to the key features of rock poetry. These are one of the key factors that support the idea that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* should be attributed to indie culture with its strong presentation of local identity. This is what constitutes the literary value of the album in the context of the thesis, according to the discussion in Chapter 3, and, moreover, what justifies the argument that the album should be referred to as indie-rock poetry. The next section will elaborate on this idea more by focusing on another literary device used in the lyrics: vivid imagery.

4.2. Poetic Realism: The Creation of Regional Identity Through Vivid Imagery

Apart from the effective use of sarcasm and irony to depict teenage experiences in northern England in a relatable and authentic manner, another important literary trope in the lyrics of *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* serves a similar purpose. This section is dedicated to demonstrating and analyzing the ways in which Turner creates a specific regional identity with the help of vivid imagery, thus proving that his lyrics possess a regional, authentic quality which

is achieved through an effective use of a literary device and which justifies its belonging to indie culture. This, like the previous section, is a necessary step in the assignment of literary value in the context of this thesis, which essentially proves that Turner's lyrics are indie-rock poetry. The following section is dedicated to the analysis of these songs, focusing on the specific elements of realism as well as the specific effect it creates in the context of the regional identity.

Several critics praise Turner for his skill of effectively using realistic imagery in his poetry. Tim Jonze calls Turner "a master of observation,"⁹⁸ whereas Jamie Wilde claims that Turner "is a lyricist brimming with talent who could document working-class life to pin-point precision and relatability."⁹⁹ Wilde even goes further as he elaborates on his critical acclaim of Turner's talents, claiming that Turner and Arctic Monkeys "united a generation and epitomised what it was to be young, lost, and British."¹⁰⁰ Barry Walters sums up the general effect of Turner's work on the album with an emphasis on realism:

Turner's hyper-realistic observations help explain why his group inspires this much loyalty. He bluntly documents the lives of young Northern England clubbers in an intensely regional Yorkshire whine, an unlikely star describing a decidedly unglamorous sliver of nightlife. *Whatever People Say I Am* is practically an old-fashioned concept album about working-class clubbing, a *Saturday Night Fever* for the British sons and daughters of parents raised on disco and punk.¹⁰¹

The lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are dedicated to the portrayal of teenage experiences and feelings, which makes them, according to Roy Shucker (discussed in

⁹⁸ Tim Jonze, "Arctic Monkeys: Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," *NME*, January 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20150110171543/http://www.nme.com/reviews/arctic-monkeys/7837>.

⁹⁹ Jamie Wilde, "Spotlight Special: Arctic Monkeys - Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," January 2021, <https://www.clashmusic.com/features/spotlight-special-arctic-monkeys-whatever-people-say-i-am-thats-what-im-not/>.

¹⁰⁰ Wilde, "Spotlight Special: Arctic Monkeys - Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not."

¹⁰¹ Barry Walters, "Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not," *Rolling Stone*, February 21, 2006, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-album-reviews/whatever-people-say-i-am-thats-what-im-not-201301/>.

Chapter 3) “an authentic expression of popular experiences and needs,”¹⁰² with the social realism of the lyrics being the central feature. According to Shucker, this is the key feature of rock poetry. In rock poetry, as has been discussed previously, “a notion of lyrical realism asserts ‘a direct relationship between a lyric and the social or emotional condition it describes and represents.’”¹⁰³ Therefore, specific aspects of social realism, which are achieved through the use of vivid imagery, and the description of authentic experiences of, as Motti Regev puts it, “the feelings and the spirit of a specific generational group,”¹⁰⁴ prove that Turner’s lyrics are rock poetry and, therefore, literature.

“From the Ritz to the Rubble” is one of the songs where vivid imagery is used as a central device to depict a failed attempt to get into a club. The theme is metaphorically expressed by the title: the Ritz is a music venue in Manchester,¹⁰⁵ which suggests a hyperbolised idea of being thrown away from the club to the rubble:

Well, last night these two bouncers
And one of'em's alright, the other one's the scary one
His way or no way, totalitarian
He's got no time for your looking or breathing
How he don't want you to, so step out the queue
He makes examples of you, and there's nowt you can say
Behind they go through to the bit where you pay
And you realize then that it's finally the time
To walk back past ten-thousand eyes in the line¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 146.

¹⁰³ Shuker, *Understanding Popular Music*, 147.

¹⁰⁴ Motti Regev, “Producing Artistic Value: The Case of Rock Music,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 35, no.1 (1994) 85-102. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4121245>.

¹⁰⁵ O2 Ritz Manchester, “O2 Ritz Manchester,” <https://www.academymusicgroup.com/o2ritzmanchester/>, Accessed November 22.

¹⁰⁶ Alex Turner, “From the Ritz to the Rubble,” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 13, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

There is a great level of detail in the description: the scene is presented through a perspective of a lyrical subject that has a strong opinion about the two contrasting bouncers, one of them is “alright” and the other one is “scary” which creates an impression of a strong emotional reaction. It is made clear that there is no point in going against the ‘totalitarian’ ways of the bouncer, who turns a person away, ‘makes examples of you’, after which the only thing that is left to do is to “walk past ten-thousand eyes in the line.” The realistic image of a long queue, conveyed through a metonymic reference in “ten-thousand eyes,” functions as an implication of one’s feelings after being refused entrance to the club. The focus is on the authentic experience of a teenager, since the emphasis on the eyes implies the feeling of shame. The experience is local and specific, and would be relatable to most English teenagers. As Simon Reynolds, an English music journalist, points out: “Turner’s prime terrain is young people grabbing for fun and sparkle in the face of all the forces that would crush their spirit, whether it’s psycho bouncers, limited funds, or simply England’s wet winters and gray summer skies.”¹⁰⁷ Turner’s lyrics serve as a statement against the oppressive ‘totalitarian’ forces, represented by the bouncers, which contributes to the authentic description of teenage experience and supports the notion of him being a rock poet and the lyrics therefore being indie-rock poetry.

The teenage rebellious feeling and the tension with the authorities is conveyed through vivid imagery in “Riot Van,” where the oppressive figure is represented by the police, as the song title hints. The lyrics revolve around the relationship between the teenagers and the police. As music journalist Alexis Petridis points out:

¹⁰⁷ Simon Reynolds, “Arctic Monkeys Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not,” *ReynoldsRetro* (blog) January 3, 2011, <http://reynoldsretro.blogspot.com/2011/01/arctic-monkeys-whatever-people-say-i-am.html>.

Riot Van offers a brilliant framing of adolescent ennui, setting the tale of a gobby teenager's run-in with the police to music that sounds like a sigh or a diffident shrug.¹⁰⁸

The “adolescent ennui” is the central motif of the lyrics. As a whole, the lyrics convey the idea that the tension between the teenagers and the police mostly does not have a criminal reason but is rather motivated by teenagers having nothing to do:

So up rolls a riot van
And sparks excitement in the boys
But the policemen look annoyed
Perhaps these are ones they should avoid¹⁰⁹

The imagery is the central literary device that contributes to the social realism of the lyrics, which is the central element of rock poetry, contributing to their literary value. It also works on a symbolic and metaphorical level, demonstrating how it uses a literary device to convey a message. According to Max Müller, “to conceive of immaterial things, human beings must express them as images of material things because human language lags behind conceptual needs. So language grows through metaphor, from image to idea.”¹¹⁰ In that way, the “riot van” may be considered an image for the oppressive force that the teenagers feel, as well as a source of entertainment. The image functions as a precise portrayal of an episode from life in a small northern English town, contributing to the social realism of the song through the use of imagery, supporting the idea of their rock poetic nature:

Got a chase last night
From men with truncheons dressed in hats
We didn't do that much wrong
Still ran away though, for the laugh
Just for the laugh¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Alexis Petridis, “Arctic Monkeys’ 20 greatest songs - ranked!,” *The Guardian*, September 8, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/sep/08/arctic-monkeys-20-greatest-songs-ranked>.

¹⁰⁹ Alex Turner, “Riot Van,” *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 13, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-riot-van-lyrics>.

¹¹⁰ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “imagery.”

¹¹¹ Turner, “Riot Van.”

This makes the lyrics poetry since the use of metaphorical and realistic imagery contributes to the social realism of the lyrics, and the devices that Turner uses are literary. This fulfills the criteria of rock poetry as suggested by Shucker, which proves that the lyrics are literature. The lyrics are authentic, local and easy to identify with, which also justifies their belonging to indie culture.

In this way, the use of literary devices such as realistic vivid imagery, sarcasm and irony and the creation of regional identity, as well as the focus on social realism proves that the lyrics are literature, clearly belonging to indie culture with a strong emphasis on regional identity. Apart from using literary devices, the lyrics fulfill the criteria of rock poetry, which is the portrayal of feelings and experiences of a specific generational group, as Motti Regev suggests in his discussion of rock music. This makes the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* authentic, honest, age and region-specific. The fact that Turner achieves this mostly due to an effective use of literary devices is an important part in proving that the lyrics on the album should be referred to as indie-rock poetry. In order to make the proof that the lyrics are literature complete, it is necessary to focus on the formal aspects of Turner's lyrics, mainly in relation to form and content and form as literary performance, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

5. The Performance of Form on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*

While the previous chapter focused on the literary aspects of the lyrics that are linked with content to prove that the lyrics use literary devices to create an effect, this section discusses the formal aspects of Turner's lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*. In order to fully demonstrate the literary qualities of the lyrics and prove that they should be considered as literature, it is necessary to focus not only on content, but also on the aspects of form. To do this, Charles Olson's and Terry Eagleton's notions of the connection between form and meaning, as well as ways in which this affects the use of formal poetic devices and principles such as lineation, enjambment and anaphora, are used. Based on those notions, this section aims to demonstrate ways in which the form of Turner's lyrics opens up opportunities for the use of lineation, enjambment and anaphora, and also ways in which these formal choices act as a continuation of the content, conveying the key messages and feelings of the lyrics. This essentially shows that lyrics are poetry, since the formal outline, as will be discussed, is a poetic performance in itself.

Form and content are in close correlation with each other. Form may be seen as a continuation of content, contributing to the effects, messages or feelings that are conveyed by content. As American poet and essayist Charles Olson suggests by referencing Robert Creeley in his essay "Projective Verse": "Form is never more than an extension of content, [...] right form, in any given poem, is the only and exclusively possible extension of content under hand."¹¹² The definition of form in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* contains a reference to Terry Eagleton's discourse about form in which he admits that "a dynamic 'most evident in a poem, which deploys words usually to be found in the lexicon, but by combining and condensing

¹¹² Charles Olson, "Projective Verse", in *Collected Prose*, ed. Donald Allen and Benjamin Friedlander (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1997), 240. For an in-depth discussion of how Olson's ideas about form and content in anglophone poetry evolved during the second half of the twentieth century, see: Stephan Delbos, *The New American Poetry and Cold War Nationalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021).

them generates an irreducible specificity of force and meaning.”¹¹³ Eagleton also writes about the relationship between form and content, suggesting that one cannot exist without the other, thus meaning that they should be perceived as the same entity:

Form and content are inseparable in this sense — that literary criticism typically involves grasping what is said in terms of how it is said [. . .] this seems true above all in poetry — a literary genre which could almost be defined as one in which form and content are intimately interwoven. It is as though poetry above all discloses the secret truth of literary writing: that form is constitutive of content and not just a reflection of it. Tone, rhythm, rhyme, syntax, assonance, grammar, punctuation, and so on, are actually generators of meaning, not just containers of it. To modify any of them is to modify meaning itself.¹¹⁴

One of the central formal poetic aspects of Turner’s lyrics in each song is the division into lines.

“What distinguishes *poetic* form is the line that is a poet’s determination, not a compositor’s.”¹¹⁵

This creates an opportunity for using enjambment, as well as for an interplay between the division of the poem into lines and an organized combination of syllables. The deliberate division of the text into specific lines is, therefore, an important formal poetic device. As Olson points out:

But the syllable is only the first child of the incest of verse (always, that Egyptian thing, it produces twins!). The other child is the LINE. And together, these two, the syllable and the line, they make a poem, they make that thing, the—what shall we call it, the Boss of all, the "Single Intelligence." And the line comes (I swear it) from the breath, from the breathing of the man who writes, at the moment that he writes, and thus is, it is here that, the daily work, the WORK, gets in, for only he, the man who writes, can declare, at every moment, the line its metric and its ending—where its breathing, shall come to, termination.¹¹⁶

For enjambment the central unit is the sentence and the way it’s divided across the lines, combined with the way the syllables are outlined, since it is the “continuation of a syntactic unit from one

¹¹³ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “form.”

¹¹⁴ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “form.”

¹¹⁵ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “form.”

¹¹⁶ Olson, “Projective Verse,” 242.

line to the next without a major juncture or pause.”¹¹⁷ The interplay between the syllables and the way the sentences of the poem are divided into lines may contribute to the formation of a specific poetic effect, which comes across as “instances in which the ‘non-stopping’ of the verse is felt as overflow, especially in relation to some poetic effect.”¹¹⁸

5.1. Enjambment in the Lyrics

Once clear instance of enjambment appears in the opening lines of “The View from the Afternoon”:

Anticipation has a habit to set you up
For disappointment in evening entertainment but
Tonight there'll be some love¹¹⁹

The outline of the lines represents the theme of conflict and contrast, since it is about looking forward to going out in the evening despite all previous dissatisfactions of such experiences:

Enjambment can give the reader mixed messages: the closure of the metrical pattern at line end implies a pause, while the incompleteness of the phrase says to go on. These conflicting signals can heighten tension or temporarily suggest one meaning only to adjust that meaning when the phrase is completed.¹²⁰

Moreover, the creation of the “mixed signals” is made possible in the interplay of the syllables, since the end of the first and the second lines, which are enjambed, also both have the same four syllables which are emphasized: “to-set-you-up”; “(en)ter-tain-ment-but”. This contributes to the poetic flow which is based on juxtaposing the connections and divisions of the lines, and it also

¹¹⁷ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “enjambment.”

¹¹⁸ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “enjambment.”

¹¹⁹ Alex Turner, “The View from the Afternoon,” *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

¹²⁰ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “enjambment.”

reflects the flow of thought in the context of the theme of the lyrics, since the lyrics depict a mental process with conflicting ideas.

A similar effect is achieved through enjambment in the stanza later in the lyrics, where the lyrical subject depicts an instance of sending a text message to a girl that he is interested in:

And she won't be surprised and she won't be shocked
When she's pressed the star after she's pressed unlock
And there's verse and chapter sat in her inbox
And all that is said is that you've drank a lot¹²¹

In this case, enjambment supports the narrative flow of the depiction of this instance, on one hand, creating pauses for tension and on the other hand, keeping the stanza uniform, supporting the singularity of the narrative. It also makes the narrative more intriguing, since within one syntactic unit, due to this division of the lines, there is a new piece of information being revealed with each new line. In this way, the enjambment “heightens tension and temporarily suggests one meaning only to adjust that meaning when the phrase is completed.”¹²² This effect is created exceptionally with the help of a formal literary technique, which suggests that the lyrics are poetry, since they utilize a specific formal literary technique in order to communicate a message in the most effective way.

Another notable utilization of enjambment on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* can be seen in “Mardy Bum.” The lyrics describe an instance of an argument with a romantic partner and reflect the themes of conflict, misunderstanding and frustration:

Well, now then, mardy bum
I've seen your frown and it's like looking down
The barrel of a gun
And it goes off
And out come all these words
Oh, there's a very pleasant side to you
A side I much prefer

¹²¹ Turner, “The View From The Afternoon.”

¹²² *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “enjambment.”

It's one that laughs and jokes around
Remember cuddles in the kitchen, yeah
To get things off the ground
And it was up, up and away
Oh, but it's right hard to remember that
On a day like today
When you're all argumentative
And you've got the face on¹²³

The enjambment of lines, again, adds tension to the narrative, since with each new line a new detail about the argument is revealed. “It’s like looking down / The barrel of a gun” is an example of form openly symbolizing the meaning conveyed by the lyrics, since it is necessary to look down in order to get to the next line. This also contributes to conveying the feelings of frustration, fear and uneasiness, due to the contrast that is achieved through enjambment: on one hand there is syntactic movement from one line to the next line, but on the other visually there is a boundary which suggests a stop, which also creates certain expectation as to what word comes next, creating a sense of intrigue.¹²⁴

A similar effect is achieved in the last four lines of the second stanza, in which the lyrical subject concludes by using enjambment, explaining that despite the memories of “cuddles in the kitchen / to get things off the ground” “It’s right hard to remember that / On a day like today / When you’re all argumentative / And you’ve got the face on.” The form is, in such a way, not only an essential part of content that works to convey the same message, but also has performative nature itself. Derek Attridge in *The Singularity of Literature* argues that “literary work exists only in *performance*.”¹²⁵ In other words, the exact division of the lines in the aforementioned manner

¹²³ Alex Turner, “Mardy Bum.” *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 13, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-riot-van-lyrics>.

¹²⁴ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “line.”

¹²⁵ Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 95.

may be a performance in itself, which means that it is literature, since in the literary work, the *eventness* of the event is what matters.¹²⁶ Attridge writes:

In other kinds of text, the ones we call literary, such labor is combined with, and is in a certain sense always subject to, the selection and arrangement of words. In these works, otherness and singularity arise from the encounter with the words themselves, their sequence, their suggestiveness, their patterning, their interrelations, their sounds and rhythms. To re-experience the otherness of a work of this type, it is not enough to recall the arguments made, the ideas introduced, the images conjured up; it is necessary to re-read or recall the words, in their created order. One way of saying this is that a creative achievement in the literary field is, whatever else it may be, a formal one.¹²⁷

The mere presence of a formal device and, moreover, its connection with the content comes across as a literary performance. The organized fashion and the pressure that Turner puts on his lyrics in order to create a poetic effect and convey a certain message or feeling prove their literary merit. The content's heavy reliance on form in the lyrics is apparent since without the aforementioned formal aspects, the messages conveyed through content would not be complete, which proves that the lyrics are literature. The next section focuses on anaphora as another formal device the lyrics utilize, functioning as an extension of meaning and contributing to the lyrics' literary value.

5.2. Repetition: Anaphora and Epiphora

Anaphora is another formal device which is frequently present in the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*. It is a formal device that is based on "the repetition of the same word or words at the beginning of successive phrases, clauses, sentences, or lines."¹²⁸

Anaphora is based on repetition, and "the structure of repetition underlies the majority of poetic

¹²⁶ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, 95.

¹²⁷ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, 107.

¹²⁸ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. "anaphora."

devices, and it is possible to argue that repetition defines the poetic use of language.”¹²⁹ For example, the structure of “Fake Tales of San Francisco” is based around the repetition of the phrase “Fake Tales of San Francisco” in the opening of the first lines of the stanzas, which is juxtaposed with the repetition of lines “I don’t want to hear you (kick me out, kick me out).”¹³⁰ By opening each stanza with the same repeated line, Turner creates a clear setting before starting to depict a scene from a music club with a performing amateur band. This repetition reinforces the sarcastic mockery of the following lines, emphasizing the inauthentic nature of the bands that are being described. At the same time, it functions as a reminder of the main theme of the song before continuing with the later description in the third stanza. Moreover, especially the repeated lines “I don’t want to hear you (kick me out, kick me out)” create a clear pattern, a constant reminder about the poetic nature of the lyrics, since “the more repetitions there are in a poem, the more we are conscious of the poem’s artifice.”¹³¹ In such way, the phrase “Fake Tales of San Francisco” functions as an extended anaphora, serving as an introduction to the setting and always preceding some variation, serving to emphasize the same message of the lyrics, “lending unity and coherence”¹³² to the structure of the lyrics.

Anaphora can be used not only to put emphasis on the similarity of an important element, but also to expose a fundamental difference between the repeated elements.¹³³ In “Mardy Bum” Turner uses the repetition of the whole stanza three times with a slight variation in the beginning of the first line to convey the linear progress of the dialogue with a romantic partner with which

¹²⁹ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “repetition.”

¹³⁰ Turner, “Fake Tales Of San Francisco.”

¹³¹ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “repetition.”

¹³² *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “repetition.”

¹³³ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “repetition.”

the lyrical subject is having an argument. The first time the stanza appears is a clear reference to the description of the character and memories connected with the character:

It's one that laughs and jokes around
Remember cuddles in the kitchen, yeah
To get things off the ground
And it was up, up and away
Oh, but it's right hard to remember that
On a day like today
When you're all argumentative
And you've got the face on¹³⁴

Later on, the whole stanza is repeated in order to emphasize the passing of time, with the first line beginning with “Well, can't we just laugh and joke around?,” which is a variation of the initial sentence. The sentence uses the same key phrase “laugh and joke around,” but puts it in the form of a suggestion, to symbolize a dialogue. The third time it is repeated with a variation on that question “So laugh and joke around?.” Not only does it create a clear pattern and a sense of regularity and familiarity, but also emphasizes the desperate attempts of the lyrical subject to settle the argument with a romantic partner. In this way, “anaphora thrusts itself into the reader's attention: each line begins with an unmistakable reminder of the unfolding pattern. Thus, anaphora highlights poetic lines as discrete units while simultaneously binding those lines together.”¹³⁵

A similar usage of repetition can be spotted in “Riot Van,” where an epiphora is used: the phrase “Riot Van” is repeated three times throughout the lyrics: in the first stanza and in the last two, with the last repetition having a variation in the sentence: “So up rolls a riot van;” “And up rolls a riot van;” “Thrown in the riot van.”¹³⁶ It is an epiphora since the figure is repeated at the end of poetic units.¹³⁷ Since the lyrics have a narrative nature, depicting a scene of teenagers

¹³⁴ Turner, “Mardy Bum.”

¹³⁵ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “anaphora.”

¹³⁶ Turner, “Riot Van.”

¹³⁷ *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Fourth Edition (2012), s.v. “anaphora.”

provoking the police, being chased and caught in the end, the placement of epiphora reflects the narrative passage and serves as an extension of the content. The repetition marks the chronological sections in the narrative of the lyrics, by bringing slight variation with each new repetition. This is the case of a paradoxical use of anaphora, in which it is used to highlight the differences by using the similar.

Clearly, form is the continuation of the content of the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*. It is used in connection with content to tell a story, depict a feeling or convey a message, which shows its reliance on literary form in order to effectively fulfill its poetic aim. This is another reason why the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* are indie-rock poetry, since the role which the poetic devices play in effectively achieving its aim is central. The form comes across as, what Derek Attridge calls, literary performance.¹³⁸ Therefore, along with the previous chapters, this proves that *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* is literature, since, just like any other poem, the lyrics on the album, apart from possessing the clear qualities of indie culture, rock poetry and the creation of northern regional identity, achieve this with formal literary devices, in connection to content.

¹³⁸ Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature*, 95.

6. Conclusion

Even though the question of what constitutes literature, literary value and where the border between poetic and everyday language lies cannot be answered in universal terms, it is still possible to refer to certain works of art as literature. Referring to the lyrics on *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* as literature, or, more specifically, indie-rock poetry, is admitting that under the specific circumstances in the context of an interpretive community, the subject of academic study successfully fulfills the stated criteria of literary value. Literary value, in the context of this thesis, consists of an effective use of literary devices with regards to both content and form in order to convey messages and depict the feelings and experiences of northern English teenagers. This makes *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* poetry, belonging to indie culture with its authentic, intimate and local tone. Through the use of literary devices, Alex Turner's lyrics create a strong local northern English identity, depicting the feelings and experiences of a specific generational and regional group. Due to all of the aforementioned factors, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not* should be referred to as indie-rock poetry, which depicts the feelings, experiences and mental processes of northern English teenagers in the early years of the twenty-first century. Moreover, the precision, honesty, intimacy and strong local character, achieved with the help of literary techniques, makes the lyrics on the album of great interest for future research of both high cultural and pop cultural items, since such indie-rock poetry is a reflection of the vanishing border between the two: it can either exist in both realms, or not accept the existence of either category. This shows that pop cultural elements can be studied from an academic perspective since they use traditional poetic devices with regards to content and form in order to create a poetic effect, convey a message, and, moreover, portray a sense of a strong belonging to existing cultural and literary categories.

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Appendices

Arctic Monkeys: Fake Tales of San Francisco¹³⁹

Fake tales of San Francisco
Echo through the room
More point to a wedding disco
Without a bride or groom
And there's a super cool band, yeah
With their trilbies and their glasses of white wine
And all the weekend rockstars are in the toilets
Practicing their lines

I don't want to hear you (kick me out, kick me out)
I don't want to hear you, no, kick me out, kick me out
I don't want to hear you (kick me out, kick me out)
I don't want to hear you, I don't want to hear your

Fake tales of San Francisco
Echo through the air
And there's a few bored faces at the back, all
Wishing they weren't there
And as the microphone squeaks
A young girl's telephone beeps
Yeah, she's dashing for the exit
Oh, she's running to the streets outside
"Oh, you've saved me", she screams down the line
"The band were fucking wank and I'm not having a nice time"

I don't want to hear you (kick me out, kick me out)
I don't want to hear you, no (kick me out, kick me out)

Yeah, but his bird said it's amazing though, so all that's left
Is the proof that love's not only blind, but deaf

He talks of San Francisco, he's from Hunter's Bar
I don't quite know the distance, but I'm sure that's far
Yeah, I'm sure it's pretty far
And, yeah, I'd love to tell you all my problem
You're not from New York City, you're from Rotherham
So get off the bandwagon, and put down the handbook
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

¹³⁹ Alex Turner, "Fake Tales Of San Francisco," *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-fake-tales-of-san-francisco-lyrics>.

Get off the bandwagon and put down the handbook
Get off the bandwagon and put down the handbook
Get off the bandwagon and put down the handbook
Get off the bandwagon and put down the handbook, yeah

Arctic Monkeys: From the Ritz to the Rubble¹⁴⁰

Well, last night these two bouncers
And one of 'em's alright, the other one's the scary one
His way or no way, totalitarian
He's got no time for your looking or breathing
How he don't want you to, so step out the queue
He makes examples of you and there's nowt you can say
Behind they go through to the bit where you pay
And you realize then that it's finally the time
To walk back past ten-thousand eyes in the line
And you can swap jumpers and make another move
Instilled in your brain, you've got something to prove
To all the smirking faces and the boys in black
Why can't they be pleasant? Why can't they have a laugh?
He's got his hand in your chest, he wants to give you a duff
Well, secretly I think they want you all to kick off
They want arms flying everywhere and bottles as well
It's just something to talk about, a story to tell, yeah

Well, I'm so glad they turned us all away
We'll put it down to fate
I said a thousand million things
That I could never say this morning
Got too deep, but how deep is too deep?

Well, this town's a different town today
Said, this town's a different town to what it was last night
You couldn't have done that on a Sunday
And that girl's a different girl today
Said, that girl's a different girl to her you kissed last night
You couldn't have done that on a Sunday
Of course not

Well, I'm so glad they turned us all away
We'll put it down to fate
I thought a thousand million things

¹⁴⁰Alex Turner "From the Ritz to the Rubble." *Genius*. Genius Media Group, Inc. Accessed December 13, 2022. <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

That I could never think this morning
Got too deep, but how deep is too deep?

Last night, what we talked about
It made so much sense
But now the haze has ascended
It don't make no sense anymore
Said, last night, what we talked about
It made so much sense
But now the haze has ascended
It don't make no sense anymore, oh

Da-da, da-da-da
Da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da-da
Da-da, da-da-da, da-da-da-da-da

Arctic Monkeys: I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor¹⁴¹

Stop making the eyes at me
I'll stop making the eyes at you
What it is that surprises me
Is that I don't really want you to

And your shoulders are frozen (cold as the night)
Oh, but you're an explosion (you're dynamite)
Your name isn't Rio, but I don't care for sand
And lighting the fuse might result in a bang, b-b-bang-oh

I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
I don't know if you're looking for romance or
I don't know what you're looking for
I said, I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
Dancing to electro-pop like a robot from 1984
Well, from 1984

I wish you'd stop ignoring me
Because you're sending me to despair
Without a sound, yeah, you're calling me
And I don't think it's very fair

That your shoulders are frozen (cold as the night)
Oh, but you're an explosion (you're dynamite)
Your name isn't Rio, but I don't care for sand

¹⁴¹Alex Turner, "I Bet You Look Good on the Dancefloor," *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc. Accessed December 6, 2022. <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-i-bet-you-look-good-on-the-dancefloor-lyrics>.

And lighting the fuse might result in a bang, b-b-bang-oh

I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
I don't know if you're looking for romance or
I don't know what you're looking for
I said, I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
Dancing to electro-pop like a robot from 1984
Well, from 1984

Oh, there ain't no love, no Montagues or Capulets
Just banging tunes and DJ sets and
Dirty dancefloors and dreams of naughtiness

Well, I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
I don't know if you're looking for romance or
I don't know what you're looking for
I said, I bet that you look good on the dancefloor
Dancing to electro-pop like a robot from 1984
Said, from 1984

Arctic Monkeys: Mardy Bum¹⁴²

Well, now then, mardy bum
I've seen your frown and it's like looking down
The barrel of a gun
And it goes off
And out come all these words
Oh, there's a very pleasant side to you
A side I much prefer

It's one that laughs and jokes around
Remember cuddles in the kitchen, yeah
To get things off the ground
And it was up, up and away
Oh, but it's right hard to remember that
On a day like today
When you're all argumentative
And you've got the face on

Well, now then, mardy bum
Oh, I'm in trouble again, aren't I?
I thought as much
'Cause you turned over there

¹⁴²Alex Turner, "Mardy Bum," *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-mardy-bum-lyrics>.

Pulling that silent disappointment face
The one that I can't bare

Well, can't we just laugh and joke around?
Remember cuddles in the kitchen, yeah
To get things off the ground
And it was up, up and away
Oh, but it's right hard to remember that
On a day like today
When you're all argumentative
And you've got the face on

And, yeah, I'm sorry I was late
But I missed the train
And then the traffic was a state
And I can't be arsed to carry on in this debate
That reoccurs, oh, when you say I don't care
But, of course I do, yeah, I clearly do

So laugh and joke around?
Remember cuddles in the kitchen, yeah
To get things off the ground
And it was up, up and away
Oh, but it's right hard to remember that
On a day like today
When you're all argumentative
And you've got the face on

Arctic Monkeys: Riot Van¹⁴³

So up rolls a riot van
And sparks excitement in the boys
But the policemen look annoyed
Perhaps these are ones they should avoid

Got a chase last night
From men with truncheons dressed in hats
We didn't do that much wrong
Still ran away though, for the laugh
Just for the laugh

And, please, just stop talking
'Cause they won't find us if you do

¹⁴³Alex Turner, "Riot Van," *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 13, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-riot-van-lyrics>.

Oh, those silly boys in blue
Well, they won't catch me and you

"Have you been drinking, son?
You don't look old enough to me"
"I'm sorry, officer, is there a certain age you're supposed to be?
'Cause nobody told me"

And up rolls the riot van
And these lads just wind the coppers up
They ask why they don't catch proper crooks
They get their address and their names took
But they couldn't care less

Thrown in the riot van
And all the coppers kicked him in
And there was no way he could win
Just had to take it on the chin

Arctic Monkeys: The View from the Afternoon¹⁴⁴

Anticipation has a habit to set you up
For disappointment in evening entertainment but
Tonight there'll be some love
Tonight there'll be a ruckus, yeah, regardless of what's gone before
I want to see all of the things that we've already seen
The lairy girls hung out the window of the limousine
Of course it's fancy dress
And they're all looking quite forlorn in bunny ears and devil horns and how

Anticipation has a habit to set you up
For disappointment in evening entertainment but
Tonight there'll be some love
Tonight there'll be a ruckus, yeah, regardless of what's gone before
I want to see all of the things that we've already seen

I wanna see you take the jackpot out the fruit machine
And put it all back in
You've got to understand that you can never beat the bandit, no

And she won't be surprised and she won't be shocked
When she's pressed the star after she's pressed unlock
And there's verse and chapter sat in her inbox

¹⁴⁴Alex Turner, "The View from the Afternoon," *Genius*, Genius Media Group, Inc., Accessed December 6, 2022, <https://genius.com/Arctic-monkeys-the-view-from-the-afternoon-lyrics>.

And all that is said is that you've drank a lot

And you should bear that in mind tonight
Bear that in mind, yeah
You should bear that in mind tonight
Bear that in mind

And you can pour your heart out
For a reason it would block
Oh, you send her after nine o'clock

Anticipation has a habit to set you up
For disappointment in evening entertainment but
Tonight there'll be some love
Tonight there'll be a ruckus, yeah, regardless of what's gone before

And she won't be surprised and she won't be shocked
When she's pressed the star after she's pressed unlock
And there's verse and chapter sat in her inbox
And all that is said is that you've drank a lot

And you should bear that in mind tonight
Bear that in mind, yeah
You should bear that in mind tonight
Bear that in mind

And you can pour your heart out
Around three o'clock
When the two-for-ones have done the writer's block