Aimee Hinds, "Entry on: It’s Never Over (Hey Orpheus) by Arcade Fire ", peer-reviewed by Susan Deacy and Lisa Maurice. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2020). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/1045. Entry version as of November 05, 2026.

Arcade Fire

It’s Never Over (Hey Orpheus)

Canada (2013)

TAGS: Orpheus Underworld





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	It’s Never Over (Hey Orpheus)
Title of the Album(s)	Reflektor
Studio/Production Company	Sonovox; Merge Records / Arcade Fire; Markus Dravs; James Murphy
Country of the First Edition	Canada
Country/countries of popularity	Worldwide
Original Language	English, French
First Edition Date	2013
First Edition Details	Arcade Fire, *Reflektor: It’s Never Over (Hey Orpheus)*. Sonovox; Merge Records / Arcade Fire; Markus Dravs; James Murphy, 2013, 6:44 min.
Running time	6.44 min.
Format	CD, Vinyl, Digital
Official Website	arcadefire.com (accessed: June 16, 2020)
Available Onllne	iTunes, Spotify
Genre	Narrative songs
Target Audience	Young adults
Author of the Entry	Aimee Hinds, University of Roehampton, aimee.hinds89@gmail.com

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Creators



Arcade Fire, photographed by Andreas Meixensperger on June 20, 2014 (accessed: June 16, 2020). The file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license.

Arcade Fire (Music Band)

Arcade Fire are a six-piece Canadian band, originally formed in 2000 by Win Butler and former member Josh Deu. They have released five albums to date. Current members are as follows:

Win Butler (b. 1980) and brother Will Butler (b. 1982). Born in California, they were raised in Texas. Win moved to Montreal, Canada to attend McGill University in 2000 where he studied for a BA in Religious Studies, and Will followed, moving to Montreal in 2004 to join Arcade Fire.

Régine Chassagne (b. 1976) studied Jazz Voice at McGill University, where she met Win Butler in 2000. Chassagne was born in Montreal to parents of Haitian descent who left Haiti during the dictatorship of Francois Duvalier, which has prompted the band to undertake activism and fundraising for Haitian causes.

Richard Reed Parry (b. 1977) is from Ottawa, and studied electroacoustics and contemporary dance at Concordia University. Parry has been involved in several other acts including The National, New International Standards and Little Scream, as well as writing commissioned music. Parry joined the band just before the break-up of its original line-up in 2003, bringing in new members to help re-form the band, including former core member Sarah Neufeld and remaining members Tim Kingsbury (b. 1977) and Jeremy Gara (b. 1978), both Parry's band members from New International Standards.

Kingsbury is originally from Guelph, Ontario, and Gara is from Ottawa; both are involved in various side projects, including Sam Patch which they are both part of.

All the band members play several instruments and often swap roles between sets.

Sources:

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Win Butler: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

Will Butler: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

Régine Chassagne: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

Richard Reed Parry: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

Tim Kingsbury: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

Jeremy Gara: Profile at Wikipedia (accessed: July 7, 2020).

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Additional information

Sequels, Prequels and Spin-offs	*Awful Sound (Oh Eurydice)*: a companion song on the same album.

Summary

The song narrates the story of Orpheus' attempt to rescue his dead wife Eurydice from the underworld, mostly from the point of view of Eurydice who urges Orpheus not to turn around. The rest of the song appears to be narrated by Orpheus who reassures Eurydice. The song begins at the point in the story where Orpheus is in the process of rescuing Eurydice, with her walking out of the Underworld behind him, and ends with an indirect reference to Orpheus' failure and Eurydice's return to the Underworld.

Analysis

The song is not a direct reception of the Orpheus myth (in which he marries Eurydice who is bitten by a snake and dies, and attempts to rescue her from the Underworld), but of the film *Orfeu Negro* (Eng: *Black Orpheus*, 1959, dir. Marcel Camus). Songwriter Win Butler explained to *Rolling Stone* that *Black Orpheus* is one of his favourite films and provided inspiration for the album *Reflektor*. A companion track, *Awful Sound (Oh Eurydice)* precedes this song on the album. The impact of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth on the album is also clear in the album art, depicting Auguste Rodin's 1893 sculpture *Orpheus and Eurydice*. Butler's reading of the Orpheus myth relies on *Black Orpheus*, and he has stated that he sees Orpheus and Eurydice's story as 'the original love triangle, a Romeo-and-Juliet kind of story' (Doyle, 2013). The idea of the Orpheus myth as a love triangle is not presented in ancient versions (although it is in *Black Orpheus*, in which Orfeu is already engaged before meeting Eurydice), but perhaps adds context for the songwriter to express Orpheus' desperation and both of their sadness. Butler also adds that *Reflektor* as an album was inspired by Kierkegaard's *The Present Age* as well as a visit to Haiti (Doyle, 2013); the song is not necessarily reflective of the band's corpus of work in its entirety, but thematically and lyrically it is tied into the rest of the album through these shared inspirations.

Unlike the preceding song, *Awful Sound (Oh Eurydice)*, this song

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lyrically presents a version of the myth that is recognisable for anyone with a basic knowledge of the Orpheus myth through Eurydice’s pleas for Orpheus to “wait until it’s over” and not to “turn around too soon”. While this version should contain no surprises for anyone familiar with either *Black Orpheus* or any of the ancient source material (most notably Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*), the song is not explicit in its links to the myth (apart from in naming Orpheus and Eurydice), and so the mythical connection would probably not be clear to a listener with no knowledge. The song opens with this verse, making it immediately recognisable as Eurydice’s point of view:

Hey, Orpheus!

I'm behind you

Don't turn around

I can find you

While the song is mostly narrated by Eurydice, Orpheus’ commitment to her is made clear in the verse:

Hey, Eurydice!

Can you see me?

I will sing your name

Till you're sick of me

Just wait until it's over

Just wait until it's through

Orpheus and Eurydice’s shared hope of a reconciliation is expressed through the repeated refrain (and title) of “it’s never over”, while the inevitable conclusion is hinted at throughout the song with the line “you will get over”. The final verse indicates the same conclusion as the myth:

We stood beside

A frozen sea

I saw you out

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In front of me

Reflected light

A hollow moon

Oh Orpheus, Eurydice

It's over too soon

The song is sung as a male/female duet, with one voice or the other more pronounced depending upon whether the narrator is Eurydice, Orpheus or both (the manipulation of vocals and music to tell the story feeds into the story of Orpheus as a famed musician, whose musical prowess gets him into the Underworld to free Eurydice in the first place). The last verse is sung by both, implying that the line "I saw you out in front of me" refers to them both seeing each other when Orpheus finally turns around. The "frozen sea", referenced a few times throughout the song, is potentially a reference to the Styx, the river the must be crossed to reach the Underworld in Greek mythology.

The end of the song and the loss of Eurydice to death is a defining characteristic of the Orpheus myth and a key event in many receptions of the myth, both direct (for example, *Black Orpheus* and more contemporary receptions like *Hadestown*) and those that are more subtle, such as *Moulin Rouge*; Rothman (2013) points out for the listener unfamiliar with the myth that references to 'looking back' in several pop songs can be linked to Orpheus and Eurydice. In this song, the subtle reference to Eurydice's demise allows the theme of death to be brought up in a way that does not surprise an unfamiliar listener, especially young adults and children.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Orpheus Underworld
Other Motifs, Figures,	Death Intertextuality Reconciliation Success and failure

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and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture

Further Reading

Reviews:

- In Spin by Jem Aswad (accessed: June 16, 2020).
- In NME by Hazel Sheffield (accessed: June 16, 2020).

Doyle, Patrick, "Win Butler Reveals Secret Influences Behind Arcade Fire's 'Reflektor'", *Rolling Stone,* 22nd Oct. 2013, available at rollingstone.com (accessed: June 16, 2020) .

Rothman, Lily, "Brush Up on the Greek Myth That Arcade Fire Is Singing About", *Time,* 29th Oct. 2013, available at entertainment.time.com (accessed: June 16, 2020).

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