Call Me Queer:

Queer theory and the Soundtrack of *Call Me by Your Name*

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Introduction

In a culture that classifies the world through binary categories, entities that fall in between those categories are often subjected to fear and anxiety.[1] It is therefore no surprise that two subjects as fluid, undefinable and abstract as music and queer identities both have been occupying controversial positions within Western history.[2] Remarkably, both these subjects are central to the critically acclaimed film *Call Me by Your Name.* The film, directed by Italian director Luca Guadagnino, is part of his so-called "desire" film trilogy, together with earlier films *Il Sono L'Amore* (2009) and *A Bigger Splash* (2015). It tells the story of a summer romance between a seventeen year old boy called Elio, and Oliver, a twenty-eight year old scholar who is invited to work on his doctoral thesis while staying in Elio's parents' summer house in Italy. Its narrative features a nuanced and fluid, and therefore queer conception of desire and sexuality; the characters stay out of defined categories through the ambiguous meaning of the film's dialogue and their sexual identities. In this film, music takes on a remarkable position. Elio uses music to express the multiple outlets regarding his desire for Oliver. Moreover, the songs, and piano works of the soundtrack are often combined with the relatively loud presence of sounds such as the movement of water, crickets or the wind rushing through the trees which could point towards a more affective experience of sound for the audience.

I would therefore argue that music in this film is employed to call into question the stability of sexual categories. This study will thus be concerned with the relationship between queer theory, music and sound in relation to the image. While both queer theorists and musicologists have been concerned with the marginal position of their object of study within media representation, little attention has been paid to how film music and queer theory intersect.[3] However, a central question, as evidenced in recent work in this field, is how music plays a role in the construction of "normative gender roles and lines of sexual desire."[4] This would entail the soundtracks' enforcement or resistance of normative sexuality and music's role in the

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[1] Stuart Hall, "The Spectacle of the Other," in *Representation,* ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 226-227.
[2] Judith Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 11., Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006), 21.
[3] Scott Paulin, "Unheard Sexualities?: Queer Theory and the Soundtrack," in *Spectatorship: Shifting Theories of Gender, Sexuality and Media,* ed. Roxanne Samer, and William Whittington (Texas: Texas University Press, 2017), 77.
[4] James Buhler, "Gender, Sexuality, and the Soundtrack," in *The Oxford Handbook of Film Music Studies,* ed. David Neumeyer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 370.

construction of queer subjectivities. I would like to contribute to an answer to these questions by exploring the role of music in constructing a representation and experience of queer desire.

The term queer refers, in this case, to the movement that emerged during the 1990s. Scholars such as Eve Kosofky Sedgewick and Judith Butler contested the limitations of homosexual and lesbian criticism. Butler argued for a theory that could account for the variety of other identities that fall in between normative homosexual categories. Sedgewick contributed to her argument by treating sexuality as a social construct with no innate grounding. [5] Queer theory thereby aimed to challenge the essentialisation of categories of sex, gender and sexual orientation and came to account for, as David Halperin puts it: 'whatever is at odds with the normal.'[6]

Judith Peraino draws the connection between music and the queer through a discussion of how music has been used to call into question norms of gender and sexuality. Her entry point stems from the ancient Greek story about Odysseus and his struggles to resist the song of the Sirens. Their beautiful song, feared for its dangerous powers, was said to have fatal consequences for who would listen to it. For Peraino, the function of the Sirens' song can be attributed to more than merely its dangerous powers. She suggests a reading of the song as being able to "invite an imagining of what things would be like if they were different.[7] Her reading of the song proposes a power to queer Odysseus his world and invite him to deviate from the line that Sara Ahmed refers to as the "straight line" of normative sexual orientation.[8] I argue that Guagdanino's employment of music in *Call Me by Your Name* can be understood through Peraino's conception of music as a queering practice. I will therefore approach the music in this film like she analysed musical practices throughout history: as discursive ones.

The way in which *Call Me by Your Name* constructs a queer experience operates through a variety of different means. To a certain extent, these can be explored on the level of representation. One such a representational value lies within the soundtrack's queering ability through its pre-existing context, a process that Anahid Kassabian would refer to as *affilitating identifications.*[9] Another is the way in which Elio's piano performances operate on a queer site of

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[5] Peter Brooker, Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson, "Gay Lesbian and Queer Theories," in *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory,* ed. Peter Brooker, Raman Selden and Peter Widdowson (London: Routledge, 2017), 255-7.

[6] David Halperin, *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (London: Routledge, 1990), 79.

[7] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, 1-3.

[8] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (London: Duke University Press, 2006) 70.

[9] Anahid Kassabian, *Hearing Music* (Oxfordshire: Taylor and Francis Group, 2002), 141-2.

ambivalence which enables a playful negotiation between Elio's performative identities.[10] Moreover, we can also read the lyrics in Sufjan Stevens' songs as a narrative strategy to communicate Elio's unspoken feelings.

However, even though an analysis of the means as described above offers fruitful insights for the construction and confession of queer desires through music, the queering powers of music are probably best understood through the way it affects our bodies. Feminist and queer theorists have long been concerned with affect and embodiment as it calls into question the distinction between the masculine rationality versus feminine emotional binary which opens the possibility for a reading of feelings as an alternative form of knowledge.[11] Thinking in terms of affect then would shed light on our embodied experience which could help us move beyond the established categories of the social subject.[12] Moving from representational, mind-centred understandings of music towards a more affective one could therefore be more useful in relation to how the soundtrack in *Call Me by Your Name* establishes a queer experience.

Our bodily, preconscious and pre-emotional, sensory, in other words, affective reactions to images, sound and, especially music, play a large role in our subjective experience of the world around us.[13] Plato already feared the affective power of music to push us towards the wrong directions, directions that we today might call queer.[14] Ian Biddle and Marie Thompson discuss how a focus on the relationship between music, sound and affect marks a shift from traditional hermeneutic analysis towards an analysis of its affective force. A specific focus on affect would thereby blur the boundaries between music and sound and focus on sonic qualities rather than different musical categories.[15] Such an approach might be fruitful for an exploration of the vivid sounds and that are so typical to this film. The affective quality of the film is part of a growing emphasis on affect in current media which ask for a different approach in analysis in order to

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[10] Gary C. Thomas, " Men at the Keyboard," in *Beyond the Soundtrack: Representing Music in Cinema,* ed. Daniel Goldmark, et al. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007, 277- 289; Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 4.

[11] Carolyn Pedwell and Anne Whitehead, "Affecting Feminism: Questions of Feeling in Feminist Theory," *Feminist Theory* 13, no. 2 (2012): 119.

[12] Claire Hemmings, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn," *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (September 2005): 549.

[13] Eric Shouse, "Feeling, Emotion, Affect," *Journal of Media and Culture* 8, no. 6 (Fall 2006), http://journal.media-culture.org.au/0512/03-shouse.php

[14] Ian Biddle and Marie Thompson,"Introduction," in *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorising Sonic Experience,* ed.Ian Biddle and Marie Thompson (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2013), 11.

[15] Ibid, 19.

understand how in which subjectivity and identity are remediated.[16] An analysis that accounts for these qualities will thus form the base from which I will argue that in the case of *Call Me by Your Name,* music and sound are employed to give us a glimpse of what the Sirens' song could do and what Plato might have feared: creating a subjective experience of a queer *desire*.

Ultimately, this thesis aims to show how *Call Me by Your Name* establishes a queer audiovisual aesthetic that employs music to queer its image and invites its audience to take on a queer subject position. This study will thereby aim to contribute to how music and sound can be analyzed in relation to queer theory on both a representational and affective level. In order to exemplify this relationship, I will perform a textual analysis of the soundtrack in relation to its image as a discursive, queering practice which features Elio's search for and articulation of a queer identity through music. One specific type of such practices, or "technologies", as Foucault called them which I argue to be of particular importance to the deconstruction of how his queer subject position in this film is produced, are the technologies of the self.[17] The use of music in relation to these practices will therefore be the main focus of this thesis.

Music as Technology of the Self

Michel Foucault conceptualised his different types of technologies to account for the means through which individuals were able to take on different subject positions.[18] He approached society as a set of structured practices which shift throughout what he called "discourse."[19] In *The History of Sexuality,* he traces sexual identities as shifting within a historical framework and points out how discourse produces subject positions from which individuals could define their sexuality.[20] By tracing the emergence of subject positions in history, Foucault not only provided us with a historical overview, he also provided us with a tool to question and deconstruct the subject positions within modern day society.

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[16] Anneke Smelik, "Lara Croft, Kill Bill en de feministische filmwetenschap," in *Handboek Genderstudies in Media, Kunst en Cultuur,* ed. Rosemarie Buikema & Liedeke Plate (Bussum: Uitgeverij Coutinho, 2015), 280-1.

[17] Together with the technologies of *the self,*Foucault distinguished three other types of categories which operated on an institutional level: *production, sign systems,* and *power.* See: Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, Volume 1,* ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Press, 1994), 177.

[18] Sean Nixon, "Exhibiting Masculinity," in *Representation,* ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 317.

[19] Stuart Hall, "The Work of Representation," in *Representation,* ed. Stuart Hall et al. (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 29.

[20] Gary Gutting, "Foucault: A Very Short Introduction,*"* in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault,* ed Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 98-9.

In his later work, Foucault sought for a way to account for the ability of individuals to challenge their own subjectivities while still operating within the institutional forces that determined power structures within society. This would consist of a technology that would acquire individuals to have, to a certain extent, agency over the construction of their own identity; that is to say to challenge one's identity which is constituted within the boundaries of hegemonic discourse.[21] The practice that ignited Foucault's interest in tracing such practices within history was a specific treatment which was practiced by French psychiatrist François Leuret. Leuret's practice for curing patients was based on the principle explicit affirmation; the patient had to explicitly affirm his or her madness in order to be cured from mental illness.[22] Foucault read this practice, which involved the patient being forced to confess his or her mental illness under a cold shower, as the "reverse of the performative speech act": letting the patient "voluntarily" confess his own madness makes the patient able to distance himself from his delirium.[23]

Foucault found that his earlier conceptualisation of technologies, those of *production, power,* and *sign systems* which operated more on an institutional level outside of the individual, could not account for the patient's own ability to confess his madness and thereby alter his own subjective identity. As a result, he traced what he called "the techniques of the self": "techniques that permit individuals to effect, by their own means, a certain number of operations on their own bodies, their own souls, their own thoughts, their own conduct, and this in a manner so as to transform themselves, and to attain a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power."[24] As the patient was able to confess and distance himself from his illness, he thus employed technology of the self to form his own subject position. Central to these technologies is the confession and discovery of truth. Foucault traces these practices within history as "obligations of truth" which means "discovering the truth, being enlightened by the truth, [and] telling the truth."[25] Peraino, in turn, distinguishes these obligations of truth as formed by both *discipline* and *desire*: the desire to discover one's own truths and simultaneously

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[21] Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Ethics, Essential Works of Foucault Volume 1,* ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Press, 1994), 230.
[22] Ibid, 175.
[23] Ibid, 176-78.
[24] Ibid, 177.
[25] Ibid.

confess them in order to transform the self.[26] The technologies of the self were thus formed by the desire to form one's own subjectivity within the discipline of institutional power structures.

Peraino marks the special role of music in relation to the technologies of the self. She places music as an ambivalent ground for a clash between discipline and desire by the example of musical performance: "A musician may discipline voice, fingers, breath, and mind in order to attain control over them in musical performance, but the performance itself may evoke undisciplined, frenzied emotions in those who hear it. Through the medium of musical performance, then a discipline 'of the self on the self' potentially results in excessive desire."[27] Here, she describes music as a twofold medium which is able to both restrain and discipline our conception of self and simultaneously evoke excessive desire. Drawing on this relationship between the technologies of the self and music, I will show that, as Peraino describes in her first and second chapter, music still can be used to function as a form of self-discovery and investigating unknown pleasures as well as to function as confession within the discipline of power structures within society.[28]

The discovery and confession of truth of the technology of the self is a central theme to Elio's story. As he is afraid to confess his feelings for Oliver, I argue that music becomes the means for both himself and the audience to explore the desire lying within his queer subjectivity. As we follow how Elio falls in love with Oliver, we see how music comes to function as a technology able to both discipline his character into existing subjectivities while challenging these subjectivities at the same time. Within the film, music becomes a technology through which the heteronormative masculine and the feminine homonormative aspects of Elio's character intersect and ultimately become queer.

The Awakening of the Prince

In the film, the queer qualities of his character are represented through binary oppositions of sexual performativity. Elio is both the teenager who dances, drinks and laughs outside with his friends, but also the boy who stays at home alone, transcribing music; the masculine, show-off, intellectual and the feminine, domestic pupil. He is the young heteronormative seducer who sleeps with Marzia, but also the homosexual boy who is madly in love with Oliver. With regard

[26] Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens*, 68.
[27] Ibid, 11.
[28] Ibid, 70.

to speaking about the truth of his queer subject position, Elio finds himself in a difficult position due to a fear of the disapprovement of what his surroundings, and especially Oliver, would think.

As we encounter Elio's struggle to speak, Elio's parents take on a vital role: instead of disapproving, they actually aim to support his love for Oliver. In their attempt to let Elio discover his own truth, they help him to confess his feelings in a way that can be considered as similar, fortunately not the same, as the "cold shower" approach of Dr. Lauret. Their aim was not to convince Elio to confess his queer identity, their aim was to cure him from the fear of being queer. The scene in which Elio's mental process towards confession is set in motion, features Elio and his two parents together in the living room. His mother wants him to listen to a part of a story from Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron* about a knight that does not know whether to speak or stay silent about his love for a princess. Whilst she reads the story, which obviously refers to Elio's situation, the gramophone player, plays a record of Ravel's "Le Jardin Féerique," the final piece from his collection of short pieces on fairy tales called *Ma Mere l'Oye.* In its original context, the piece revolves about the last part of the sleeping beauty: the moment she is wakened by the kiss of her prince in the fairy garden.[29] The short piece compliments the narrative on screen through the great similarities between the contextual fairytale of the music, the fairytale told by Anella (Elio's mother), and Elio's struggle to speak up to Oliver about his feelings. Its original context of a waking princess sheds a new light upon how the audience is allowed to follow Elio's investigation of his own truth.

In this scene, I would therefore argue that the image is queered by the original context of the music. Anahid Kassabian refers to this process as *affiliating identifications.* This concept, together with its opposite assimilating identifications, refers to the different form of identifications with the text which can be evoked by bringing together music and images. Assimilating identifications are often formed by music that is composed to fit and enhance the image, music that facilitates affiliating identifications rather adds different meaning to the image because of its meaning within context outside of the film.[30] In *Call Me by Your Name,* the affiliating identifications which are brought in by the context of "Le Jardin Féerique," reveal the process of Elio finding the courage to make the confession to both himself and Oliver about his own truth and become the means to queer the image.

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[29] Emily Kilpatrick, "'Therein Lies a Tale': Musical and Literary Structure in Ravel's *Ma Mere l'Oye," Context* 34, (2009): 82.
[30] Kassabian, *Hearing Music*, 141-2.

Elio's Confession

From then, the dilemma that Anella poses through the fairy tale: is it better to speak or to die?, becomes of vital importance in the narrative of the film. Elio has to choose either between finding the courage to speak freely or to remain silent and "to die" of the fear around his queer identity and to be rejected by Oliver. Elio's aims to solve this problem by speaking through the in-between: the queer ability of music. Of particular importance for his "moderate" form of confession is a scene in which he performs a musical piece for Oliver. Elio sits in the garden, playing Bach's Capriccio in B-flat major, hoping that Oliver, lying in the grass, will pick up on the sound. And indeed he does. Oliver asks Elio to play it again for him to which Elio asks him to come inside and listen to him performing the piece on piano. However, he does not play the piece as he played it outside. Elio alters his performance by playing it as how he thinks Franz Liszt would have played it. Then, when Oliver asks him again to play the piece as he did outside on the guitar, Elio alters the piece again and plays it like Busoni would have played the first version of Liszt. Ultimately, as Oliver becomes frustrated and plans on walking away, Elio finally finds the courage to play the piece as he did outside. In this scene, Elio's performance becomes the playground of *discipline* and *desire* which takes on important role in speaking freely about the queer of himself.

A vital role in challenging the hegemonic notion of self in the scene, is the one that is played by the piano. In his essay on the relationship between theatrical performance and film, Gary C. Thomas describes the instrument as functioning as liminal site of representation. Thomas builds on what Foucault theorised as the *heterotopia*: spaces that operate at the liminal border between opposites such as public/private, male/female, hetero-/homosexuality. He points out how the piano is able to signify such a liminality through its quality to represent both the feminine, soft, and private domesticity, and the public, loud masculinity. The piano in film then comes to represent what Foucault describes with a metaphor of a ship that takes us to sea: "that is, put us at risk, and bring us into the open-ended possibilities of experimentation, improvisation, and play, the heterotopian life possibilities that then emerge into view."[31]

Especially Thomas's connection between the piano as a form of play opens up the possibility for a further exploration of how Elio employs the piano to challenge his notion of

[31] Gary C. Thomas, "Men at the Keyboard: Liminal Spaces and the Heterotopian Function of Music," 279-80.

self. Roger Moseley explores the conception of music making as challenging existing epistemologies surrounding topics such as "agency, autonomy, embodiment, gender, sensation, presence, and meaning."[32] He draws on the conception of playing games defined by the discipline of its rules and the extent to which they afford the desire for free play and improvisation. Moseley emphasises how this binary thought of play can help us understand how they can engage with Foucault's conception of the "affordances and restrictions of particular systems of thought (*épistème),* but also with their shifting formations." [33] Through play, the individual can therefore alter its own subject while remaining within the rules of institutional forces.

As we trace Elio's interaction with the piano and the keyboard on screen as a form of play, it becomes clear how it enables him to exert his queer conception of self. All his performances throughout the film, function as a technique to alter the self. In the presence of his parents, friends and family, Elio's performances come to function as a trophy of a masculine musical virtuosity. However, in the performance of Bach's Capriccio for Oliver, his performance comes to employ categories that come closer to revealing his true self to him. First, as noted above, he fudges through impersonating the soft and seductive performance of Liszt, and the masculine pompous, heavy play of Busoni while deliberately hiding his true queer identity. Ultimately, he decides to let go of the masquerade and allows himself to experience the feelings his "authentic" performance evokes: his performance come to function as a confession in which he must subject himself to whatever fate will fall upon revealing his true feelings. The piano, thus forms his own playful form to confess his desires which, in turn, are shaped by the discipline of musical performance.

In the film, the role of music as a tool of confession goes beyond Elio's piano performance for Oliver. His feelings are also directly communicated to the audience through three songs by singer songwriter Sufjan Stevens of which Guadagnino wanted them to function as some "sort of narrator, without having a normal narrator."[34] As they are all non-diegetic and clearly stand out through their difference in musical style from the eighties disco and classical pieces we have heard earlier on, Stevens' music speaks on a different level, that of Elio's inner

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[32] Roger Moseley, *Keys to Play: Music as a Ludic Medium from Apollo to Nintendo* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 4.
[33] Ibid, 26-36.
[34] Keith Caultfield, "How Sufjan Stevens' Music became a 'Sort of Narrator' for 'Call Me by Your Name," *Billboard,* January 10, 2017, https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/8093818/
sufjan-stevens-call-me-by-your-name-music-luca-guadagnino-interview

experience. In the first scene that features Stevens' music, we see a worried Elio, at twilight under the trees of the garden, wondering where Oliver might be. A continuous shot of his puzzled face is accompanied by the song "Futile Devices." The lyrics of the song take on a prominent position here as they refer to Elio's struggle to speak: "And I would say I love you, but saying it out loud is hard. So I won't say it at all, and I won't stay very long." In addition, the relationship between the lyrics and the image in the scene featuring "Visions of Gideon" functions in much the same way as with "Futile Devices.": in this final scene, we see Elio in tears due to his loss of hope for love after he hears that Oliver is engaged to his girlfriend. The scene accompanied by "Mystery of Love," however, does not only feature images of Elio, but also of Oliver as they are on a three-day trip to Bergamo together. The lyrics of the song depict the Elio's joy of finally being able to enjoy his relationship. Together, the lyrics of all three songs narrate Elio's feelings during these scenes and become a form of confession within the discipline of the constraint about queer love. However, the inner experience of Elio's feelings through music bears more potential than the relatively straightforward meaning of the lyrics of Stevens' music.

Affective Queer Musical Desire

As mentioned in the introduction, there is something particularly affective about the materiality of the music which I argue to communicate Elio's queer desire to the audience through an embodied experience. Brian Massumi exemplifies the relationship between affect and the circulation of knowledge by arguing how, because of the "open" synaesthetic experience that characterises affect, it becomes the means to explore one's own unconscious, sometimes unexpected feelings derived from the interaction with objects. It becomes an entry point for self-reflection.[35] From this point, I would like to draw a connection between the affective quality of music and the exploration of one's own desires as in Foucault's technologies of the self through which the spectator is encouraged to experience Elio's queer desire for Oliver.

Barbara Kennedy traces an embodied experience of film within the philosophical thought of Gilles Deleuze. She provides us with tools for a Deleuzian analysis of images which, as turns out, can also be valuable for music as it is able to account for sounds disclosure of its

[35] Brian Massumi, "The Autonomy of Affect," In *Deleuze: A Critical Reader,* ed. Paul Patton (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), 228-9.

ontological materiality while still operating within a musical form. Kennedy exemplifies the affective quality of film by drawing on Deleuze's "aesthetics of sensation": the molecular materiality of art as producing an effect of its own. In Deleuzian terms, art should not be thought of as semiotic symbols, but as encounters between the 'force' and 'intensity' of the molecular movement of the material of the object. It is an underlying affective sensation with the semiotic form imposed upon it.[36] It operates through what Deleuze calls 'becoming-woman.' With this term, Deleuze does not mean to refer to an identification with an essential "female" subject, but to a "desubjectification of the gendered 'entity' of woman."[37] Molecular movement is therefore able to 'free up lines of flight', 'liberating' a thousand tiny sexes that identity subsumes under the One."[38] Becomings, according to Kennedy, are therefore "*desubjectified affects*": the ability of art to move beyond the boundaries of categorisation and evoke what I would call an aesthetic affect of the queer.

Kennedy proposes an approach by drawing on her reading of Deleuze's conception of music as rhythm which consists of three compounds: *vibration, resonance* and *forced movement.* Together they form a set of elements, connecting the object as a unit in which art becomes a "machine" that evokes a rhythmic sensation though elements such as light, colour, point and counterpoint. Deleuze based his distinction between the three rhythmic elements on his findings of the paintings of Francis Bacon. He used the term vibration to refer the way in which Bacon created the sensation of one colour (molar/subject) which was formed by a 'rhythmic oscillation' of a variety of colours (molecular/object). This vibration of molecules creates "a sensation which is felt at a nervous level, a level of excitation upon the nervous system." It is able to directly affect our bodies, queering our desires through excitation. Resonance, in turn, is the effect of two separate sensations together.[39] In audiovisual instances, I would call this conformance between the movement of music and the image in which they resonate on the same rhythm. Lastly, forced movement, refers to the bridge between contesting sensations: despite their distinctiveness, the composition of them all together composes an overall movement between them and constructs them as a whole.[40] Translated to audiovisual terms, this would then refer to

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[36] Barbara M. Kennedy, *Deleuze and Cinema: The Aesthetics of Sensation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 109-11.
[37] Ibid, 91.
[38] Ibid, 95.
[39] Ibid, 113.
[40] Ibid, 113-4.

the contesting relationship between the sensation of music and visuality being pushed into one form, thereby evoking a new sensation.

One specific sequence in the film that exemplifies how these three compounds of sensation come to function are the shots of the afternoon that preceded Elio and Oliver's first kiss. The sequence starts with Elio attempting to confess his love to Oliver at the war monument in town. In the following scenes we see them cycling through the Italian landscape. On the visual level, the sequence matches the serenity and tempo of a lazy hot summer afternoon: the shots are surprisingly long and the images primarily feature the warm sun on the grass of the fields. While the images consist of long, slow shots before the climax of their first kiss, the accompanying piano piece "Une Barque Sur L'Océan" from Ravel's *Miroirs* provides the vibrant sensation of the tension of desire building up. The piece emerges multiple times from the point at which Elio confronts Oliver at the monument until they arrive at the berm where they kiss.

Originally, with "Une Barque Sur L'Océan," Ravel aimed to convey the sense of a boat on the ocean being moved by the water. Although this reminds us of Foucault's metaphor the ship taking us to sea, liminality is now constructed through the material vibration of music: arpeggios rapidly moving back and forth were employed create the sense of the fluid movement of water.[41] It is scattered in an impressionist bundle of notes/molecules which provide the serene and long shots with a vibrating sensation which enables the audience to experience feels the underlying tension and queer desire. Moreover, it creates a forced movement which binds the sequence of images as a unified build-up towards their first kiss.

When we take this perspective of vibration, resonance, and forced movement further on to the songs by Sufjan Stevens I would argue that in all three scenes, Stevens' voice comes to affect our bodies, thereby evoking a pure sensation that resonates with Elio's strong unsubjectified desires. The high 'intensity' of affect in his voice is not determined by its volume. It is rather determined by how intensely it vibrates. His voice does not contain a distinctive, molar, colour of tone. It rather is a whisper, touching our eardrums with the variety of tone colours whispers consists of. Stevens' voice thus functions as a vibrating molecular image, a queer 'becoming' working upon our nerve system, thereby evoking a highly affective experience which extends the meaning of the lyrics in the songs. The images accompanying these three

[41] Héloïse Marie Murdoch, "Ravel's *Miroirs:* Text and Context" (MSc diss., University of the Witwaterstrand, 2007), 47.

songs also complement this molecularity of Stevens' music by addressing the material components of the elements in the scene. In the scene featuring "Futile Devices," the images become blurred by the ripples of smoke and sometimes a piece of videotape. As the images become blurrier, the immersive qualities of traditional cinema are slowly taken down by a acknowledgement of the materiality of film. Together the images and Stevens' music resonate on the same vibrating rhythm, acknowledging the viewer both addressing an affective reaction and exposing a theatrical relationship and making the viewer aware of its presence thereby addressing an embodied experience.

The different components of the scene featuring "Mystery of Love" are, however, resonating in a different sense. Instead of a contribution to the progress of the narrative, it should be seen as a small memory capsule in Elio's mind, containing vivid elements of the state of ecstasy that defined this moment in his memory. I would argue that Stevens' music, sound and image in this scene highlight the elements that evoke such a state. We see shots of nature, the green colours of the trees, a small stream, a large waterfall accompanied by the vibrant sounds of water falling down. As we see Elio and Oliver running up the hill, the environment is filled with echoes of their cries of happiness. Coupled together with "Mystery of Love," the scene becomes a bundle of elements that evoke the vivid sensation of what their love would have felt like.

The last scene of the film, which is accompanied by "Visions of Gideon," brings both the theatrical and emotional sensations of the two previously described scenes together. The molecular sensations of the tears dripping of his face, the crackling sound of the fireplace together with Stevens' voice create a highly affective sensation as he sees his last hope for love being burned in the flames. However, in the end, his eyes go beyond the realm of his house in Italy and directly look upon our faces in front of the cinema screen. Our relationship with him becomes exposed as we are directly addressed by him "breaking the fourth wall." As the audience has followed and experienced his quest for queer love through music, image and sound we have imagined what finding one's own queer truth could be like.

Conclusion

With *Call Me by Your Name,* Guagdagnino provided us with an experience through film that deals with the issues revolved around the struggle of finding one's own identity and the struggle revolving its disclosure to our environment. Building on Peraino's argument of the queer quality of music and Foucault's technologies of the self, I have aimed to bring queer theory and film music analysis closer together and proposed an analysis of what such a relationship could entail. In this analysis, I focussed specifically on the technologies of the self. However, as Foucault noted, these categories of technologies never fully operate as separate entities.[42] Nevertheless, I focussed specifically on this type as the relationship between music and the queer subject as finding and confessing its own identity and truth took on a central position in my argument.

As it turns out, the figures which provided the material for this thesis; Peraino, Foucault, Ravel, Sufjan Stevens, and Guadagnino all have had to deal with these issues on their own. Building on their work, I aimed to show how they can help us to make sense of the process of articulating these identities through music, sound and image. On the one hand, this involved ability of music to function as a site of representation through pre-existing contexts, lyrics and performativity. On the other, it entailed the affective quality of film as an embodied experience through which it established the body of the spectator as a site of queer activism.

However, the question remains whether my exploration of embodied experiences through sight and sound has entirely succeeded in capturing the affective qualities of queer subjective identities. Feminist scholar Laura U. Marks points out the overprivileged consideration of visuality and sound. She argues for a centrality of other senses in the synesthetic experience of affect and brings forward the senses of taste, smell and touch as they share a larger proximity to bodily experiences.[43] She argues how a subversion of the Western sensory hierarchy entails a consideration of these senses and that they can serve as an alternative epistemological source that, together with sight and sound, is able to fully transverse the mind/body dichotomy.[44] As a means to overcome this Western sensory hierarchy in film, she

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[42] Judith Peraino, *Listening to the Sirens,* 4.
[43] Laura U. Marks, " Thinking Multisensory Culture," *Paragraph* 31, no. 2 (2008): 123.
[44] Ibid, 135-6.

has been concerned with experiencing these proximate senses through the visual body of film. One such an example is her concept of *haptic visuality* as to account for the synesthetic relationship between sight and touch.[45] However, as Davina Quinlivan points out, Marks often considers such synesthetic experiences in film more often through sight than sound. I would therefore argue that the role of music within these processes deserves further exploration.[46] This, in turn, could enrich our understanding the establishment of an embodied experience of queer desire in film as music has proven to have just as strong affective and queering abilities.

[45] Davina Quinlivan, "On How Queer Cinema Might Feel," *MSMI* 9, no. 1 (2015): 70.
[46] Ibid, 69.

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