

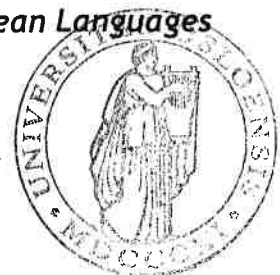
06424757

**'Color for the Eye, Color for the Ear':
Music, Metaphor and Meaning
in Joni Mitchell's *Blue***

Karen Marie Espeland



*A Thesis Presented to
The Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages
The University of Oslo
In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Master of Arts degree
Spring Term 2006*



BIBLIOTEK FOR
HUMANIORA OG
SAMFUNNSVITENSKAP

Karen Marie Espeland
(1 CD à l'homme)

Oslo 2006

Preface and acknowledgments

Accidentally, the time of my first purchase of a Joni Mitchell album coincided with my first encounter with conceptual metaphor. In the autumn of 2000, I was an Erasmus student at the University of East Anglia in Norwich. The Joni Mitchell album I bought was *Ladies of the Canyon*. In the module Linguistic Approaches to Literature, Paul Chilton introduced me to conceptual metaphor. I was interested in how this could be applied to the analysis of song lyrics. However, in the essay I wrote for this module I did not choose Mitchell's album as an object of interpretation.¹ I analysed two pop songs by Leonard Cohen and Silje Nergaard, mostly based on the semiotics of music as presented in Theo Van Leeuwen's *Speech, Music, Sound* (1999) and Lakoff & Johnson's theory of metaphor. In the spring of 2002, I expanded this work to a larger term paper in English Didactics when I studied at Agder University College.² I adapted my material for classroom teaching, an experiment that turned out to be quite successful, seemingly motivating for the students. The following year, the autumn of 2003, I studied music, and decided to explore popular songs even further, resulting in a term paper focusing to a larger extent on the communicative function of pop songs.³ At this time, my friend and fellow student, singer Hanne Kolstø, based her semi-practical term paper on the comparison of two of Joni Mitchell's albums; *Ladies of the Canyon* and *Blue*. Her beautiful covers of some of these songs were inspiring for me, stimulating both my thoughts and feelings.

As can be concluded from the above account, I have taken a keen interest in the analysis of popular songs for several years in the course of my studies. Consequently, it was not a difficult task to choose the topic for my thesis in English Literature. As I started my master studies at the University of Oslo, I was happy to discover that Professor Kay Wikberg taught a module called 'On Metaphor'. I followed these interesting seminars in the spring of 2005, and wrote an essay on conceptual metaphor in Joni Mitchell's 'A Case of You'.⁴ As I searched for music suitable for the type of interpretive analysis I wanted to undertake in my thesis, Mitchell's songs proved to be the material most fitted for such a task, with lyrics that

¹ A term paper submitted to the UEA, LLT, autumn 2000: 'Communicative use of sound and metaphor in two 'popular' waltzes'.

² A term paper submitted to Agder University College, spring 2002: 'Music as a tool for teaching English'.

³ A term submitted to Agder University College, autumn 2003: 'Kommunikativ bruk av lyd og metaforer i pop-musikk'.

⁴ An essay submitted to the University of Oslo, spring 2005: 'Metaphor, music and meaning in Joni Mitchell's "A Case of You"'.

are rich in metaphor, orchestrated in a musically fascinating manner. Also, the beauty of her songs had a particular appeal to me, both intellectually and emotionally.

In April, 2005, Professor Sheila Whiteley from Salford University in Manchester visited the University of Oslo, offering a guest lecture at the Department of Musicology. This meeting established a contact which has been highly inspirational for me in the course of my writing process. Because of a travel grant provided by the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages, I had the opportunity to go abroad for research purposes. My visit to Salford University was most rewarding, providing me with a lot of new input. I am greatly indebted to Sheila Whiteley for organising such an interesting program for me there, as well as making me feel most welcome.

Writing this thesis would have been a 'lonely road' if it wasn't for the rewarding contact with a number of people throughout the process, for which I am grateful. In particular, there are two persons I would like to thank, whose contributions have influenced my work to a great extent. First, I wish to express my thanks to my supervisor, Kay Wikberg. His useful advice and constructive feedback have influenced my work from the very beginning. I have learned a lot about the fascinating field of metaphors thanks to his interesting seminars and knowledgeable comments to my work. Additionally, I owe a lot to Professor Sheila Whiteley, who has inspired me greatly in the course of my writing process through her generosity and positive support. Her valuable insight in the field of popular music and her thoughtful comments to my analyses influenced my work to a great extent. I am grateful for her helpful guidance as my co-supervisor in the final and crucial part of the process.

The administration at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European Languages also deserve my gratitude for their kind assistance in the process of getting a co-supervisor as well as the travel grant making my trip to Salford possible. I wish to thank Stan Hawkins for his encouragement and for pointing me in the direction of relevant literature, and Jeanette Rhedding-Jones for her useful advice on methods of research. I also want to thank Daniel Sonenberg for his kind generosity in sending me his conference paper as well as his whole doctoral dissertation on Joni Mitchell, and Jim Leblanc and Yngvar Steinholt for sending me their IASPM conference papers via e-mail. Further, I want to thank the participants in the Joni Mitchell Discussion List (JMDL) for thought-provoking debates, contributing with answers to my questions, and helping me expand my knowledge.

I am grateful for the help and encouragement I have received from family and friends. Furthermore, I have appreciated the support from fellow students on the 8th floor in Niels Treschow's building, at the Department of Literature, Area Studies and European

Languages. In particular, I wish to express my thanks to my closest family, for backing me up and encouraging me along the way. My deep-felt gratitude goes to my father Berge Espeland for his encouraging interest, his indispensable presence as a ‘consultant of music’ and for reading my chapters.

I wish to thank my friend in Joni Mitchell, Oddmund Kårevik, for encouragement, interesting conversations, and a rewarding exchange of Mitchell-related articles. I am also grateful to Professor Halvor Eifring for reading and commenting on my first draft as well as an inspiring discussion with helpful suggestions. Last, but not least, I want to thank Jon Mikkel Broch Ålvik for intriguing discussions, helpful input and proof reading.

Table of contents

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	1
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
<i>Blue</i> , honesty and singer-songwriters.....	3
Background – Joni Mitchell	6
A model for female experience – a feminist in all but name.....	7
Outline of thesis.....	8
CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	9
The language of popular songs.....	9
Conceptual metaphor.....	15
Poetic use of metaphors	16
Music as metaphor	19
Musical features: voice, melody and harmony	22
Voice.....	22
Melody.....	26
Harmony	30
Interpretive analysis	33
CHAPTER 3: INTRODUCTION TO INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS.....	38
Travel metaphors in Joni Mitchell's songs	38
Joni Mitchell's personal situation around 1970.....	44
Travel and self-exploration	47
Blue as colour, instability and state of mind	49
CHAPTER 4: INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF 'BLUE'	51
CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF 'A CASE OF YOU'	65
Earlier version of 'A Case of You'	83
CHAPTER 6: INTERPRETIVE ANALYSIS OF 'RIVER'	89
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION	107

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY.....	112
APPENDICES	119

Chapter 1: Introduction

'I'd say that I was born with a gift of metaphor—which you can translate into any of the arts quite nicely—and a love of color: color for the eyes, color for the ears', Joni Mitchell told *Vanity Fair*'s Bill Flanagan in 1997.¹ This figurative utterance captures some of the essence of my perspective on her songs in this thesis. More specifically, my interpretive analysis raises questions concerning the extent to which a conceptual metaphor can function as a tool for detecting meaning in a song. Focussing on Mitchell's 1971 album, *Blue*, my analysis explores the ways in which prevalent themes are illuminated and communicated through conceptual metaphors. My multi-modal approach fuses two different ways of making meaning, intrinsic to song, namely words and music.

Mitchell's identification of metaphor as central to her creativity shows how she, as a painter, musician, composer and singer, perceives the concept of metaphor as applicable to 'any of the arts'. Her 'gift of metaphor' is visible in her wording, and her occupation as a painter is revealed through her discourse of music, where she uses colour as a metaphor. Her comment also echoes what her influential school teacher, Arthur Kratzman, told the young Mitchell: 'If you can paint with a brush, you can paint with words' (quoted in Smith 2004: 9). Also, she speaks in similar terms of the creative yearnings that flickered through her as a child during piano lessons: 'From the beginning I really wanted to mess around and create, find the colours the piano had buried in it' (ibid.: 8).

In *color for the eye, color for the ear*, Mitchell makes use of metonymy referring to the *eyes* for the visual sense and the *ears* for the auditory sense. As the imagery of her songs is highly visual and to a certain extent drenched with colour, one might interpret *for the eye* as referring to the literary dimension of her art songs.² As a colour in fluid form, paint is a liquid that invites the activation of prevalent imagery, and, as I will show, there is a semantic field related to fluids running through the album. The image of the ocean in the song 'Blue', for example, matches this stream of metaphors, and its colour links up with the title of the album. Also, liquids like blood, wine, water and ink occur in the lyrics I have selected. The image of

¹ Bill Flanagan, 'Lady of the Canyon', *Vanity Fair*, June 1997.

² *Art song* is a term often used to describe Mitchell's songs, both by scholars and the popular press. Mitchell says she prefers this term rather than to be called a *singer-songwriter*: 'Later, they called it (folk music) singer-songwriters. Or art-songs, which I liked best' (Cameron Crowe, 'The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, 26 July, 1979). It is suggested that songs can be perceived as works of art. Consequently, I see *art song* as a suitable term for Mitchell's music. (Indeed, the notion of art can be discussed further, in connection with high:low culture (see p. 12). However, due to the limited extent of this thesis, I have not included such a discussion.)

travel is also of major importance and relates to a specific type of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. Travel seems to suggest a restless soul longing for independence and freedom, albeit vacillating with Mitchell's conflicting desire to settle for enduring love. The tensions inherent in such a state, torn between the contrasting opposites of STABILITY/ INSTABILITY and RELATIONAL INTIMACY/ INDEPENDENCE, seem to provoke an inner disruption and a feeling of melancholy or blueness that pervades the album. Nevertheless, there are joyous moments, and these serve to establish a duality of emotion.³

These polarities of contrasting opposites are not only prevalent in her lyrics. The colour wash Mitchell provides for our ears through her voice, her melodies and her harmonies seems to point in the direction of the themes I have just mentioned. Even though blue is the most permeating colour on the album, both literally and metaphorically, Mitchell enlivens her images by the use of other colours such as green, red and black. I have selected three songs from the album: 'Blue', 'A Case of You' and 'River'. I hope these will give a representative idea of important aspects of Mitchell's metaphorical vocabulary, as expressed in both words and music.

I consider it appropriate to briefly outline the thinking behind my analysis. As Sheila Whiteley observes,

[t]raditionally, music has been analysed as an abstract form with limited reference to its function and role in society. For scholars of popular music, however, any grasp of musical understanding derives from identifying the specific localities in which the music is conceived and consumed. To theorise popular music, it is thus necessary to identify the interrelationships between musical sounds, lyrical texts and visual narratives... and how they produce and foreground different sensibilities [...]. What is crucial to any musicological investigation are not simple, or for that matter, complex transcription of the musical content of a song, nor mere isolated semiotic analyses, but rather fresh analytical explorations of the ways in which musical discourses work in tandem with lyrics, performance styles (and) gendered identities (1997: xiv, xvi).

Whiteley would also see popular musicology as an interdisciplinary field and, as such, there is no fixed methodological approach for the analysis of popular songs. Consequently, I have formulated my own analytical approach, drawing largely on conceptual metaphor theory derived from the field of cognitive linguistics. The songs selected are analysed from the viewpoint of linguistics and musicology simultaneously, based on the hypothesis that lyrics and music are interwoven and mutually interdependent. Strictly using a linguistic perspective would not have been a satisfactory solution, and neither would a method focusing solely on the musical features. Using conceptual metaphor as a tool, I describe how musical and literary

³ Smith (2004: 48-49) particularly insists on the positive perspective of the album.

devices contribute to communicating the message of a song as a coherent meaning system. In spite of this multimodal perspective, I am conscious of the fact that there is no such thing as 'one deeper meaning' in the songs. Meaning is always negotiable, dependent on the context and determined by the subjective interpretation of the analyst.

Blue, honesty and singer-songwriters

Joni Mitchell released *Blue* in June 1971. The album has been described as the 'incandescent moment [of her career] against which all others are compared' and most often cited as her 'seminal work' (quoted in Sonenberg 2003: 71). In an interview with Daniel Levitin in *Grammy Magazine*, 1997, Mitchell states that the album was 'shockingly intimate for the time', emphasising its candid qualities: 'it's extraordinarily emotionally honest...' (2000: 182f). *Blue* received appraisal for its honesty, its wide emotional spectrum and extraordinary singer-songwriter craft, in accordance with the ideal of authenticity of the period. In fact, songwriter Kris Kristofferson contends that '*Blue* turned forever on the head what a singer-songwriter should be'.⁴

A contemporary review in *Rolling Stone* reads: 'on *Blue* she has matched her popular music skills with the purity and honesty of what was once called folk music and through the blend she has given us some of the most beautiful moments in recent popular music'.⁵ This seems in line with *Sounds*' appraisal of the album: 'You feel that each composition is a piece of the artist herself and that each new segment is exactly true to life, nothing however painful or personal has been left out – complete honesty in fact'.⁶ *Shockingly intimate* and *extraordinarily emotionally honest* are phrases Mitchell herself uses to describe her album. Her use of adverbs like *shockingly* and *extraordinarily* are striking and perhaps not overstated. They largely match the observations of the *Rolling Stone* and *Sounds* critics, who highlight the album's 'purity' and 'complete honesty'. This creed of honesty needs further clarification, and can be linked with the singer-songwriter movement and the so-termed authenticity of rock itself.⁷

During the sixties, there was a shift in the production and nature of popular songs. Having previously been fabricated by professional songwriters and performed by other artists,

⁴ An interview in the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003).

⁵ Timothy Crouse, 'Blue', *Rolling Stone*, 5 August, 1971.

⁶ Billy Walker, 'Beautifully Blue Joni Mitchell', *Sounds*, 3 July, 1971.

⁷ According to Stan Hawkins, rock 'reached its height as an authentic mode of expression' in the early 1970s (2002: 2).

the songs were now often written and sung by the same person.⁸ Consequently, there was a shift in the properties of the songs as well: they were no longer intended for any artist to sing – they were now personalised and seen as an authentic expression of one individual.⁹ This new idiom of song-writing, performance and authenticity provided a specific space for closeness and intimacy. In connection with her analysis of Mitchell's 'Both Sides, Now', Whiteley mentions the presence of a 'sense of candour and honesty which resonates with the introspection of the late 1960s' (Whiteley 2000: 81). She also comments on the vocal features linked with folk rock authenticity: 'As such, the audience of folk became accustomed to voices which lacked polish, and where off-key singing, drawls, twangs, falsettos and an untrained personalised delivery signalled authenticity' (ibid.: 83). Mitchell's distinctive vocal style, marked by falsetto, extensive leaps and long notes, can certainly be seen as an example of this.

However, realism and authenticity are values dependent on conventions (Frith 2004: 194). 'Authenticity lies in a particular use of language, a particular treatment of narrative and imagery [and] a particular ideological position' (ibid.). It seems clear that the end of the sixties promoted such ideals of candour. Mitchell told *Melody Maker* in 1970:

[My songs] are honest and personal, and based on truth, but I exercise a writer's license to change details. Honesty is important to me. If I have any personal philosophy it is that I like the truth. I like to be straight with people, and them with me. But it is not easy to do this all the time, especially in this business where there is so much falsity.¹⁰

The dictum of intimacy and honesty is reflected in songs by other artists at the time: Carly Simon's 'We Have No Secrets' (1972), Graham Nash's 'Be Yourself' (1971) and Laura Nyro's 'You Don't Love Me When I Cry' (1969). Hence, at the time, there was a growing emphasis on individualism and self-expression, and this influenced women singer-songwriters in particular (Whiteley 2000: 75). Mitchell as a singer-songwriter¹¹ has in particular been referred to as 'confessional' and a 'diarist', mirroring the quest, or self-imposed demand, for truthfulness of expression.¹² This feature was particularly pertinent during the making of *Blue*.

⁸ See for instance Frith 2004: 187.

⁹ Here, I am grateful to Jon Mikkel Broch Ålvik for his useful comments.

¹⁰ Michael Watts, 'Glimpses of Joni', *Melody Maker*, 19 September, 1970.

¹¹ According to Richie Unterberger, the term *singer-songwriter* can be used as a subcategory of folk-rock. He comments on the application of the term, commonly used 'to refer to performers, the bumper crop of them from the late '60s and '70s, who recorded personal and poetic songs that could have been (and sometimes were) performed solo on guitar, harmonica, and piano' (2003: 80). Hence, he uses *singer-songwriter* to refer to a group of artists at a certain time, which is how I will apply the term in this thesis.

¹² A number of authors speak of Mitchell in these terms, for instance O'Brien (2000: 141) and Smith (2004).

Faced with her 'disproportionate' success and sudden leap into stardom around 1970, Mitchell thought:

"You don't even know who I am. You want to worship me?" That's why I became a confessional poet. I thought, "You better know who you're applauding up here." It was a compulsion to be honest with my audience.¹³

As I will explain in a later chapter (p. 46), Mitchell was influenced by Nietzsche and his encouragement to 'write in one's own blood'. Consequently, her self-imposed demand for honesty has philosophical as well as sociological roots.

In spite of her link with the singer-songwriter movement of the late 1960s, it seems impossible to put the music of Joni Mitchell into one category of style. In the course of her musical career, Mitchell has gone through a wide range of transitions, expanding her musical territory, crossing boundaries of genre and style. For most people, she is known as a singer-songwriter linked with the genre of folk-rock and aligned with artists such as Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. This is perhaps because her early work is most known to people, and it was in the early to mid 1970s that she was at the peak of her musical career. However, Mitchell says she was a folk singer only for a couple of years, before she started recording. In an interview with Daniel Levitin for *Grammy Magazine*, she explains:

The thing is, what I was doing was not really folk music, it just looked like it superficially because it was a girl with a guitar. But if you actually listened to the music – the musical content was really coming out of a pop base in a certain way and also a classical base in another way.¹⁴

Considering Mitchell's innovative compositional style, devices like her distinct harmonic vocabulary,¹⁵ the complexity of her imagery and her particular vocal performance, it seems evident that her complex style is irreconcilable with the simplicity of folk. Moreover, it seems to have a lot in common with jazz, particularly her post-*Blue* material. However, certain features of folk-rock are maintained in her musical idiom of the early 1970s, such as the previously mentioned bid for honesty and authenticity and deeply personalised form of expression connected with singer-songwriters.

¹³ Cameron Crowe, 'The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, 26 July, 1979.

¹⁴ Daniel Levitin, 'A Conversation with Joni Mitchell 1. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman', *Grammy Magazine*, March 1997.

¹⁵ See, for instance, Sonenberg (2003) and Whitesell (2002).

Background - Joni Mitchell

Joni Mitchell was born in Fort Macleod, Canada on 7 November, 1943.¹⁶ Her birth name was Roberta Joan Anderson. Growing up on the Canadian prairie has influenced her work to a notable extent. Her bout of polio at the age of nine made her develop a rich inner world, a natural consequence of the fact that she had to spend a lot of time on her own. Consequently, she started singing and painting. Her growing interests in the visual arts lead to her matriculation at Alberta College of Art, Calgary, in 1963, but she subsequently abandoned her education in order to become a folk singer. With the help of an instruction record, Mitchell taught herself how to play the guitar, and she rapidly invented her own playing technique and later tunings due to her weak left hand caused by polio. She soon started to perform in coffee houses in Calgary. At this time, Mitchell fell pregnant and felt compelled to give her baby girl up for adoption. In Toronto she met folk singer Chuck Mitchell, to whom she was promptly married in 1965. Mitchell moved to Detroit and formed a duo with her husband, a constellation that ended after a short while along with their marriage. She was soon to experience success as a songwriter, and her songs were performed by artists such as Judy Collins, Tom Rush and Buffy St. Marie.

In 1967, Joni Mitchell moved to New York where there was a bigger music scene. Her short, romantic liaison with Leonard Cohen inspired her song-writing: 'he showed me how to plumb the depths of my own experience', Mitchell recalls (quoted in O'Brien 2002: 68). In 1968, she moved to Laurel Canyon outside Los Angeles. The same year, she finally attained a recording contract with Warner-Reprise, and *Song to a Seagull* was released in 1968 with the help of producer and then-boyfriend David Crosby. Since then, Mitchell has been a creative and productive force, capable of releasing more than twenty records in the course of less than four decades. *Clouds* (1969) and *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970) confirmed Mitchell's position as an influential singer-songwriter. However, it was her fourth album, *Blue*, that became 'the benchmark for all that came before and after' (ibid.: 142). In her later works, Mitchell no longer revealed herself quite so poignantly vulnerable. Her stylistic journey,¹⁷ detectable in the albums to come, shows a fearless individual, uncompromisingly following her artistic muse, refusing to settle within the confinements of one genre. Moreover, she fuses elements from jazz, folk, world music, pop and new wave, creating a diversified

¹⁶ This brief biography section is based on Karen O'Brien's biography *Shadows and Light* (2002), the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003) as well as David Sonenberg (2003: 3-8).

¹⁷ See Sonenberg 2003: 8-10.

selection of albums that have served to inspire artists as varied as Seal, Prince, Morrissey, Tori Amos and k.d. lang.

A model for female experience - a feminist in all but name

Even though numerous musicians express that they are greatly indebted to Joni Mitchell, it is evident that she has served as a source of influence not only because of her creative capacity and musical skills. Due to the choices she has made concerning how to live her life, as well as the personas portrayed in her songs, she has served as a role model for many women. She has followed her 'inner muse' over settling down, without feeling constrained or compromised by domestic duties.¹⁸ Singer-songwriter Patti Witten remembers buying *Blue* in her early teens, and the impact the album had on her:

To my 13-year old sensibilities, the lyrics gave me to understand that as a grown up lady it was acceptable and meaningful to be candid about one's romantic relationships... [I learned that] multiple relationships are ok; leaving your man for your own freedom is ok; still loving him, desiring him was ok; being honest about it is ok; and more. It was not shocking; it was revolutionary, in a quiet, one-on-one kind of way.¹⁹

In *Women and Popular Music* (2000), Whiteley states that it was Mitchell's 'particular musicality and personal insights that made her significant in forging a new world of possibilities for women' (78). Also, her autonomy²⁰ and the ardent artistic independence she exercised in the course of her career are particularly noticeable. Whiteley emphasises how Mitchell 'offered a model of female experience in coping with the realities of working in a male-dominated music industry' (ibid.). Sonenberg describes her merits: 'Her work as a composer, lyricist, singer, guitarist, pianist, producer and arranger has set a standard that few in the world of pop music have reached, let alone maintained' (iv). In spite of her influence, Mitchell never called herself a feminist. Referring to Mitchell as '[f]eminist in all but name' (165), Karen O'Brien (2002) observes:

For a woman who has always disavowed any link with feminism, Mitchell would have been a powerful asset to the movement in the 70s if she could only have overcome her resistance to that F word. She showed herself willing and able to write deeply insightful works on the female condition, on the dynamics of relationships where the power is immensely weighted towards the man's superior financial status and the woman's dependence on it, and on the real or imagined victimhood of many women and their capacity to escape that (164f).

¹⁸ See my analysis of 'Blue' on p. 56.

¹⁹ From an e-mail to the Joni Mitchell Discussion List (JMDL) on 6 December 2005.

²⁰ See O'Brien 2000: 70, 79.

As visible in Mitchell's early albums, she was certainly a woman questioning her own identity at the time. This theme of self-exploration is notably present in *Blue*. Problematising who she was represented a big issue in the early seventies. Due to her numerous liaisons with men, she was also accused of being promiscuous, something that is less likely to have happened in contemporary Western society. A female musician on the road, a typically male territory, also represented a challenge. Travelling on her own with no fixed timetable was not a safe way of life, and there were not many female role models. Such a rough lifestyle was what eventually promoted the death of Janis Joplin in 1972.²¹ Hence, *Blue* bears testimony to both Mitchell's self-exploratory project and her desire to travel, giving a female voice to the tensions inherent in the dilemma of searching for long-lasting love while craving independence and freedom.

Outline of thesis

This thesis is concerned with analysing some of the main themes in Mitchell's 1971 album *Blue*, using conceptual metaphor as a tool for detecting such meanings. The songs chosen for examination are 'Blue', 'A Case of You' and 'River'. These songs are expected to provide a rich source of metaphors that can be related to other songs by Mitchell, and thus supply supportive intertextual analysis for my own interpretation. I will particularly emphasise how certain emotions are conveyed in these songs through the use of metaphors, vocal performance, melody and harmonic clothing.

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical framework, commenting on the language of popular songs, conceptual metaphor and devices that can be read as musical metaphors for emotion, namely voice, melody and harmony. This section on music may appear quite technical for anybody who is not familiar with the notation and the terminology. The approach used is multimodal, which requires basic insights into two different domains, i.e. metaphor and music. Chapter 3 introduces the interpretive analyses, giving a general presentation of metaphors of travel in Joni Mitchell's songs and providing background information concerning her personal situation around 1970. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 deal with the actual analysis of the songs, applying the methods described in the theory section. Looking for pertinent features, I will attempt to interpret both musical and verbal elements of the songs, examining to what extent my findings match with main themes on the album. The final chapter provides a summary of my findings and an evaluation of my approach.

²¹ I am grateful to Sheila Whiteley for these interesting observations during my visit to Salford University in November 2005.

Chapter 2: Theoretical framework

This chapter provides an outline of the theoretical framework used in my interpretive analysis. The methods applied aim to illuminate important aspects of the songs chosen for analysis, and the theoretical components are illustrated with relevant examples. Using an overall metaphorical perspective, my objective is to detect what I consider to be the pertinent linguistic and musical devices which contribute towards deeper levels of meaning within the selected art-songs. First, I will comment on the language of popular songs and discuss how song lyrics can be related to poetry, prose and speech acts. Second, I will explain the theory of conceptual metaphor, which will be the most important analytic tool for my examination of Mitchell's songs. The poetic use of metaphor will also be a relevant theme here, as research has shown that her songs are pervaded by both everyday and literary metaphor. It is also suggested that music may sometimes serve as a metaphor enhancing important themes on the album. I therefore treat various sonic elements as musical metaphors, emphasising how chord progressions, vocal features and melodic movements serve to illustrate, inflect or even alter the meaning of the songs. As I consider harmony, melody and voice crucial meaning-carrying devices, these aspects are particularly highlighted when interpreting the songs. All in all, these linguistic and musical devices are important because they point in the same direction thematically, i.e. they seem to communicate an inner disruption and aspects like INSTABILITY, RESTLESSNESS and ESCAPISM.

The language of popular songs

The ways in which language is used within popular songs raises certain questions concerning the listener/analyst's expectations. In particular, problems arise concerning the lyric's relationship to poetry or prose, and whether the performance of the text can function as a speech act. It is evident, for example, that when a written text is sung, the words, and their potential for semiosis, or meaning-making, changes. As a consequence, when a song's verbalised content is considered as distinct from the musical text, vital aspects of a song's meaning-carrying potential is lost. An appropriate analogy to song words in print versus performed lyrics is perhaps that of the spoken and the written word. It has been argued that as much as eighty per cent of a speaker's message is transmitted through the non-verbal part of the communication. For instance, intonation, body language and voice quality contribute to

the meaning of a speech act. Singing a text thus adds important meaning-carrying dimensions to words, realised through melody, voice quality, dynamics, tempo and rhythm.

In 'Why do songs have words?', Simon Frith states that 'singers use non-verbal as well as verbal devices to make their points – emphases, sighs, hesitations, changes of tone; lyrics involve pleas, sneers and commands as well as statements and messages and stories' (2004: 203). Hence, a singer is able to expand the conventional confines of expression provided by the act of speaking. The words are elevated and intensified in a way, and singing is perceived as a performance (2002: 172). A different form of attention is drawn to the words and to the singer. Frith sums up the importance of what we hear when someone sings, drawing particular attention to the way in which a song provides sound structures as signs of emotion:

In songs, words are the sign of a voice. A song is always a performance and song words are always spoken out, heard in someone's accent. Songs are more like plays than poems; song words work as speech and speech acts, bearing meaning not just semantically, but also as structures of sound that are direct signs of emotion and marks of character (2004: 203).

Frith suggests two strategies which are relevant to examining *meaning* in lyrics. The first concerns 'treating songs as poems, literary objects to be analyzed entirely separately from music'; the second as 'speech acts, words to be analyzed in performance' (2002: 158). Even though I believe lyrics are characterised by both aspects mentioned, I would argue that it would be misleading to treat song lyrics as poems, separated from their musical meaning, at least if one has the intention of understanding the meaning of a song as a whole. This is why I have chosen to undertake a multi-modal qualitative interpretation of the songs selected.

Scholars of both sociology and popular music have commented on the differences and similarities between poetry and song lyrics. Dai Griffiths, a popular musicologist, outlines some of the problematic areas of the interdisciplinary field of pop lyrics. Varying with respect to the scholar's original field of study, pop lyrics are neglected, treated as poetry¹ or seen as an uncomplicated and straightforward transmission of a cultural message that can be objectively identified (2003: 39-42). He suggests that we should think of song lyrics as texts containing traits from both poetry and prose. This seems to be in accordance with Frith, who observes that there is 'a continuity between poetry and song, rather than a clear division' (2002: 178). I would like to add that I believe that the degree of poetic language depends on

¹ For instance, Griffiths refers to Day (1988), whose studies of Dylan were based on his lyrics *in print*. In spite of what seems a limited perspective on Dylan's works of art as a whole, Day is bold enough to say that 'words are not merely a part but the central part of multi-dimensional art' (2003: 42).

the genre: certain pop music styles seem more pervaded by poetic literary devices than others.² Genres such as folk-rock and the singer-songwriter tradition are expected to be particularly influenced by poetic language, an observation which is borne out in my analysis of Mitchell's musical output.

It is suggested that the degree of poetic language can vary within the career of a single artist. In particular, the language in the songs from Mitchell's two first albums is sometimes referred to as a 'flowery phase',³ clearly influenced by her poems, for example the phrase *crimson crystal beads to beckon* from 'Chelsea Morning'. Mitchell's school teacher, Arthur Kratzman, urged the girl to 'paint with words'. Consequently, Mitchell wrote poetry. For instance, at sixteen, she wrote a poem called 'The Fishbowl', which turned out to become a prophecy of her own ascent into stardom:


*The fishbowl is a world reversed
Where fishermen with hooks
That dangle from the bottom up
Reel down their catch on gilded bait
Without a fight⁴*

Such a poetic style is noticeable in 'Tin Angel' from *Clouds* (1969), Mitchell's second album:

*Dark with darker moods is he
Not a golden Prince who's come
Through columbines and wizardry
To talk of castles in the sun*

Later in her career, on *Blue*, for instance, Mitchell sometimes uses a more colloquial language, as in this example from 'River': *But it don't snow here, it stays pretty green.*

It is thus argued that as a product of creative writing, songs may contain diversified types of language, deriving from the realm of poetry, prose and everyday language. The varying degree of poetic character in the language of popular songs can be illustrated through the following cline:

poetry/poetic language  **prose/everyday language**

As an example of poetic language in Mitchell's songs, I would like to mention the phrase *you're in my blood like holy wine* from 'A Case of You', containing, as I will later explain, a

² This seems to match with Brackett's observations: 'connotations of song lyrics are affected by conventions and the genres and styles to which these conventions refer' (Brackett 2000: 30).

³ This phrase was used on the Joni Mitchell Discussion List 22 April 2004 and 6 December 2005.

⁴ Hoskyns 2000: 166.

complex metaphorical blend. In essence, it is argued that the phrase is not likely to have been uttered in a conversation. In the same song, there are sentences that seem purely colloquial: *Where's that at? If you want me I'll be in the bar*. 'River' provides further examples of a mixture of colloquial and poetic language. Here, Mitchell seems to have chosen her words from an everyday language vocabulary (the vernacular), albeit poeticising her lyrics with a regular pattern of alliteration, rhyme, rhythm: *I'm so hard to handle/ I'm selfish and I'm sad/ Now I've gone and lost the best baby/ That I ever had*.

What makes poetic language different from everyday or prosaic language? Speaking of poetics in general, Leech raises three important points: Firstly, poetic language can be characterised by deviation of rules of language in many different ways; secondly, the creative writer may exercise greater freedom than other users of language; and thirdly, the characteristics of literary language derive from everyday language (1969: 6). His observations are similar to those of Roland Barthes, who writes: 'song texts provide a framework for permissive language behaviour' (quoted in Frith 2002: 169).

The language of poetry is often expected to be richer, more original, providing more resistance than the verbal constellations used in popular songs. While this may be related to the distinctions evident in discussions concerning high or elite culture and a majority or mass culture,⁵ it is evident that the latter category of texts often provides a simpler and more accessible form of expression, particularly marked by colloquialisms and extensive use of repetition at various levels. Words can be repeated, as well as whole sentences and paragraphs, conventionally referred to as refrains. Musically, there can be rhythmic, melodic and harmonic repetition matching the development in the lyrics. An example of such repetition can be found in 'All I Want', the opening lines of *Blue*: [...] *travelling, travelling, travelling, travelling*, where the verbal and melodic repetition serve to illustrate the monotony of a journey. 'A Case of You' contains repetition of a whole sentence: *And I would still be on my feet/ Oh I would still be on my feet*, perhaps to make the statement stronger. At the end of

⁵ The distinction of high and low culture is further discussed by Bakhtin (1991: 138-141). See also Middleton (1990: 34-45 and 2000: 1-4). This has certainly been an issue when it comes to taking popular music seriously, and relates to the so-called C19 debates on high/low culture where the former was seen as serious, educational, the latter is insignificant or, indeed, having an adverse effect on the listener, an issue also prevalent in the Frankfurt School. The debate is also relevant to the Americanisation of culture, often related to mass culture. The question arises whether an increased degree of poetical language makes popular music more 'worthy'. But with the advent of postmodernism, the distinctions between high and low culture seem less relevant today. (I am grateful to Sheila Whiteley for her input here.) Joni Mitchell seems to identify with high culture, listing classical composers as influences and Miles Davis and Picasso as role models. Interestingly, she compares herself to Mozart and Beethoven ('did Beethoven have a producer? Did Mozart?': Camille Paglia, 'The Trailblazer Interview', *Interview*, August 2005).

'River', the whole first verse is repeated, perhaps to indicate a circle, that there is no solution to her wish to escape.

Often in both songs and poems, rhyme contributes to making such regular patterns with elements of formal repetition. Griffiths emphasises rhyme as 'so central in pop music', adding that it is 'surely a surprise that there is little systematic discussion' (2003: 50). For instance, in 'River', the lyrics follow a certain pattern, with a regular amount of syllables (6-5-6-8). Mitchell also uses rhyming following an ABCB pattern in the verses. Few of her songs are as regular as this.

Alliteration is also a common trait of the language of popular songs, sometimes as a means of beautifying constellations of sounds. *Acid, booze and ass, needles, guns and grass* is a phrase from 'Blue' that serves as an example of both rhyming and alliteration. Importantly, rhyming and alliteration also make the song lyrics easier to remember. In concert, artists normally do not have the lyrics in written form with them, and they have to rely on their memory in order to sing them. There are thus many interesting features of the language of popular songs worthy of systematic investigation.⁶ Even though these are important to take note of, I have chosen my main focus to be metaphor as I see this aspect as particularly relevant when it comes to discovering layers of meaning.

Interestingly, Unterberger mentions the role of folk-rock in the development of song lyrics: 'folk rock raised the bar for popular song lyrics to a new, higher level. As a cumulative result, rock 'n' roll lyrics were themselves starting to be taken as poetry on their own terms' (2003: 122). Consequently, certain genres generate particular expectations when it comes to the poetic quality of song lyrics. Frith, writing some fifteen years earlier, agrees, identifying Dylan with the creation of poetic lyrics in pop music:

Dylan is the poet because his images are personal and obscure rather than direct or commonplace – his words are not plain, and the rock singer/songwriters who emerged from folk clubs in the 1960s followed his seminal example, drawing words from classic balladry, from the beat poets, from 150 years of Bohemian romantic verse. (2004: 200)

From 1964, Dylan distanced himself from the social conscience of folk and protest singers. Instead of serving as a spokesman for the people, he turned to representing himself. Drawing on his lived experience and inner world, Dylan created his new and personalised songs (Skårberg 1997: 33).⁷ As Whiteley points out, '[w]hat's interesting here is the shift in mode of

⁶ For further reading on this topic, see Griffith 2003.

⁷ I am grateful to Jon Mikkell Broch Ålvik for his input here.

address from 'we' to 'I'. This was to influence John Lennon (e.g. 'I Am the Walrus') and the shift in [The] Beatles' songs towards a more poetic frame of lyric writing'.⁸

Joni Mitchell has also openly acknowledged Dylan's influence. Listening to his song 'Positively 4th Street' from 1965 apparently made a great impression on her, and she later commented that she felt that the pop song had 'grown up' (Griffiths 2003: 41). In 1979 she told Cameron Crowe: 'It wasn't until Dylan began to write poetic songs that it occurred to me you could actually sing those poems'.⁹ Interestingly, she calls herself a 'confessional poet' in the same interview, only to distance herself from both terms later. Frith concludes: 'This was to suggest a new criterion of lyrical realism – truth-to-personal-experience or truth-to-feeling, a truth measured by the private use of words, the self-conscious use of language' (2004: 200). This new criterion of lyrical realism was something Mitchell seemed to integrate into her writing style. In the documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003), she says she liked 'the idea of the personal narrative', a type of story-telling that is highly significant in her own songs.

Verbal language is just one of such communicative devices a singer makes use of in order to present her identity through a personal narrative. Frith also contends that 'the use of language in pop songs has as much to do with establishing the communicative situation as with communicating, and more to do with articulating a feeling than explaining it' (2002: 168). I would argue that metaphors function in a similar way when it comes to the communication of certain states of mind. As I will explain later, mental images, drawing on external events or natural forces, can sometimes make confusing emotional states more clear, giving them a linguistic expression.

While poetry is, to a great extent, pervaded by symbols and metaphors, so exhibiting a high density of figurative language, and while popular songs are generally more accessible and straightforward, Mitchell's use of language is marked by both poetic and colloquial language, so effecting what might be termed a vernacular poetic. In effect, the use of everyday, poetic and compositional metaphors in her art songs, combined with an enhanced musical context which serves to 'illustrate' the verbal content, provides a personalised musical expression of her various emotional states. As such, the conceptual metaphor is not

⁸ In an e-mail dated 14 April 2004.

⁹ Cameron Crowe, 'The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, 26 July, 1979. Also, nearly two decades later, she distanced herself from this 'confessionality' she was linked with: 'I don't think of myself as confessional. That's a name that was put on me' (Morrissey, 'Melancholy Meets the Infinite Sadness', *Rolling Stone*, 6 March, 1997). In a different article a year earlier, Mitchell says she prefers the term 'penitence of spirit' instead of 'confessional' (Frank Jump, 'Joni Mitchell', *New York Times*, 1 December, 1996). Unterberger speaks of 'confessional songwriters such as Mitchell' (2003: 212). Mitchell later also distanced herself from the notion of poet: 'Just don't call her a poet' (Ethan Brown, 'Influences: Joni Mitchell', *New York Magazine*, 9 May 2005).

simply confined to a poetic discourse, but is rather a vital aspect of both language types: the poetic and the vernacular/colloquial, a point I will explain in more detail later.

Conceptual metaphor

'The essence of metaphor is', according to Lakoff & Johnson, 'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another' (1980: 5). Metaphor is understood as a cognitive concept forming the basis of linguistic expressions. Metaphor is a matter of thought, not of language, as claimed by George Lakoff (1993). Rooted in human ideology and everyday experience, metaphor influences the way we think about things. As competent users of language, we naturally transfer knowledge about one field, or conceptual domain, onto another conceptual domain, in order to understand it better (Kövecses 2002: 4). When one conceptual domain, a source domain, is understood in terms of another conceptual domain, the target domain, there is evidence of conceptual metaphor. These conceptual metaphors give birth to various metaphorical expressions. The conceptual metaphor TIME IS MONEY is thus realised through the metaphorical expression *waste of time*. We activate our knowledge about the concept of money to understand better the concept of time. Typically, source domains are more based on experience than target domains. It is quite common that conceptual metaphor helps us understand something abstract in terms of something concrete and experientially basic. In everyday language, people may use the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY as a basis for phrases like *we reached a dead-end street in our relationship* or *look, how far we've come*. The concept of something concrete and experientially basic (JOURNEY – source domain) is used to understand something abstract (LOVE – target domain).

Lakoff uses the term MAPPING to describe a set of correspondences from the source domain to the target domain. Certain features are mapped on to the target domain, from the source domain, so that we may activate our preliminary knowledge, or so-called image schemas, of one semantic field in order to understand a different field. He mentions a set of correspondences belonging to THE LOVE-AS-JOURNEY MAPPING, where the lovers correspond to travellers, the love relationship corresponds to the vehicle and the lovers' common goals correspond to their common destinations on the journey (1993: 207). As an example, I can give a brief preview of my analysis of the metaphors in Joni Mitchell's song 'Blue', where the concept of love is compared to a more specific journey, namely a voyage at sea: *crown and anchor me, or let me sail away*. As listeners, we are invited to activate our knowledge of seafaring and map it on to the domain of love. The sailors correspond to lovers; the ship

corresponds to the love relationship,¹⁰ or even lovers; anchoring implies settling down. This is an example of how a conceptual metaphor, prevalent in our everyday language of love, can give birth to original and poetic metaphors.


Peter Crisp mentions the need for a ready-made system of basic metaphors. He contends that cognitive semanticists like Johnson, Lakoff, Turner and Kövecses have shown that 'such a system underlies both conventional metaphorical expressions and much original use of metaphorical language' (2003: 101). In this thesis, I will show how Joni Mitchell applies both original and conventional metaphorical language in her songs, based on such an underlying system of metaphors. Since metaphors are rooted in our physical everyday experience, it is possible to derive a general range of basic metaphors applicable for the examination of various instances of metaphorical language in use.

Poetic use of metaphors

As I have already explained, song lyrics may bear the characteristics of both poetry and prose. As such, the question is raised as to how and in what ways the poetic use of metaphors differs from the everyday use of metaphors. Kövecses contends that 'original, creative *literary metaphors* (...) are typically less clear but richer in meaning than either everyday metaphors or metaphors in science' (2002: 43). Crisp states that there is 'psychological evidence that poetic metaphor is markedly unlike scientific metaphor, being both less systematic and more suggestive' (2003: 109). If this is taken as a basic premise, then it is interesting to see how they can be linked with primary metaphors.

Lakoff & Turner (1989) mention four various ways in which poetic thought, hence poetic metaphor, uses the 'mechanisms of everyday thought': extending, elaborating, questioning and composing. Extending involves making use of one conceptual metaphor, extending it and including elements that are not otherwise mapped. This is, for instance, what Mitchell does when she writes *crown and anchor me, or let me sail away*, extending the metaphor LOVE IS A JOURNEY to LOVE IS A VOYAGE AT SEA. Composing, combining several conceptual metaphors, will later be referred to as BLENDING: 'Its effect is to produce a richer and more complex set of metaphorical connections, which gives inferences beyond those that follow from each of the metaphors alone' (1989: 71). As I will show later, this is a technique Mitchell makes use of when creating her imagery.

¹⁰ See, for instance, my analysis of the early version of 'A Case of You', p. 84: *Just before our ship got lost.*

FIGURATIVE		LITERAL
<i>And we both get so blue</i>		<i>a blue TV screen light her eyes are blue</i>
<i>Or let me sail away</i>		<i>So I bought me a ticket/ I caught a plane to Spain</i>

Crisp's contention that 'activated metaphorical language without activated metaphorical concepts' is present in similes and linguistic metaphors, and by contrast, 'activated metaphorical concepts without metaphorical language' are prevalent in allegories

¹² Mitchell's extended mention of specific geographic locations also activates the metaphor GENERIC IS SPECIFIC (see Kövecses 2002: 39). In spite of Mitchell's diary-like specifications, her songs still communicate something more general, permitting her listeners to derive more general knowledge concerning *their* lives.

and symbols (2003: 106-107), is significant. This is illustrated through his example of how the metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING is activated in the opening scene of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* by the use of fog, symbolising the impenetrable British legal system. Even though fog naturally exists in Dickens's fictional world, it still activates the conceptual metaphor KNOWING IS SEEING and, by implication, NOT KNOWING IS NOT SEEING. A similar example can be found in 'River', where Mitchell's narrator, stuck in sunny California at Christmas time, literally wishes she had a frozen stream 'to skate away on'. In spite of this proposed literariness, *river* activates the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. One can even interpret this frozen stream as a symbol of suppressed emotions, with the movement of skating away as escapism. 'Pure' metaphors are literally false – for instance A RELATIONSHIP IS A SHIP. By contrast, *In the blue TV screen light* is literally true, as well as having another level of meaning, pointing in the direction of polysemy. Somehow, this phrase can also be interpreted as a figurative utterance.

SIMILES are like metaphors in the sense that they are also used in order to project properties from one domain to another domain. What makes similes distinct is their explicitness and marking (see Goatly 1997: 253). The features you want mapped onto the target domain from your source domain are explicitly indicated through a marker (*like* or *as*). Marking is a means of guiding the reader's understanding, avoiding ambiguity and being specific and precise in descriptions. Goatly explains that 'similes are often used restrictively to convey extra precision to meanings, since this is a major metaphorical function' (ibid.: 236). 'Linguistic metaphor and simile', Crisp states, 'are thus alternative ways of expressing conceptual (or image) metaphor linguistically' (2003: 106). *You're (in my blood) like holy wine* is a phrase from 'A Case of You' that can be used to illustrate the concept of similes. This phrase will be discussed in more detail in my analysis of the song.

Another common phenomenon of metaphorical use is BLENDING. Kövecses (2000: 228) mentions a network model that can be useful when the conceptual metaphor theory does not apply, when the metaphorical expressions detected do not fit with any of the conceptual metaphors in Lakoff & Johnson's system. This model consists of two or more input domains that make up a blended space, which is a conceptual blending of the two. This blended space is an imagined, impossible domain, from which one can derive a generic space, containing an 'abstract structure taken as applying to both input spaces' (ibid.: 230). Crisp refers to Lakoff & Turner (1989), who call the simultaneous combining of different metaphors 'metaphorical compositions', stating that this phenomenon is 'widely recognised as especially characteristic of poetic metaphor' (2003: 110). He uses the example *this surgeon is a butcher*, where the

two input spaces (*butcher* and *surgeon*) are merged into one imagined, temporary blended space. By the use of blending, the language user is capable of communicating the incompetence of the surgeon.¹³ As my analysis will show, I have discussed the phrase *You're in my blood like holy wine* according to the theory of blending.¹⁴

Making use of basic conceptual metaphors I will try to detect which metaphors and which metaphorical expressions are used in 'A Case of You', 'Blue' and 'River', and how their resonance reverberates throughout the songs contributing to the overall meaning of the lyrics. However, as I have previously indicated, it is important to bear in mind the importance of focusing on the *performance* of the lyrics, which is intrinsic to song, and not just narrowly focusing on the conceptual metaphors lying behind them. As such, I will explore the relationship between words and music in a song as a whole, using conceptual metaphor as a tool for my investigation.

Music as metaphor

Music has the ability to communicate feelings, to describe the otherwise indescribable, and in the course of my analyses, I have sometimes interpreted the musical context for the lyrics as a musical metaphor.¹⁵ Here, I would argue that Mitchell's way of using musical devices extends beyond creating certain moods; rather, her choice of melody movement, harmonic colouring and vocal style underline and reinforce the meaning of the lyrics. Moreover, these elements enhance core themes of the album.

Mitchell's melodies are freely fluctuating, her voice constantly making new, quavering streams, seemingly fluid-like with no fixed borders, much in line with the prevalent liquid-metaphor running through the album. The non-conformity expressed through her manner of breaking with standard forms of chord progressions, reluctance to settle within a single tonality, and her unusual vocal style can be interpreted as signs of independence, albeit with an indication of a sense of restlessness. This musical context can be read as a metaphor for a fluctuating and restless soul, a theme that seems to match Mitchell's imagery relating to liquids and travel, echoing prevalent themes of STABILITY/INSTABILITY and RELATIONAL

¹³ A useful figure showing the integration network of the surgeon as a butcher can be seen in Grady et al. 1999: 105.

¹⁴ For further reading on blending, see Grady et al. 1999.

¹⁵ Interestingly, a cognitive tool for describing music has been much needed, which is why conceptual metaphor is consistently used in discourse about music. Consider, for instance, how we speak of a *rising* and *falling* melody line. This is further discussed in Spitzer (2004), Snyder (2000) and Brackett (2000: 24-27).

INTIMACY/ INDEPENDENCE. I will look into how selected musical parameters can stand as metaphorical illustrations of certain main themes.

It is, perhaps, a truism to state that a song is a product of the composer and performer's decisions. Each of the choices made with respect to features such as melody, rhythm, instrumentation, vocals and metaphors have semiotic value. They are the results of options someone has made from resources available, in order to create meaning, to communicate something to listeners (Van Leeuwen 1999, 4f).¹⁶ As there is a considerable interplay of meanings both within Mitchell's music and other cultural artefacts, notions of INTERTEXTUALITY¹⁷ and DIALOGICS¹⁸ will provide insight. As Richard Middleton observes, 'meaning is always both socially and historically situated [...and it] works through dialogue – echoes, traces, contrasts, responses – both with previous discursive moments and, at the same time, with addressees real or imagined' (2000: 13).

[T]he concept of dialogic exchange provides a particular insight into intertextuality and how meaning in popular music is produced at many different levels. A textual analysis of lyrics and musical style provides one important methodological trajectory, but meaning is also produced through dialogue within the textures, voices and structures; between producers and addressees; between discourses, musical and other. (Whiteley 2005: 2)

It is then considered important to take into account such dialogic exchange in order to interpret popular music and investigate how meaning is negotiated.

Intertextuality may occur at various levels. For instance, the impact of 'River' partly relies on the intertextual activation of 'Jingle Bells', the evocation of Christmas contributing to feelings of empathy and nostalgia with the listener. In the course of my analyses, I have looked at the reoccurrence of certain images in Mitchell's lyrics, finding instances to support my interpretations. As such, I have shown a web of intertextual references in her songs. 'A Case of You', for example, with its biblical imagery, triggers the intertextual activation of the Holy Communion. As Michael Burke observes, '[t]his intertextual echo of other texts is just

¹⁶ Certainly, other features contribute to making meaning in a popular song. For instance, what Hawkins calls 'components of technical production: the mix, studio effects, the configurations of recording, and the polyphony of multi-tracking' (2002: 10) clearly influence what we hear and how we interpret a song.

¹⁷ Wales defines *intertextuality* as 'UTTERANCES/TEXTS in relation to other UTTERANCES/TEXTS', elaborating that 'even within a single text there can be, as it were, a continual 'dialogue' between the text given and other texts/utterances that exist outside it, literary and non-literary' (2001: 220f). Julia Kristeva introduced the term *intertextuality* in *Semeiotikè* (1969), discussing Bakhtin's notions of his dialogical principle. Referring to a discovery that Bakhtin was the first to introduce, Kristeva states that 'tout texte se construit comme mosaïque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte' (146): 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations, any text is the absorption and transformation of another text' (my translation).

¹⁸ According to Wales, Bakhtin's dialogical principle involves the philosophy that 'every utterance, every sentence (and hence even monologue) is orientated dynamically, towards an anticipated implied response, is in 'dialogue' with utterances that have already been made, and also in interaction with the social situation around it' (2001: 108).

one potential space that a reader might activate and project in order to facilitate the ongoing construction of an interpretative perspective' (2003: 120). Pursuing an interpretative analysis of a popular song, one exhibits such activations both as readers and as listeners, and the construction of meaning can operate in a wide range of ways. I have chosen a multimodal perspective, and this helps me highlight important themes of the album.

Stan Hawkins uses the term CODE, derived from and widely used in semiotics, stating that 'everything we experience emanates from the structure of the signifying chains' (2002: 9). There is always an element of ambiguity in the coded text. Also, codes, since they are articulated through their context, guarantee some form of affective encounter. Hawkins rightly contends that 'the task of code identification, involves a range of levels of *acquired* listening competence' for the analyst (ibid.).¹⁹

Further, Hawkins mentions a range of what he calls 'syntagmatic primary musical codes', separating them into two main groups: stylistic codes and technical codes (ibid.: 10). Stylistic codes have to do with socio-cultural location, performance and genre. Technical codes consist of components of production and established music-theoretical parameters denoting musical units. Here, the focus will be on Mitchell's vocal performance and certain music-theoretical parameters. I shall now turn to the introduction of what can be considered relevant codes of musical communication: voice, melody and harmony. I believe that these aspects in particular contribute to illustrating vital themes of the album, functioning as musical metaphors. Sonic interaction through instrumentation is also important, and I will comment on Mitchell's piano/dulcimer accompaniment to her songs, resonating with aspects of travel. Communicating with musical codes of voice, melody, harmony and instrumentation has certain implications for the metaphorical aspect of the songs.²⁰ It is considered that an examination of these parameters will allow me to highlight important themes for the songs as a whole.

¹⁹ The listening situation clearly influences an interpretation of a song, and a CD or an mp3 file gives favourable conditions for repeated listening, which may alter the impression of a song, promoting the discovery of new elements and reaching a deeper understanding of what the song expresses. However, the communication and listening experience is less spontaneous and arguably more cognitive than in a live concert, for instance.

²⁰ Certainly, rhythm is a musical element carrying meaning on its own right. However, it is also inherent in melody, and I have chosen not to focus on rhythm separately, due to the limited extent of this thesis. I comment briefly on rhythm when interpreting the accompaniment of 'A Case of You'. However, I have chosen not to let this feature get a subsection of its own.

Musical features: voice, melody and harmony

'Words and music complement each other, and separating words from music will detract from the song's total effect' (Mosher 1989: 144). In an attempt at reaching a wider understanding of the meaning of a song, the musical features have a significant place. In the performance of a song, it seems impossible to separate a voice from its melody. Also, the harmonic clothing surrounding the vocals carries important signification, as I see it, and largely contributes towards establishing the mood of a song, influencing its meaning. Melody, arguably 'an independent meaning system' (Van Leeuwen 1999: 97), also plays a vital part in communication of the message of a song as a whole.

Voice

The voice in pop songs is important at various levels. One can speak of the narrative voice in the song lyrics, as well as the voice of characters depicted in the story told in the popular song. When Joni Mitchell sings *I wish I had a river, You know I've been to sea before and I could drink a case of you*, questions are raised as to who is this 'I'-person. As Frith observes, the voice contributes to meaning-making in a song in two ways simultaneously, through words, and through music.

[...]what is the relationship between the voice as a carrier of sounds, the singing voice, making "gestures", and the voice as a carrier of words, the speaking voice, making "utterances"? The issue is not meaning (words) versus absence of meaning (music), but the relationship between the two different sorts of meaning-making, the tensions and conflicts between them. There's a question here of power: who is to be the master, words or music? And what makes the voice so interesting is that it makes meaning in these two ways simultaneously. We have, therefore, to approach the voice under four headings: as a *musical instrument*; as a *body*; as a *person*; and as a *character*'. (2002: 186-187)

Frith's distinction between the different functions of a voice can help highlight important aspects of the communication process involving the transmission of a song's message as a personal narrative and as a presentation of identity. Speaking of the voice as a musical instrument, he states that 'the voice stands for the person more directly than any other musical device' (ibid.: 191). Here he acknowledges the metonymy THE VOICE STANDS FOR THE PERSON and is in accordance with Whiteley, who observes that the 'human voice is often interpreted as a metaphor for the internal, subjective world of the individual' (2005: 139).²¹

²¹ In his analysis of Morrissey's 'Satan Rejected My Soul', Stan Hawkins suggests that 'the overall effect of [Morrissey's] articulation becomes a *sonic metaphor* for the authorial voice' (2002: 85).

This can be expressed in the following metaphor: THE INTERNAL WORLD OF THE INDIVIDUAL IS THE HUMAN VOICE. Frith also contends that 'the voice is an apparently transparent reflection to feeling: it is the sound of the voice, not the words sung, which suggests what a singer really means' (2004: 204). Consequently, we may interpret the voice we hear as a metaphor for what goes on inside the singer, his or her state of mind or feelings. As such, when Joni Mitchell sings, her voice can be interpreted as conveying intense personal emotions and/or emotions that are pertinent to the characterisation/mood of the song. It is also apparent that a musical instrument may be seen as carrying a voice – the sound of a guitar or piano is somehow marked by the identity of the performer, i.e. the way in which the instrumentalist plays his/her instrument is often interpreted as the performer's musical fingerprint. This is at its most apparent when considering the human voice, which, as Frith observes, is even more revealing of the performer's identity and his/her ability to communicate emotion.

The difference between 'voice as a person' and 'voice as a character' seems particularly relevant when analysing Mitchell's songs. Frith links 'voice as a person' with issues of truthfulness and pretence. 'Truth', Frith writes, 'is a matter of conventions', and it can 'vary from genre to genre': 'How we hear a musical voice ... is tied into how we hear music' (2002: 197). A voice can be used to deceive ourselves and others. This seems relevant when reflecting on the issue of authenticity, considering the 'confessional'²² style of the singer-songwriter movement that Joni Mitchell was associated with. The voice as character implies taking on the personality of the singer, like a costume. The singer's act is complex, involving, at the same time, the singer as a person, the narrator of the song as a story, and the character(s) that the song is about (2002: 198f).

Mitchell's 'confessional' singer-songwriter style, involving a vital amount of self-referencing in the lyrics in line with the ideals of the time, caused speculation and even a tendency to fuse Joni Mitchell as a person with the narrator of her stories, as pointed out by Daniel Sonenberg:

On the most basic level, the degree of connection between Mitchell's lyrics and her biography has been a long-standing point of speculation among fans, and has prompted the frequent conflation on the part of popular music journalists, and even scholars, between the persona or personae projected in her recordings and the actual historical Mitchell. (2003: 108)

²² See, for instance, Sonenberg 2003: 104.

I have sometimes aligned the narrator of the lyrics with Joni Mitchell in person, even though this is not unproblematic. I have done so partly because of Mitchell's own utterances concerning her frailty and her demands of honesty in connection with the recording of *Blue*:

So I wanted to create a persona that was actual, that was really who I was, you know, so that if I had any insight – because I took this job very responsibly – to pass on since I had a public voice I felt I better be presenting something nourishing and useful. (Quoted in Sonenberg 2003: 109)

Although I have tried to make a distinction between the narrator in the lyrics and the 'historical' Joni Mitchell, I sometimes align her songs with her biography. This is partly because of Mitchell's acknowledged 'ability to draw on personal experience and translate this into a musical idiom' (Whiteley 2000: 79), and because of my focus on conceptual metaphor, a cognitive phenomenon grounded in our everyday life. However, one might be tempted to ask an artist associated with 'honesty of expression' and 'emotional truth' if her expression is *real* or not. Mitchell's comments may provide some answer:

what I consider great singing is between the singer and God, not an audience necessarily, I mean there are exceptions, there are showy, fun songs that will accommodate a certain amount of winky-wink, nod-nod from the stage, but on these intimate things you almost have to sing with a method acting kind of way – you have to find your sincerity like an actor does. Like Meryl Streep. You have to sing from the heart. (Levitin 2000: 184)

There seem to be two polarities present here, between truthfulness and acting, even in Mitchell's own utterances: in the first quote, she says 'I wanted to create a persona that was [...] *really who I was*', and in the second one, 'you have to find your sincerity like an *actor* does' (italics added). Consequently, it seems difficult to make a strict division between the persona in her lyrics and Mitchell herself. The emotional truth is allegedly there, irrespective of whether details in the lyrics correspond to Mitchell's lived experience or not.

Frith observes that 'voice in the printed lyrics' is 'articulated by the text itself by a process that is both self-expressive and self-revealing, both declared openly and implied by the narrative' (2002: 183). Hence, I do not see it as erroneous to link Mitchell's lyrics with her social and personal context at the time. Nevertheless, the songs' potential for meaning-making and affective aesthetic response lies, I would argue, also in their ability to evoke empathy and 'sympathetic' resonance with the listener and his or her lived experience.

The voice is thus a powerful tool in the transmission of a message through song. In *Settling the Pop Score* (2002), Hawkins explains how Morrissey's vocal style evokes empathy with the listener. He refers to vocal features such as pitch, melodic phrasing, and control of

register, all contributing such an emphatic response with the singer's audience. Joni Mitchell makes use of similar features to communicate feeling and create an emphatic response. Also, Hawkins mentions the notion of 'untrained' versus 'trained' voice (ibid.: 86). In an article from 1976, Noel Coppage says of Joni Mitchell's singing style: 'there's a taboo against cheating into falsetto too often, and she [...] has made doing that a basic part of her style'.²³

The quality of a voice has several dimensions, and there are numerous ways to describe these features using various adjectives. Van Leeuwen uses a number of 'labels' to describe a vocal feature (presentation) and what it means (representation). Some of the connections he makes between voice quality and meaning seem somewhat far-fetched. For instance, he comments on nasality as a vocal feature, calling it a 'concomitant of tension which carries strong negative value judgements' (1999: 141). Van Leeuwen claims that this feature implies sexual repression. In his book, he exemplifies this by analysing Madonna's voice quality in 'Like A Virgin', where her voice is allegedly nasal. Somewhat essentialist, Van Leeuwen's semiotic categories seem inflexible and not very functional when it comes to practical application.

While it can sometimes be hard to describe a vocal feature in words, Nick Johnstone's description of Mitchell's voice on the album *Blue* shows how an inventive use of words can be suitable for such a purpose, even though the result is not very concrete: 'But the music is always secondary to her voice, which whoops and leaps, and flies, and soars, and warbles, and takes all kinds of improbable jazzy detours'.²⁴ Interestingly, his description emphasises the metaphorical implications of Mitchell's voice, its restless qualities, resonating with themes of travel and flying, issues which I explore further in my textual analysis. The use of metaphor is also present in Sonenberg's interpretation. In his analysis of Mitchell's voice in 'I Had a King', he points to her technique, linking this with an emotion that corresponds with the lyrics: 'These sad, angry and scornful accusations imbue Mitchell's lower register singing with an intensity that wavers between desperation and strength' (2003: 54).

It is also suggested that Joni Mitchell's use of vocal melody is comparable to recitative; her voice seems light, lax, and she has a 'naturally' flowing vibrato. The intensity of the emotions is communicated through the dynamics in her vocal delivery whereby her voice gives colour and life to the lyrics. As discussed previously, Mitchell's voice can be interpreted as a metaphor for her internal world. She makes extensive – perhaps even

²³ Noel Coppage, 'Innocence on a Spree', *Stereo Review*, April 1976.

²⁴ Nick Johnstone, 'All Time Classics', *Uncut*, October 2003.

excessive – use of certain devices. As I will explain later, melismatic or arabesque²⁵ melodic phrases as well as tone colouring, very long notes and heavy vibrato contribute to her early style together with her wide ambitus (tonal range) and large vocal leaps. All in all, these features give the impression that depth of feeling is being portrayed. Also, they serve to illustrate certain main themes of the album, i.e. STABILITY/ INSTABILITY, travel and so forth.

Melody

'Why didn't I become a writer of
funny songs? I think because of
that beautiful melody',²⁶

Mitchell's vocal style is inextricably linked with her creation of melody, which is sometimes perceived as improvisational, intuitive and melismatic in its quality. It is almost impossible not to speak of melody in metaphorical terms, and as we shall see, melody can also be seen as a metaphor for emotion, an image of the fluctuating and restless soul behind the voice.

Melody can be defined as 'a succession of musical tones, as contrasted with harmony, i.e., musical tones sounded simultaneously. Thus, melody and harmony represent the horizontal and the vertical elements of the musical texture' (*Harvard Dictionary of Music*²⁷ (1966: 435f)). In *Speech, Music, Sound*, Van Leeuwen refers to Fonagy and Magdics, who in 'Emotional Patterns in Intonation and Music' (1972: 304), state that 'melodies express emotions' (1999: 94). He quotes further: 'emotions are expressed in European vocal and instrumental music by a melody configuration, dynamics and rhythm similar to those of speech' (ibid.). Claiming that intonation is never arbitrary, but has been chosen to express certain moods, he says that melodies, functioning as sound acts, can be comforting, caressing and scornful. Further, he states that melodies are not enslaved to words, but are a separate and independent meaning system. While this is a persuasive observation, it is nevertheless contended that Mitchell's lyrics and melodies seem to have a mutual dependency: the melodic contours relate to the lyric context, often reflecting the highs and lows of her emotional state. As such, it seems safe to say that Mitchell's music affects her listeners, partly because of the

²⁵ See my definitions of MELISMA on p. 28-29 and ARABESQUE on p. 27.

²⁶ Joni Mitchell, in an interview with Steven Morrissey: 'Melancholy Meets the Infinite Sadness', *Rolling Stone*, 6 March, 1997.

²⁷ *Harvard Dictionary of Music* will hence be referred to as HDM.

melodic movement and partly because of the way the melody underpins the sentiments expressed in the lyrics.

Mitchell's love of melody was inspired by the crooner era, she says in the documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003). However, she thought their lyrics were too direct. In contrast, she liked the story-telling quality of Bob Dylan's work, but felt that while he wrote in paragraphs, this was at the expense of the melody. As such, she considered it her job 'to distil a hybrid that allowed for a certain amount of melodic movement and harmonic movement, but with a certain amount of plateaus, in order to make longer statements' (ibid.)

Mitchell makes use of various techniques in order to create her melodies, and there are often several melodies within one song. She uses her musicality to improvise, creating a motif, repeating it and/or changing it, according to pitch range, intervals and rhythm. She also makes use of arabesque, tone painting²⁸ and particular scales in order to form her melodic variations. ARABESQUE²⁹ is originally a term belonging to the vocabulary of art, but extended to musical usage, it means 'figuration, ornamentation of a melody' (HDM: 45). Often, she also makes use of *tone painting* ('word painting or descriptive music') in order to illustrate her lyrics. An example of this can be found in 'River', when Mitchell lifts her vocal melody to a sustained D, lasting four measures, on the word *fly*, illustrating flight.³⁰ Tonal height here metaphorically corresponds to spatial height. Also, Mitchell at times uses various scales in her melody-making, often avoiding repetition, resulting in through-composed songs. 'Blue' is an example of such non-strophic composition.³¹

Lack of repetition makes it more difficult for the listener to grasp and learn the melody. As regards the complexity of her melodies, Noel Coppage observes: 'The counterpoint she sometimes uses on the piano is so far fetched you wonder how she keeps in her head the tune she's singing'.³² Mitchell has said that her 'melodic unpredictability' derives from the period when she sang the descant part in the church choir:

That affected my music because I like the descant part, which has a lot more range and mobility than the melody. It leaps in four and five note intervals all over the place. Maybe that's why people have difficulty with my music. I need surprises.³³

²⁸ Such 'word painting devices' are also commented on by Sonenberg (2003: 92) in his analysis of 'The Last Time I Saw Richard'.

²⁹ For an example of this type of figuration, see my analysis of 'Blue', p. 52.

³⁰ See my analysis of 'River', p. 105.

³¹ For a more extended description of the musical phrases in this song, see Whitesell 2002: 181.

³² Noel Coppage, 'Innocence on a Spree', *Stereo Review*, April 1976.

³³ Peter Brookesmith, 'Singing Her Palette: Reflections on Joni Mitchell's Visual and Musical Art', *Perfect Vision*, November 1999.

'River' is exceptional in this respect: Containing repetition at various levels, the song is simpler in its overall structure, melodic development and chord progressions than most of her other songs. 'My Old Man' can stand as an example of the opposite, where the melodic contours seem most unusual and less easy to remember. Such lack of repetition may be interpreted as a metaphor for the inner world of the narrator, echoing once again the main themes of RESTLESSNESS and INSTABILITY, mirroring the urge for something new, the urge to move on like a free being, with no itinerary set and without feeling restricted by the confined space of the conventional.

The same might be said of other characteristic features of Mitchell's songs: her successive leaps and wide ambitus in the melody.³⁴ Both aspects tend to produce tension, more involvement and energy. Her pitch range is often extensive, making her songs quite demanding to sing. As Hawkins observes, 'importantly, the effect of vocal straining evokes a sense of increased emotional intensity for the receiver through the sheer effort invested on the part of the artist' (2002: 87). This can be exemplified in several of Mitchell's songs. 'A Case of You' develops from a low G to a high D, the interval constituting an octave and a fifth. Her vocal leaps can sometimes reach the interval of an octave within a single phrase, for instance on the words *Oh Canada*.³⁵ In 'River', Mitchell makes use of such extensive pitch range as she sings *I would teach my feet to fly*, where she moves from a C to a high D.³⁶ In 'Blue', Mitchell uses a similar wide ambitus, moving from a low a on *hell's the hippest way to go*, on to a high D on *I love you*.³⁷ Van Leeuwen states that 'the wide pitch range allows us to give vent to strong feelings, whether of excitement or shock, of grief or joy, and that the narrow pitch range constrains the expression of strong feelings...' (1999: 106).

Rhythmic variation in melody is another means of intensification. This is reflected in Mitchell's sometimes recitative-like singing, her natural way of expression closely linked with speech. She will sometimes increase the amount of syllables in a phrase – or she can do the opposite, stretching out one syllable to a long-lasting, sustained melisma. MELISMA is an

³⁴ Mitchell's wide ambitus is noticeable in a number of songs, e.g. 'Woodstock' (*Ladies of the Canyon*, 1970). The group Matthews Southern Comfort had a number one hit in England with this song in the autumn of 1970. Interestingly, they have left out Mitchell's challenging melodic leaps and transformed the melody to a simpler version. (I am grateful to Halvor Eifring for this information.)

³⁵ See my analysis of 'A Case of You', p. 71. Notably, the ambitus of Mitchell's melodies seems to have narrowed over the years. This is probably the natural consequence of changes in her voice provoked by age and years of chain smoking. Her voice's 'gravel' qualities as well as the more limited vocal range are striking on her more recent work, where she chooses to perform songs in a lower register than during the early period of her career. Mitchell's symphony orchestra version of 'A Case of You' on *Both Sides Now* (2000) shows an example of this. When singing *Oh Canada*, she chooses to perform the phrase going down in pitch instead of the octave leap upwards in the 1971 version.

³⁶ See my analysis of 'River', p. 97.

³⁷ See my transcription, p. 63.

expressive vocal passage sung to one syllable, in contradistinction to the virtuoso-like and frequently stereotyped coloratura' (HDM: 435). 'Melismatic passages' is a term that fits Mitchell's singing. Her melodic moves show great variation, freely fluctuating in sinuous streams. The term is also used by Sonenberg, who states that 'the effect of all melisma [is that it] highlights the importance while obscuring the comprehensibility of the word' (2003: 100). Mitchell's manner of singing *Blue* in the song with the same title is a suitable example of this. Further, Coppage makes an appropriate comment on this issue in his discussion of one of Mitchell's songs from *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970):

The Arrangement, for example, starts out, "You could have been more than a name on the door on the thirty-third flo-o-o-o-or in the a-i-ir," with poor [*sic*: floor] waving erratically into five syllables and air into three. But can't you just feel that old skyscraper, and the "success" it houses, swaying in the wind?³⁸

Mitchell often uses such vocal phrasing to illustrate the meaning of the lyrics. I would also suggest that the term *erratic* is descriptive of Mitchell as a musician. This aspect of non-conformity, characteristic of 'her artistic and personal ethos', is also noted by Sonenberg and can be detected at various levels of her musical production. He observes, 'Mitchell's idiosyncratic approaches to the guitar, harmony, singing, piano, stylistic identity and arranging clearly delineate her work as that of a musical non-conformer' (2003: 154).

Phillip Tagg comments on the relationship between the melody and its accompaniment, referring to this as 'the melody-accompaniment dualism' (1999: 38). He explains that the accompaniment has been regarded as having a subordinate part in relation to the melody. In the *Harvard Dictionary of Music*, *accompaniment* is defined as 'the musical background provided by a less important for a more important part' (8). The melody/accompaniment dualism is analogous to the figure/ground dualism in European painting since the Renaissance, according to Tagg (1999: 39). He states that this dualism replaced previous so-called polycentric works, and this change may perhaps be seen as paralleled in classical music. The shift, he observes, is related to 'the rise of bourgeois notions of individual emancipation' (ibid.). He concludes: 'Seen in this light as a structural homology for a (then) new concept of human personality, the melody-accompaniment dualism ... can be said to carry meaning in itself' (ibid.).

In two of the songs I have chosen, 'River' and 'Blue', Mitchell accompanies herself on the piano. In 'A Case of You', Mitchell is supported by a band (James Taylor on guitar and

³⁸ Noel Coppage, 'Innocence on a Spree', *Stereo Review*, April 1976.

Russ Kunkel on drums), and accompanies herself on the dulcimer.³⁹ Her accompaniment functions as background. Mitchell is the focal centre point of the song, 'the most important human figure with whom the audience is supposed to identify', as Tagg puts it (ibid.: 39). Her voice carries the melody and brings forth her narration. Whiteley interprets Mitchell's various forms of auto-accompaniment: 'Whereas the acoustic guitar is analogous to the sketch-pad and implies movement, Mitchell's songs which are piano-accompanied are rooted in a bluesness where freedom and personal flight no longer appear a viable option' (2000: 84). Her observations largely match my interpretations of the songs on the album. Sonenberg calls Mitchell's piano technique 'limited', tracing her insinuated lack of skills to her bout of polio leading to 'a left hand incapable of quick, intricate changes of position'. As a result, he points out, 'a basic left-hand pattern of root-fifth-octave emerged as the foundation of Mitchell's technique' (2003: 72). As we shall see, such a pattern is noticeable in both the piano songs analysed here.

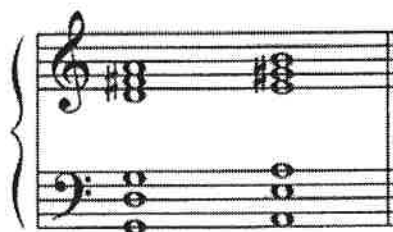
Harmony

In order to find out how meaning in the lyrics is illustrated musically, a look into Mitchell's choice of harmonic clothing in her songs may be in order. As I will show, this musical device contributes to setting the mood of a song and communicating emotion. Sonenberg also interprets harmonic language as a mediator of emotion. For instance, when analysing an Asus2 in 'I had a King', he states that '[the chord's] unresolved, suspended quality reflects the frustration of the lyrics' (2003: 46). I will follow a similar procedure when analysing the chordal movements in the songs selected.

Harmony can be defined as synonymous with *chord*, denoting 'the simultaneous occurrence of several tones, usually three or more' (HDM: 322, 143). There are two main types of chords: consonant and dissonant. *Consonance* and *dissonance* are terms used to describe 'agreeable' and 'disagreeable' intervals respectively. When Mitchell plays a D major chord with the left hand on the piano, together with a G major in the right hand, then an E major together with an A major, the result is one of dissonance (see example 1⁴⁰):

³⁹ Daniel Sonenberg refers to the relationship between Mitchell and other musicians as a 'Mitchell/band dichotomy', linking this with themes of 'independence and non-conformity' (2003: 126f) in his analysis of the title song of *Court and Spark*.

⁴⁰ From Whitesell (2003: 182).



Example 1

Harmonic analysis is concerned with determining the structure of each chord in a piece of music as well as the chordal structure of the entire piece, i.e. 'how progressions of chords are organised to form logical units which make musical sense' (HDM: 317).

Such musical units, which are called phrases, are comparable to literary phrases. Just as a sentence is constructed of single words, so is a phrase of music constructed of single chords, and we must know not only how these chords are spelled and how they sound individually, but how they are organised into musical units (ibid.).

Functional harmony is a system of harmonic analysis providing insight into harmonic progressions. Here, the chords are said to have a specific relationship to both a tonal centre and to each other, and this is an important means of creating structure. Certain chord progressions are repeated, and patterns are followed. As we shall see, this is another frame of convention that Mitchell breaks free from, much in line with themes of NON-CONFORMITY and INDEPENDENCE. For simplicity's sake, I will use the following traditional terms to describe the regular positions in chord progression: Tonic, Subdominant and Dominant.

There are two main types of harmony used in popular music: *classical harmony* and *modal harmony*. Even though both types are found in Mitchell's songs, modal harmony is perhaps most relevant when speaking of the harmonic vocabulary of Joni Mitchell. Modal harmony usually means the use of chords that follow the tonal vocabulary of any church mode⁴¹ except Ionian and Locrian. The five remaining modes, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian and Aeolian, give rise to modal harmony.

Sonenberg refers to Allan Moore, who argues that 'modal mixture (beyond classical minor/ major borrowings) is actually quite common in rock harmony' (ibid.: 45), more specifically, as Whiteley observes, in heavy metal. As we will see, such a mixture is rather frequent in Mitchell's harmonic vocabulary. 'The opposition of major and minor tonics is something of a trademark for Mitchell', Sonenberg argues, adding that this 'pivotal idiosyncrasy of her early harmonic language [...] is largely determined by her use of the guitar' (ibid.). Because of Mitchell's bout of polio as a child, she had a weak left hand, and

⁴¹ The church modes form the tonal basis of the Gregorian chant and of early music, until about 1600 (HDM: 145).

was unable to move her hands to certain chord positions. She explains: 'I craved chordal movement that I couldn't get out of standard tuning without an extremely articulate left hand' (Ruhlmann 2000: 23). Consequently, Mitchell invented her own alternative tunings.

In his article 'Harmonic Palette in Early Joni Mitchell', Lloyd Whitesell gives an extensive account of harmonic usage in some of Mitchell's work. Whitesell has divided Mitchell's songs into five categories of harmonic organisation: modal, polymodal, chromatic, polytonal and pedal point. He states that 'Mitchell's work is impressive for its extended exploration of alternatives to single key structures and the major/minor system' (2002: 173). By making use of such extended forms as the old church modes, Mitchell gains a wider harmonic palette than if she were to feel constrained by the more limited harmonic colouring provided by classical polyphony.⁴²

As Whitesell points out, '[t]he lack of a strong dominant or leading tone creates a very different sense of hierarchy among the chords of these modes' (ibid.: 175). He concludes that Mitchell is 'consistently interested in breaking up the integrity of its scale in a variety of ways, often flickering between two or more modes within a single song' (ibid.). As I will show later, this seems to be the case with 'Blue', where Mitchell operates both within Dorian and Aeolian modes (see Whitesell: 181f). This can be interpreted as a metaphor illustrating main themes of INDEPENDENCE, RESTLESSNESS and NON-CONFORMITY. Metaphors of travel and fluid thus seem to be carried over into the sphere of music.

Tagg mentions *quartal harmony*, based on the fourth, as distinguished from a common system of tertiary harmony, based on the third. Quartal chords are sometimes, within pop and jazz circles, referred to as suspensions. Whiteley (2000: 84) sees this type of chord, the sus4, as characteristic of Mitchell's work. Tagg argues that, if used consistently, quartal harmonies will acquire status as consonances in their own right, not requiring resolutions as suspensions (2003: 18). This can be said of the harmony found in 'Blue', for instance. Miles Davis's⁴³ *Kind of Blue* from 1959 is often seen as a turning point in jazz, according to Tagg, as the tertial harmony conventions of bebop were replaced by quartal chords (19-20). Aligned with Mitchell's frequent use of quartal harmony on the album *Blue*, one might see quartal harmony as indicative of such a feeling of blueness. This also seems to fit with Whiteley's observations: she links both *blue* and sus4s with 'underlying instability' (2000: 83f).

⁴² For further details on these church modes and Whitesell's categories, see Whitesell (2002: 173-193).

⁴³ Miles Davis's two seminal albums *In a Silent Way* (1969) and *Bitches Brew* (1970) are stated as Mitchell's 'personal favorites' according to Daniel Sonenberg (2003: 103).

Although Mitchell uses a wide range of altered chords in her songs, she sometimes keeps her songs within the range of normal functional progression found in Western art music, jazz and pop music. Not many of Mitchell's songs use the classical harmony (traditional major or minor modes) in their pure states. From her early period, Whitesell observes, there are only eight such songs. Two of them, 'A Case of You' and 'River', from the album *Blue*, will be commented on in chapters 5 and 6.

Sonenberg has commented on the 'insufficiency of [...] labellings suggest[ing] the inadequacy of the tonal lexicon for describing Mitchell's usage' (2003: 49). However, I believe that *functional harmony* can be a suitable starting point for analysing Mitchell's music in this context. Leech mentions foregrounding as a principle of 'artistic communication'. '[I]n music there are expected patterns – of melody, rhythm, harmonic progression, abstract form, etc., and a composer's skill lies not in mechanically reproducing these, but in introducing unexpected departures from them' (1969: 56f). For instance, the fact that 'A Case of You' ends with a Bb major, is a harmonic deviation according to expected chord progression in C major. This communicates an openness (non-conclusive), possibly illustrating that the closure of the relationship is not definite. The function of the chord development is to support the melody and message of the lyrics.

In an interview in the documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003), Mitchell calls her altered chords 'chords of inquiry' and elaborates, 'they had a question-mark in them'. 'Chords are depictions of emotions,' she says: the chords correspond to her feelings. 'There were so many unresolved things in me that those chords suited me' (ibid.). One might say that the chords function as metaphors for emotions: UNRESOLVED CHORDS ARE UNRESOLVED FEELINGS. There seems to be a correspondence between her feelings and the chords – they underline the meanings communicated in the lyrics.

I see these musical features of voice, melody and harmony as important aspects of musical communication. Basing my qualitative approach on conceptual metaphor, I will also look to the surrounding musical context of the songs and develop a widened perspective, in order to undertake a detailed interpretive analysis of a selection of songs from *Blue*.

Interpretive analysis

Interpretive analysis is a research model involving phenomenology and hermeneutics. It emphasises the importance of 'the subjective understanding of the subject' (Rhedding-Jones 2005: 54). According to Wales, *interpretation* means 'understanding' in a basic sense,

‘understanding the language of a text, and understanding its meaning and theme(s)’. She further highlights the complexity and dynamics of the process, emphasising the ‘continual interaction between the text⁴⁴ and the reader, which (ideally) acts as a constraint on the degree of freedom or (im)plausibility of any interpretation’ (2001: 219). She adds: ‘the process of interpretation will be coloured by subjectivity, and even by changes in fashion and taste from one period to another’ (ibid.).

O’Brien refers to the writer Susan Sontag, who contends, echoing Platonic ideas of mimesis: ‘To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world – in order to set up a shadow world of “meanings”’ (2002: 138). This is an interesting statement, even though I do not agree with this opinion. In my opinion, attempting to understand a song’s deeper meanings, investigating the musical and linguistic devices through which the message is communicated, enriches the aesthetic experience of listening. When analysing the songs of Joni Mitchell, I have had the experience that such a task promotes the realisation of the brilliant innovative craft and creative capacity of the artist. Also, it gives me the possibility to activate my own life experience and gain new insight through Mitchell’s works of art.

What does it mean to ‘understand a song’s deeper meanings’, and where can such meaning be discovered? Some people align a song’s meaning with the author’s intention. Joni Mitchell provides some interesting comments on this issue: ‘My interpretation of what my songs are about, is, in the whole world, the least important take. I wrote them, but that does not give me some divine insight into their meaning’ (O’Brien 2002: 138). On another occasion, Mitchell expressed her opinion on the topic: ‘Who cares what I meant! What does it mean to you?’ Commenting on the occasional scrutinising inquiry of her fans, she elaborates: ‘I’d prefer they would focus on the creation rather than the creator’.⁴⁵

Mitchell’s ‘What does it mean to you?’ seems perfectly in line with the opinions of current popular music scholars on the issue. Allan Moore emphasizes the crucial presence of the listener:

By subjecting this sound to analysis, we are in fact making an interpretation of the relationships apparent between it and antecedent, simultaneous, and consequent sounds, an activity into which it is impossible not to insert the self, because such relationships only become apparent in the presence of a perceiver. (Moore 2003: 8)

⁴⁴ The word *text* can be used to denote a work of art as a whole, be it a novel, a photography or a piece of music. Popular musicologists often use *pop text* to refer to an entire popular song, not just the lyrics. See, for instance, Hawkins 2002: 7.

⁴⁵ Les Irvin, ‘Pass the Salt, Please’, article published on the JMDL, 26 September, 1997.

Hawkins also highlights the subjective nature of interpretation. Referring to David Brackett, he states that 'codes are never static and are always dependent on acts of subjective interpretation' (2002: 10). He further states that 'pop texts are scopogenic [and] open up personal readings based on that which is presented to us, herein lies their meaningfulness' (ibid.: 24). Consequently, the subjectivity and presence of a perceiver is unavoidable in interpretive analysis.

Hawkins further claims that 'Musical codes clearly refer to an unlimited range of meanings that are prescribed to by the reader's personal context' (ibid.: 10). He also refers to Lucy Green's two categories of meaning: *inherent* and *delineated*. In *delineation*, Green refers to a process involving 'a range of musical experiences that can offer a route through a more holistic reading of a text. It then follows that only within a defined social and cultural climate can the process of delineation take place' (ibid.: 11). Delineated meaning thus seems to be a construct negotiated through an interplay of meanings between the individual and the cultural context.⁴⁶

Whether meaning can be inherent in the music itself is indeed an intriguing question. Is there something inherently 'sad' in a minor chord or a minor melodic passage? Or is the emotional impact we sometimes experience listening to such tonalities, a product of our cultural context? In *Tone of Voice and Mind*, Norman D. Cook treats such musical-psychological issues, contending: 'The "ring" of major and minor harmonies is the one inescapable, historically-undeniable link between pitch phenomena and human emotions' (2002: 90). In *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, Leonard B. Meyer contends that meaning lies in the musical structure: music 'can and does convey referential meaning' (1956: 2), i.e. 'refer to the extramusical world of concepts, actions, emotional states, and character' (ibid.: 1). In *Music Grooves* (1994), Steven Feld challenges Meyer's ideas, maintaining that musical meaning lies in its effect.⁴⁷ Music's affective character is also discussed in Sloboda's *Music and Emotion* by Sloboda (2001). This would have been an interesting point to investigate further, particularly as the album I have chosen to look into often creates emotional responses with the listener. As a participant on the Joni Mitchell Discussion List told the community: 'I

⁴⁶ As Whiteley observes, '[i]nterpretive analysis isn't boundless. For example, I would argue that the song needs to be situated within the historical context – the current political, social, cultural climate of the time, the ideologies of the period. This sets certain limits upon interpretation. For example, while Stravinsky's 'Rite of Spring' has a trance-like feel in its dance of death climax, there is no way that this could be construed as being produced by hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD. They simply hadn't been invented then!' (In e-mail correspondence 6 April 2006).

⁴⁷ See Feld's discussion of this issue (1994: 54ff). I am grateful to Kyrre Tromm Lindvig for his input here.

was fighting back tears at my desk. You know how *Blue* can do that to you'.⁴⁸ Unfortunately, doing research on listeners' aesthetic responses to Mitchell's music would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

By now, it should be clear that the interpretive analysis of popular songs is a complex field entangled with multiple academic disciplines. As Tagg points out:

Indeed, it should be stated at the outset that no analysis of musical discourse can be considered complete without consideration of social, psychological, visual, gestural, ritual, technical, historical, economic, and linguistic aspects relevant to the genre, function, style, (re-)performance situation, and listening attitude connected with the sound event being studied. (2000: 74)

Realising the impracticability of the task, I have not had the intention of undertaking a *complete* interpretive analysis of Joni Mitchell's songs. Indeed, it is unlikely that this could ever be achieved. Rather, I have chosen to focus on certain codes in my reading, searching to illuminate her use of metaphor in both in her lyrics and the musical context.⁴⁹ Looking for pertinent features in lyrics and music, I hope to be able to highlight important performative devices that serve to imbue Mitchell's imagery with more profound meaning.

My aim in this thesis is not to give a *full* presentation of Mitchell's music. I have chosen a small selection of songs from an album described as her 'seminal' work.⁵⁰ As I see it, these songs offer a window into Mitchell's creative universe, as representative examples of her artistry, thematically pointing both back to her earlier works and forth to her albums to come. My interpretive analyses are detailed, as I have made use of a qualitative method in my research. I have been looking for pertinent features, intuitively zooming in on what captured my attention in both lyrics and music. My main focus has been a linguistic one, although the musical context has been crucial to my interpretation. I have particularly been alert to Mitchell's use of metaphors, expressed through her phrases. Mitchell is a clever wordsmith; her words are not randomly chosen. I have investigated the various meanings of certain words, using the *Oxford English Dictionary*⁵¹ as a source of reference. This has helped me link up Mitchell's choice of words with the prevalent metaphors in her songs.

I have occasionally felt the need to illustrate melodic movements and chord progressions that support the meaning of the lyrics. Hence, traditional notation proved a suitable tool for such a purpose. Linked with Western art music, this is not an uncontroversial

⁴⁸ A contribution to the JMDL 7 November 2005.

⁴⁹ As I have explained, music can sometimes function as a metaphor for emotions.

⁵⁰ O'Brien 2000: 142.

⁵¹ Hence referred to as OED.

medium in the realm of popular musicology. Sonenberg quotes Peter Winkler, who says that '[n]otation enables us to transcend the evanescence of music. Its effect is to neutralize time – to kill time' (2003: 15). This is clearly an advantage when attempting to describe music, although, as Sonenberg observes: '[in notation,] the actual real-time experience with music is ignored' (ibid.). Further, he refers to Moore, who states that '[t]he primary medium of transmission of music throughout the European art tradition is and always has been stave notation. The primary medium of transmission of rock, since at least mid-1950s rock 'n' roll, has been the recording' (quoted in Sonenberg 2003: 16). Even though his statements are accurate, I have had the experience that such notation is highly useful when trying to investigate and decipher what happens melodically and harmonically in a pop song. Nevertheless, I have tried to focus on the performance of the songs, where the key to musical experience is to be found.

Sonenberg quotes Brackett, emphasising a certain 'flexibility of interpretive technique', which seems like a practicable ideal.

[T]here is not necessarily one way of interpreting popular music, but that different types of popular music use different types of rhetoric, call for different sorts of interpretation, refer to different arguments about words and voices, about musical complexity and familiarity, and draw upon different senses of history and tradition. (Quoted in ibid.: 14)

I have attempted to apply such an adaptable method in my thesis, making an effort to illuminate concepts of metaphor, music and meaning in a selection of songs from Joni Mitchell's 1971 album *Blue* through the subjectivity of my personal interpretation.⁵²

⁵² 'Deciphering pop music, and undertaking readings of its codes through the subjectivity of personal interpretation, clearly constitutes a formidable task' (Hawkins 2002: 24).

Chapter 3: Introduction to interpretive analysis

This chapter contains an introduction to the interpretive analyses. The first subsection deals with travel metaphors, which are prevalent in a number of Mitchell's songs. A second subsection provides some background information about Mitchell's personal life and the social context influencing the salient themes on *Blue*. In particular I draw attention to the concept of travel, which runs through the album, both literally and metaphorically. Similarly, as the colour blue is highly significant, both figuratively and non-figuratively, I comment briefly on its use on the album: denoting a colour, connoting instability and referring to a state of mind. The subsequent chapters will contain the interpretive analyses *per se*, of the songs 'Blue', 'A Case of You' and 'River'. More specifically, I will investigate how themes such as INDEPENDENCE vs. EMOTIONAL INTIMACY and STABILITY vs. INSTABILITY are reflected through metaphors related to travel and liquids. My analysis is also concerned with detecting how the concepts of AMBIVALENCE, RESTLESSNESS and INSTABILITY pervade the musical context, as it is suggested that such pertinent musical features often act like musical metaphors, illuminating the main themes.

Travel metaphors in Joni Mitchell's songs

Before turning to *Blue*, and in order to provide some background for the following analyses, it is considered appropriate to comment on a specific type of primary metaphor that occurs frequently in Mitchell's songs: the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. I would argue that her use of this common conceptual metaphor not only derives from a primary metaphor manifested in our everyday language, but appears intertextually generated, inspired by, and referring to, other texts, making use of this same primary metaphor. This also seems to be in accordance with how Lakoff & Turner explain the acquisition of cognitive models¹: 'We acquire our cognitive models in at least two ways: by our own direct experience and through our culture' (1989: 66).

In her early unreleased song 'The Gift of the Magi', Mitchell draws on the ironic short story by O. Henry, by the same name: *Wisemen lose their way/ Merry Christmas Day*. This brings to mind the poem 'The Journey of the Magi', by T.S. Eliot. All of these texts

¹ Also, Lakoff & Turner mention that '[c]ognitive models are not conscious models; they are unconscious and used automatically and effortlessly' (1989: 65f).

seem to be based on Matthew 2, according to Bishop Vince Lavieri.² It is possible to see Matthew 2, with its subheadings 'The Visit of the Magi', 'The Escape to Egypt' and 'The Return to Nazareth', as based on the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. This shows that there seems to be a genealogy of texts, and that various cultural artefacts mediated through a cultural context, may be in dialogue with one another.³

I will now turn to Joni Mitchell's songs, and give a few examples of how and why the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is prevalent in her lyrics. In particular, the 'urge for going' expressed in numerous songs may be said to represent a certain restlessness, a feeling Mitchell openly admits to. Speaking of her creative influences, Mitchell emphasises two artists:

Most of my heroes are monsters, unfortunately, and they are men. Separating their personalities from their art, Miles Davis and Picasso have always been my major heroes because we have this one thing in common: They were restless. I don't know any women role models for that'. (Quoted in Smith 2004: 28)

This sense of restlessness is reflected in the metaphor of travel, which resonates through Mitchell's albums *Song to a Seagull*, *Blue* and *Hejira*. As Sonenberg states, 'from the very first song of her debut album *Song to a Seagull*, Mitchell concerned herself with the pursuit of and desire for independence and freedom' (112). This is manifested through her use of metaphors. In an article in *Stereo Review* in April 1976, Noel Coppage writes that 'travel' is 'the fundamental metaphor of folk music created on this continent'.⁴ The idea of travel seems prevalent in a number of songs, and can be noticed as early as in 1966, in one of her early unreleased songs, 'Born To Take The Highway', resonating with Jack Kerouac's well-known novel *On the Road* (1957):

*I was born to take the highway
I was born to chase a dream
Any road at all is my way
Any place is where I've been
Anything is what I've seen*

² In an e-mail to the JMDL 3 September 2005.

³ There are similar examples of such intertextuality in other songs from Mitchell's body of work: 'Slouching Towards Bethlehem' on *Night Ride Home* from 1991 is based on the poem by 'The Second Coming' by W. B. Yeats, both with clear biblical references. Interestingly, *Slouching Towards Bethlehem* is also the title of an essay collection by Joan Didion from 1968. In an interview from 1991 Mitchell says she wrote the song 'in acknowledgement [...] of the Didion essay' (Steven Holden, 'Joni Mitchell Finds The Peace of Middle Age', *New York Times*, 17 March 1991). This is an example of an 'intertextual web' of cultural artefacts.

⁴ Noel Coppage, 'Innocence on a Spree', *Stereo Review*, April 1976.

Another early unreleased song, 'Day After Day', from 1965, seems like a preview of some of the themes on the album *Blue*:

*Travelling, loneliness
I've had no mercy
Since the blues got on this train
I've been so empty
Since I caught that eastbound train
I've been so lonely
Since I caught that eastbound train*

'Urge for going' was written a year later, in 1966, but did not appear on an album until *Hits* (1996). As I will show later, this also resonates with Mitchell's *Blue* inclination to 'skate away' / 'sail away' / 'fly away'.

*I get the urge for going
But I never seem to go
I get the urge for going
When the meadow grass is turning brown
Summertime is falling down and winter is closing in*

In 'I don't know where I stand' from *Clouds* (1969), Mitchell writes: *Fear is like a wilderland/ Stepping stone or sinking sand*. Fusing the metaphors STATES ARE LOCATIONS and EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES, she seems to compare certain feelings with the geographic areas you pass through on your journey through life. This analogy is explored further in 'The Circle Game' from *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970), where the 'circle of life' is related to the passing of time, reflected in a journey through a landscape and seasons:

*Then the child moved ten times round the seasons
Skated over ten clear frozen streams
[...]
And the seasons they go round and round
And the painted ponies go up and down
We're captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look
Behind from where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game*

The journey archetype is also prominent in the song 'Woodstock' from the same album: *And we've got to get ourselves/ Back to the garden*, which suggests a longing to return to the innocence of the Garden of Eden.

if In the song 'Amelia' from *Hejira* (1976), the journey metaphor is notable from the first line: *I was driving across the burning desert...* The conclusive *and your life becomes a travelogue* seems to be a direct reflection of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Also, as she states:

*People will tell you where they've gone
They'll tell you where to go
But till you get there yourself you never really know*

As such, it is clearly no coincidence that she 'pulled into the Cactus Tree Motel' at the end of the song, so effecting a sense of personal intertextuality with her date song 'Cactus Tree' from *Song to a Seagull*, where she writes:

*She will love them when she sees them
They will lose her if they follow
And she only means to please them
And her heart is full and hollow
Like a cactus tree
While she's so busy being free*

Mitchell lets a location ('Cactus Tree Hotel') stand for a state of mind, yet an image deriving from the journey archetype.

The song 'Hejira' from the same album also contains metaphorical expressions related to this conceptual metaphor:

*I'm travelling in some vehicle
I'm sitting in some café
You know it never has been easy
Whether you do or you do not resign
Whether you travel the breadth of extremities
Or stick to some straighter line*

In 'The Silky Veils of Ardour' from *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter*, Mitchell writes:

*I am a poor wayfaring stranger
Traveling through all these highs and lows
I heard there was no sickness
And no toil or danger
Just mercy and plenty
Where peaceful waters flow
Where peaceful waters flow*

1d On *For the Roses*, 'Let the Wind Carry Me' shows yet a reference to the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor: *It's a rough road to travel/ Mama let go now/ Let the wind carry me.*

'Just Like This Train' on *Court and Spark* (1974) opens with these lines: *I'm always running behind the time/ Just like this train/ Shaking into town/ With the brakes complaining.* She continues, aligning her love life with life on the road: *I used to count lovers like railroad cars/ I counted them on my side/ Lately I don't count on nothing/ I just let things slide.* A paraphrase of *the lonely road* of stardom (echoing 'All I Want' from *Blue*) can be found in 'The Judgement of the moon and stars' on *For The Roses* (1972), *They think you're too raw/ It's the judgement of the moon and stars/ Your solitary path.*

According to Crisp, the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor is 'simply one specialisation of what [Lakoff] calls the Event Structure Metaphor' (2003: 101). The Event Structure Metaphor consists of a variety of specialisations: STATES ARE LOCATIONS, CHANGES ARE MOVEMENTS, PURPOSES ARE DESTINATIONS, MEANS ARE PATHS.

Lakoff (1993) mentions yet another metaphor belonging to this primary metaphor: EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE LARGE MOVING OBJECTS, highlighting the special case of FLUIDS. He uses *You gotta go with the flow* and *We're all in the same boat* as examples. Such fluid external events seem to reflect the metaphors used on *Blue*. As I will explain, this seems easily linked with the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES.

To give a preview and a basic grid for my analyses, I here present a survey, or what Lakoff would call an 'inheritance hierarchy' (1993: 222), of how some of the conceptual metaphors present in her songs relate to each other, deriving from the Event Structure Metaphor:

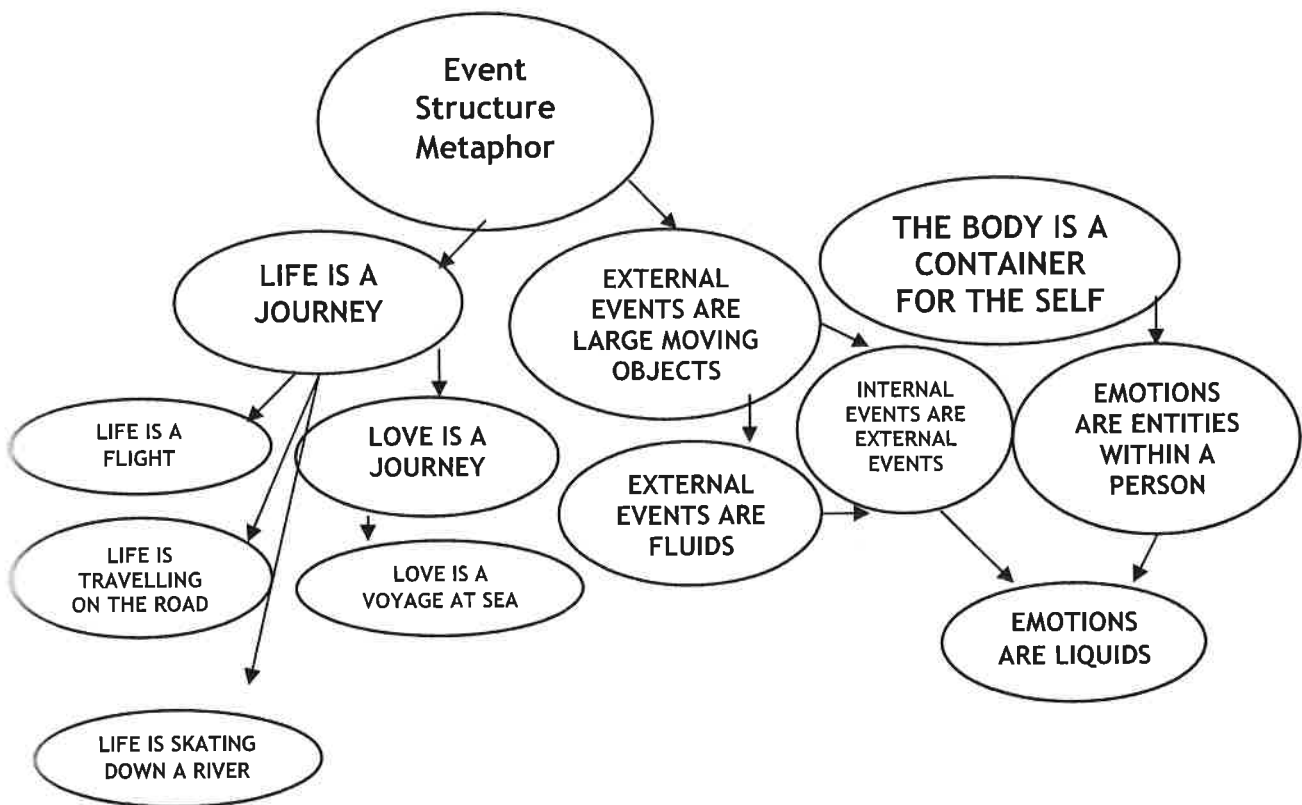


Figure: Inheritance hierarchy showing internal relationships between conceptual metaphors.

To the left, I have presented various and more specified metaphors deriving from the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY, which again is a more specific variant of The Event Structure Metaphor.

Another point to be made is how we sometimes have several source domains to describe one target domain. This is the case with the metaphor LIFE/LOVE IS A JOURNEY, where various, more specified types of journeys constitute different source domains: For instance, LIFE/LOVE as target domain is linked with these source domains on *Blue*, all various specifications of a JOURNEY:

LIFE/LOVE is

→ A VOYAGE AT SEA (*chrown and anchor me, or let me sail away*)

→ A FLIGHT (*I would teach my feet to fly*)

→ TRAVELLING ON THE ROAD (*I am on a lonely road*)

→ SKATING DOWN A RIVER (*I wish I had a river I could skate away on*)

Another important metaphor on *Blue* is one related to liquids, shown to the right in my diagram. Here, there are two metaphors related to fluids: EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS and

EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE FLUIDS. A different metaphor may serve to link these two up, namely EXTERNAL EVENTS ARE INTERNAL EVENTS.

Although emotions are central to our experience, their nature is often very difficult to grasp. Such physical phenomena as winds and floods, by contrast, are far easier for us to think about. Structuring our thought about emotions in terms of NATURAL FORCES is therefore a powerful aid to thought. (2003: 104)

As Crisp points out, it's easier for us to say something about external events, like the weather and passing scenery, than internal events such as emotions, and this fact has generated the birth of a range of metaphors. The conceptual metaphors EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES and EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS serve as my inspiration when I suggest that the frozen 'river' to 'skate away on' is an image for suppressed emotions.

Joni Mitchell's personal situation around 1970

Blue was released in June 1971, at a time when Mitchell was experiencing a rather paradoxical situation, feeling overwhelmed by her success as a solo artist, as well as suffering waves of depression. In 1983, she elaborated on her state of mind during the making of the album to *Musician's* Vic Garbarini: 'At the time I was absolutely transparent, like cellophane. If you looked at me, I would weep. We had to lock the doors to make that album. Nobody was allowed in' (quoted in O'Brien 2002: 136). As we shall see, the album seems pervaded by the emotional tensions inherent in such a state of mind.

A chain of circumstances, relating both to her personal and social context, may have contributed to Mitchell's depressed state of mind at the time. In addition to her celebrity status and turbulent love life, it is likely that Mitchell was influenced by the post-hippie disillusionment of the period. Perhaps even more poignantly, the feelings engendered by giving up her daughter for adoption made her increasingly introspective. She was twenty-one at the time. Her emotional instability was reflected in her compositions and her feelings remained with her until their reunion in 1996. Mitchell explains:

But *Blue* I wrote because I had to. I was emotionally disturbed, again. I'd given up my daughter for adoption, out of poverty, not having the money to feed and clothe and put a roof over her head. Then a few years later, suddenly, I had a house and the means. And I became a public figure. The combination of the two made me begin to withdraw, go inside, question

who I was, write more honestly. And if I found something I thought was universal I would write about that.⁵

This self-exploratory honesty was in accordance with the ideals of the 1970s, the 'me' decade. The following extract from her song 'Woodstock' from *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970), dedicated to the 1969 festival, illustrates some of the hippie optimism of this 'age of Aquarius':

*We are stardust
We are golden
And we've got to get ourselves
Back to the garden*

However, the late 1960s idealism gradually faded out, and utopian collectivism, social activism and hedonism were replaced by a growing individualism and a general feeling of disillusionment. To a notable extent, this disappointment pervaded popular music from the era, as commented on by Gary Burns:

As the 1960s had been a period of apparently happy and/or artistically powerful musical groups, the 1970s were a period of pessimistic individuals, whose hits were in many cases slow [...], spare on instrumentation [...], or concerned with depression or despair. (1989: 131)

The following lines from 'California' on *Blue* may exemplify some of this dead idealism:

*They won't give peace a chance
It was just a dream some of us had*

This is echoed by Mitchell's former partner, singer-songwriter Graham Nash: 'We thought that we [the singer/songwriter community that I'm a part of] would be able to change [...] the world instantly and we were very naïve ... we thought it would happen overnight and we were wrong' (O'Brien 2002: 115).

Towards the end of the sixties, Mitchell's career as a singer-songwriter started to take off. However, she was not comfortable with it, feeling overwhelmed by the amount of attention she received as a celebrity: 'I just thought it was too big for me, it was out of proportion. This kind of attention was absurd' (ibid.: 117). 'My individual psychological descent coincided ironically with my ascent into the public eye', Mitchell explains in the

⁵ Joe Jackson, 'Witness of Life', *Irish Times*, 6 February, 1999. See also Camille Paglia, 'The Trailblazer Interview', *Interview*, August 2005: 'Music was something I did to deal with the tremendous disturbance of losing [my daughter]. It began when she disappeared and ended when she returned'.

documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003). She demanded greater honesty of herself, and believed the audience 'should know who they were worshipping' (ibid.). The worship and the overwhelming new celebrity status were hard to cope with, making her want to 'quit this crazy scene', as she sings in 'River'. Consequently, early in 1970, Mitchell 'announced that she would be taking an indefinite break from concerts' (O'Brien 2002: 118). She decided to get away for a while, and she went travelling in Europe for a few months with her friend Penelope. A number of songs from *Blue* were written on this journey.

More than being a product of its time, the album was highly personal and emotionally loaded, allegedly functioning as a substitute for therapeutic treatment. 'A couple of years ago I got very depressed', Mitchell revealed in a 1972 interview in *Sounds Magazine*. It also seems likely that tribulations in her love life may have contributed to her state of mind at the time. As Sheila Whiteley observes, 'she is trapped by that seemingly irreconcilable dilemma of wanting a man but, at the same time, needing to be free' (2000: 1). In 1970, Mitchell felt obliged to break off a relationship with singer-songwriter Graham Nash, a man to whom she had 'sworn her heart'.⁶ Shortly after, Mitchell entered a 'passionate though turbulent relationship' with another fellow musician, James Taylor (O'Brien 2002: 131). During the making of *Blue*, Joni Mitchell says she was very vulnerable and felt exposed by her work and the constant media attention.

With her album *Blue*, Joni Mitchell also invented, almost instinctively, her own therapy to try to assimilate her experiences, particularly those of the several months preceding its release, and make sense of the longings and needs that often seemed to be pulling her in different directions, of the conflicts in love, romance, passion, desire, freedom and creativity. (ibid.: 134)

Despite a mental breakdown Mitchell continued to work: 'I was at my most defenceless during the making of *Blue* [...] And when you have no defences, the music becomes saintly and it can *communicate*' (Levitin 2000: 182). This maxim of emotional honesty is not only a creed linked with the authenticity of rock, it is also a dictum upheld by the writers Ernest Hemingway and Friedrich Nietzsche. O'Brien quotes Hemingway in a letter to F. Scott Fitzgerald: 'When you get the damned hurt, use it. Use it and down cheat' (2002: 133). Jim Leblanc (2005) contends that Mitchell openly acknowledges Nietzsche as an influence, an inspiration that derives from her early schooldays and her teacher Arthur Kratzman, who advised her to 'Write in your own blood!' (quoted in ibid.: 29). O'Brien highlights *Blue* as particularly influenced by this honesty of expression: '[p]erhaps more than any other of her

⁶ An interview in the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003).

albums it was the one created by using Nietzsche's dictum, "I have at all times written my works with my whole body and my whole life" (ibid.: 136). Mitchell says she wished to 'nourish' her audience, 'make them change the directions of their life'. She wanted the music to '[strike] against the very nerves of their lives. And in order to do that you have to strike against the very nerves of your own'.⁷

Travel and self-exploration

Travelling pervades the album, both literally, relating to Mitchell's actual travel in Europe, and metaphorically, as an image of the exploration of her identity, her life, her relationships. An important distinction is, however, as Whiteley points out,

between being a tourist – where there is a set itinerary of where you're going, for how long, etc. – and being a 'traveller' where you follow your instinct, stopping off when the mood is right, moving on but without a pre-established destiny. This was important to the counter-culture and also related to mind-travel (via hallucinogenic drugs).⁸

This seems to be an important point here, as travelling as a metaphor is a vital element in Mitchell's imagery. Whiteley also refers to her colleague Mary Routh, who sums up the album:

This geographic memory is hallmark of her imagery, and is firmly based in her desire to travel... *Blue* is the description of a year or two in her life, and she is telling us what she learned and what she experienced. She is the theme, and for the first time, she sets out to make her life her art (2000: 78f).

Looking at the various songs on *Blue*, the theme of TRAVEL is prevalent throughout the album. The initiating dulcimer and drum rhythms of 'All I Want' sets the mood of the album connoting travel, echoing the sound of a train. This is enhanced by the opening lines:

*I am on a lonely road and I am traveling
traveling, traveling, traveling
Looking for something, what can it be*

Mitchell's repetition of certain phrases underlines the monotonous sound of the train. 'All I Want' seems fairly optimistic – with life and love full of opportunities: *All I really really want our love to do/ Is to bring out the best in me and in you*, nevertheless, there is also ambivalence: *I hate you some/ I hate you some/ I love you some*. The narrator is on a 'lonely

⁷ An interview in the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003).

⁸ In an e-mail correspondence 30 January 2006.

road travelling', 'looking for the key to set me free', and thus revealing the self-exploratory project of the entire album. As Sheila Whiteley rightly states, '*Blue*, more than any other album, offers a window into [Mitchell's] subjective universe' (ibid.: 79).

The fourth song of the album, 'Carey', is a jolly, bouncy tune with calypso-like rhythms. 'Everything about this song shouts "traveller"', as quoted in Whiteley (ibid.: 87):

*The wind is in from Africa
Last night I couldn't sleep
Oh, you know it sure is hard to leave here Carey
But it's really not my home*

The unpredictability and freedom of being a traveller is underlined:

*Maybe I'll go to Amsterdam
Or maybe I'll go to Rome*

The next song on the album, 'Blue', will be examined thoroughly in the next chapter. A voyage at sea forms the core of her oceanic imagery:

*You know I've been to sea before
Crown and anchor me
Or let me sail away*

Mitchell's travel through Europe is also evident in 'California', both in the opening lines: *Sitting in a park in Paris, France*, and later in the song, where she tells the story of her trip: *I met a redneck on a Grecian isle*. Her narration goes on: *So I bought me a ticket/ I caught a plane to Spain* before, eventually, *California I'm coming home*. Geographic locations play an important part in showing where she travelled, how she moved on, and in juxtaposing *home* (*California*) and *away* (*Paris, a Grecian isle, Spain*).

As its song title implies, 'This Flight Tonight' also makes use of imagery related to travel, this time by aircraft: *Look out the left the captain said/ The lights down there, that's where we'll land*.

In the next song, 'River', a journey on foot evolves into a utopian flight: *Oh I wish I had a river/ I could skate away on... I wish I had a river so long/ I would teach my feet to fly*. Also, climatic descriptions tell us that something is different from what she is used to: *But it don't snow here/ It stays pretty green*, thus juxtaposing her current surroundings with her place of origin. The contrast of home and away is also highlighted in 'California'. However,

when in Europe, Mitchell's thoughts drift back to California, *coming home*, but when in California, her memory wanders off to her childhood Canada (cf. 'River').

Blue as colour, instability and state of mind

The album cover of *Blue* shows a photo of Mitchell looking downwards, in deep blue shades (see front cover), underpinning a core theme of the album. As Whiteley observes,

the musical and literary associations of blue/blues/bluesness provides a colour wash for her compositional canvas, a spectrum which draws into association such images as the sea, Little Green's blue eyes, her tattoo, and the blue TV screen light in 'A Case of You'. (ibid.: 82)

In general, *blue* refers both to the colour blue and to an emotional state: 'the blues (for 'blue devils'): depression of spirits, despondency' (OED). It can be said to refer to a specific mood of melancholy and pondering. As Whiteley suggests in her examples, the word *blue* is present in almost every song lyric on the album. In the opening song, 'All I Want', the word refers to a state of despondency due to mutual emotional hurting: *Do you see – do you see – do you see/ How you hurt me baby/ So I hurt you too/ Then we both get so blue*. Interestingly, Whiteley analyses 'the falling vocal contour' on the word *blue* here as 'a musical metaphor of instability which is enhanced by the shifting harmonies in the guitar accompaniment, with the final Abm7 providing a pivotal bluesness' (2000: 83).

The next song, 'My Old Man', describes a joyous love affair: *we don't need no piece of paper from the city hall/ keeping us tied and true*. The narrator seems to be at home, while her beloved man, described as *the warmest chord I've ever heard*, is sometimes away, leaving her on her own: *But when he is gone/ Me and them lonesome blues collide/ The bed's too big/ The frying pan's too wide*. Mitchell uses images of spare physical space to describe a feeling of emptiness when her man is away. *Blues* here denotes a feeling of loneliness and lowness in spirit.

'Little Green' is the song Mitchell wrote for her baby daughter, who she gave up for adoption. Here, the colour blue emerges through Little Green's eyes: *So you write him a letter and say, "Her eyes are blue"*. This may be a hint of Mitchell's devastating pain in giving up her child for adoption, a feeling of 'unresolvedness' that followed her for years.

The title track, 'Blue', is pervaded by unresolved chord progressions, mirroring her inner tensions. The colour blue is indirectly present in Mitchell's imagery through the colour of the ocean and the colour of ink. *Hey Blue, here is a song for you*: Mitchell addresses

someone she calls 'Blue', possibly a nickname for somebody, or maybe she addresses a personification of depression in general. I will elaborate on this in the next chapter.

In 'California', Mitchell uses 'the blues' to describe a feeling of loneliness, and maybe homesickness: *Oh it gets so lonely/ When you're walking/ And the streets are full of strangers/ All the news of home you read/ Just gives you the blues*. As the last phrase is repeated, Mitchell underlines the message using blues tonality in the melody (E major: melody motif: G# - F# - G# - Bb - C# - **D** (blue note) - C# - Bb - C#).⁹ 'A Case of You' contains a short phrase containing the colour, like a hushed hint of the song's underlying feelings of sadness: *In the blue TV screen light*.

A different type of bluesness,¹⁰ related to disillusionment, can be perceived in 'The Last Time I Saw Richard'. According to Sonenberg, this song not only communicates reluctance to let go of ideals and aspirations in the lyrics, but also in the music. Importantly, this is underlined in features that are adopted from 'jazz, including harmony and especially a jazz-like structural approach to vocal melody', which, he argues, in part, projects 'the narrator's own resistance to the death of the 1960s dream' (2003: 20). This is evident in Mitchell's musical devices, where she seems to favour non-conformity over conventionality. She lets jazz-like improvisations influence her piano accompaniment and vocal style. Also, this resistance to the death of idealism is detectable in the lyrics, where the narrator insists that those 'dark café days' only represent 'a phase', 'a dark cocoon before I get those gorgeous wings and fly away'. As I will explain in my analysis of 'River', the image of flying represents a prevalent metaphor in Mitchell's work, resonating with themes of aspirations and idealism.

As we have seen here, imagery of travel and the colour blue are important aspects on the album both metaphorically and musically, highlighting themes of restlessness, instability, ambivalence, self-exploration and emotional disruption. I will now look more closely at some of the songs from *Blue*, examining what devices Mitchell uses to communicate emotion. I will particularly emphasize the way she applies metaphors in the lyrics to convey emotions, and how her particular vocal style, melodies and chord progressions serve as sonic metaphors to underline and add meaning to the songs.

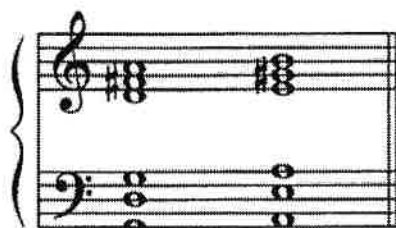
⁹ Transcription, Karen Marie Espeland (2006).

¹⁰ The word *bluesness* can be regarded as a neologism, derived from *the blues*, used by Whiteley (2000: 82f). I will use it as a near-synonym for 'melancholy'. *Blueness* is a term that also denotes such 'lowness in spirit'. However, *bluesness* seems to maintain musical connotations as well, and will therefore be useful in this context.

Chapter 4: Interpretive analysis of 'Blue'

A more specific type of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY archetype pervades this song, namely a metaphoric frame of nautical imagery, the ocean bringing into association both the literal meaning of *blue* through ink and waves, and the more figurative meaning of instability, melancholy and depression. Harmonic dissonance, lack of tonal orientation, heavily vibrating vocals and arabesque tone painting contribute to this effect of devastating bewilderment. In a *Rolling Stone* review from August 1971, Timothy Crouse described 'Blue' as 'a distillation of pain and [it] is therefore the most private of Joni's private songs'.¹ I will now take a look at how this intensity of pain and disruption is communicated.

This elegiac song is characterised by severe dissonance in its musical context, underlining the mournful message of disillusionment. Two different chords played simultaneously repeatedly provide a striking clash, reflecting the ambivalence and disharmonious state of mind of the narrator, for instance D/G and E/A (see example 1²):



Example 1

The tonalities seem to change throughout the song, creating a frame of restlessness and lack of orientation, which makes it hard to carry through a chord progression analysis. Its minor mode is mainly Aeolian, which is a scale often used in death marches and funerals.³ According to Tagg, Aeolian harmony seems to have acquired two main functions in pop and rock music; connoting notions of the ominous, fateful or implacable, and substituting standard cadences with more colourful and dramatic cadences (Tagg 2003: 16). Use of modes has been an important feature in other genres as well. Whiteley observes that

the use of modes was a distinguishing feature of Black Sabbath and subsequent heavy metal bands. Black Sabbath consciously avoided the blues-based characteristics of hard rock and instead explored the sonic effects of pure modal forms (in particular Aeolian, but also significant use of Dorian and Mixolydian), the Aeolian providing a dark quality to their work.⁴

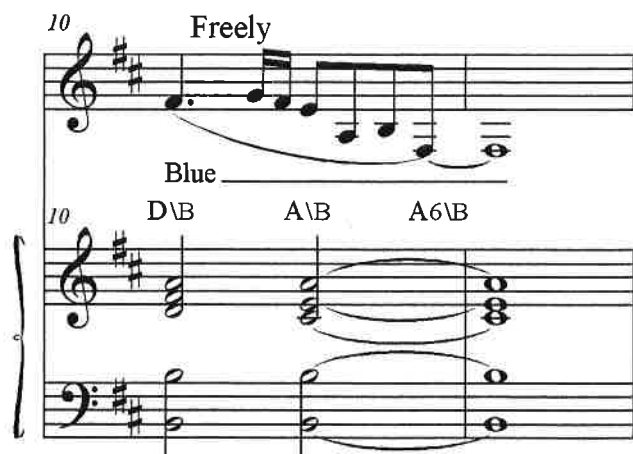
¹ Timothy Crouse, 'Blue', *Rolling Stone*, 5 August, 1971.

² From Whitesell 2003: 182.

³ I am grateful to Sarah Kerton at Salford University for this information.

⁴ In an e-mail correspondence 30 January 2006.

This seems to be in accordance with Tagg's comments about the connotations of Aeolian polyphony. Occasionally, the mode switches to Dorian, which serves as a contribution to emphasising the equivocal emotions communicated through the lyrics. Mitchell's voice is a powerful messenger, responsible for a large part of the emotional impact of the song. She brings forth her 'soliloquy to pain' (Whiteley 2000: 88) in a deeply moving manner. She allows her melody to pour out, letting her sinuous melodic streams find new ways, in accordance with the emotional truth of her narration. I agree with Whitesell's expression *arabesque* in this respect, a form of improvisation which is typical of her singing style. Originally a term belonging to the vocabulary of art, *arabesque* is also used 'in the sense of figuration, ornamentation of a melody' (HDM: 45), for instance on the word *blue* (see example 2)⁵:



Example 2

This shows how visual images are applied to music, in order to make its abstract and non-tangible qualities more concrete.

A chain of what might be called marine metaphors seems to reverberate through the song: there are several metaphorical expressions belonging to the semantic domain of the sea: *anchor*, *sail*, *shell* and *sinking*. This frame of imagery is not something new in the songs of Joni Mitchell. On her first album, *Song to a Seagull* (1968), there are several examples of 'seafaring imagery' (O'Brien 2002: 87). In 'The Dawntreader', we hear of *periwinkle*, *gilded galleons*, *ocean floor*, *harbor*, *mermaids* and *seadreams*. 'The Pirate of Penance' plays on the title of a Gilbert and Sullivan light opera, *The Pirates of Penzance* (ibid.). With words like *pirate*, *anchored*, *port*, *bounty* and *drowning* Mitchell paints an oceanic frame around the story of a nautical womanizer. In the title song, the flight of the seagull can be seen as an

⁵ I've based all my examples on Howard Wright's transcription of 'Blue' at www.jonimitchell.com/guitar. In this example, though, I have added a measure as this seems to be more in accordance with what Mitchell plays on the CD. However, the melody is my own transcription throughout, based on the album version.

image of freedom and the pursuit of one's dreams: *My dreams with the seagulls fly/ Out of reach out of cry*. Also the last song of the album, 'Cactus Tree', starts off with an image of a sailor, only one of the various wooers she alludes to in the song: *There's a man who's been out sailing/ In a decade full of dreams/ And he takes her to a schooner/ And he treats her like a queen*. However, she seems to cling to her independence, concluding in the last verse: *She will love them when she sees them/ They will lose her if they follow/ And her heart is full and hollow/ Like a cactus tree*.

At the time when Mitchell made this album, she was dating David Crosby, who was the owner of a schooner. He later claimed that the song 'The Dawntreader' was about him, because of the sea-related imagery. However, this is something Joni Mitchell later denied, saying: '...I guess people identify with songs that you write and think you wrote them just for them' (ibid.: 87). However, it seems likely that Joni Mitchell has been inspired by this period's trips to the ocean, presumably with her boyfriend at the time.

During her journey in Europe in 1970, Joni Mitchell had some new experiences of the sea in entirely new surroundings. She went travelling to Greece, Spain and France with a friend. She spent a few weeks in the coastal village of Matala, where she lived in a cave by the sea, something that was considered very 'chic' by the hippies at the end of the sixties. Here, she probably found some inspiration for new songs, and maybe used her visual inputs to create the oceanic imagery in her lyrics (ibid.: 124).

The introduction of the song sets a harmonious and reflective mood, through an undulating piano melody line, supported by repeated rolling bass and consonant harmonies. Then the calm piano flow slows down, giving way to the opening of the song with dissonant chords (Bm7 – A/B – Bm7 – A/B) and resuming its original tempo. This transition changes the feeling of harmony, giving way to a melancholic mood as the Aeolian minor melody line enters on the word *blue*, accompanied by a Bm piano chord. Mitchell sustains the word, making use of tone colouring to communicate a sense of melancholy.

Blue

In the previous chapter, I explained some of the meanings that *blue* might have. It has both a literal meaning, referring to a colour, and a figurative meaning, referring to an emotional state of depression. *Blue* is also the colour of the ocean, and therefore fits perfectly with the rest of the surrounding maritime metaphorical frame. The subsequent words are surrounded by the same melancholic harmonic clothing (Bm7 – A/B) as the word *blue*:

songs are like tattoos

In this simile, with the marker *like*, *songs* are compared to *tattoos*. The comparison is made explicit, to draw our attention to the aspects that these two phenomena may have in common. Crisp mentions *image metaphor*, where one sensory domain is compared with another (2003: 103). This seems to fit here, through the comparison of an auditory sense with a visual one. While conceptual metaphor is most often based on experiential correlations, image metaphors are based on similarity. 'Rather than re-conceptualising an abstract domain in terms of an experientially basic one, image metaphor remains within the realm of the experientially basic' (ibid.). Certainly, *songs* and *tattoos* belong in the domain of the experientially basic. A *tattoo* is also something that can be said to belong to the semantic domain of the sea. Even though tattoos have been a trendy and frequent phenomenon among young people during the last decade, tattoos have a historic association with sailors. The *Merriam Webster Online* provides this definition: 'an indelible mark or figure fixed upon the body by insertion of pigment under the skin or by production of scars'. I think Mitchell wants to point out to her listeners that a song, like love, may stick with you permanently, affecting you deeply, under your skin (see 'A Case of You', p. 73). Both this fixed quality of a tattoo and its similarity with a scar can be mapped onto the domain of songs, focusing on the profound (and sometimes painful) impact a song, or a love relationship, may have on you.

This theme of profound impact is also important in the analysis of 'A Case of You' (*Love is touching souls/ Surely you touched mine*), as will be discussed on p. 79. It may therefore seem relevant to think that the song referred to here is more than just 'any' song. One might speculate that the song in question is a love song, representing a profound love relationship. This seems to be a relevant image, her occupation taken into consideration. The men she dated around that time (Graham Nash and James Taylor) were musicians, and also singer-songwriters. Given the Aeolian minor mode and the sorrowful background chords, this profound and permanent impact of a song seems to be a painful or depressing fact. This interpretation is supported by Whitesell: 'In an image of masterful ambivalence, Joni lets the sailor's tattoo stand for the indelible lacerations of love, the needletracks of addiction, and the ink of her own pen, filling in the empty spaces' (2002: 181).

You know I've been to sea before

Here, Mitchell addresses a person, *you*. As listeners we have only vague ideas of what kind of character this might be, even though this is a very conventional way for singers to address their current partner, former partner, or utopian partner in pop songs. Generally speaking, by using *you* as a personal pronoun, Mitchell sets a frame of closeness and intimacy in the song.

As the phrase *been to sea before* starts, the left hand enters with steady bass notes, resembling the rolling rhythms of the waves, providing an appropriate rocking motion for the elegiac monologue of the singer. 'Rhythmic release' is a phrase used by Whitesell to describe this transience. Sheila Whiteley comes up with a significant association to *rocking*, which has analogies with cradles and church hymns. She mentions the church hymn written by Emma Hart Willard, 'Rocked in the cradle of the deep', and elaborates: 'given the mood of the song, the sea provides a sense of comfort, maybe a nostalgic nod back to happier times'.⁶ Her observation seems even more pertinent when considering the song's final phrase: *A foggy lullaby/ There is your song from me*. Being *at sea* not only has a literal sense, meaning 'on a sea voyage', but it can also have a figurative meaning: 'In a state of mind resembling the condition of a ship which is out of sight of land and has lost her bearings; in a state of uncertainty or perplexity, at a loss' (OED). Drawing on this idiom, Whiteley comments that Mitchell is "'at sea" with her emotions' in the song (2000: 88). And such emotional bewilderment is something the narrator recognizes from earlier on, she has been there before. This is something that the person she addresses (her partner?) is aware of.

*Crown and anchor me
Or let me sail away*

This seems to be an imperative request for her partner to settle with her or let her go. *Crown me* is a metaphorical expression echoing one of her earliest songs, 'I Had a King' from *Song to a Seagull* (1968). The song refers to her ex-husband who took her off 'for marriage too soon'. *King* connotes power, masculinity and domination. The failure of the marriage considered, *king* may have negative connotations here. Mitchell may have felt that he disempowered her: *the queen's in the grove 'til the end of the year*. Giving characters royal positions seems to add dignity and honour, giving sublime status to the partner in question. The conceptual metaphor might be expressed as follows: A RELATIONSHIP IS A MONARCHY, with the following submappings: PARTNERS ARE MONARCHS, more specifically perhaps A WIFE/ GIRLFRIEND IS A QUEEN and A HUSBAND/BOYFRIEND IS A KING. This metaphor is also used in 'Cactus Tree': *And he takes her to a schooner/ And he treats her like a queen*. Here, the connotations are clearly positive: to treat someone as a queen is an act of respect and honour.

Interestingly, a song called 'I Used to Be a King' occurs on Graham Nash's 1971 album *Songs for Beginners*. For a couple of years, he and Mitchell shared a house in Laurel

⁶ In an e-mail correspondence 30 January 2006.

Canyon as partners. Nash sings: *I used to be a King/ and everything around me turned to gold/ I thought I had everything/ and now I'm left without a hand to hold*. He seems to have recycled Mitchell's king-metaphor to express his sorrow when their joyous love affair came to an end. This is an interesting form of intertextuality, where songs seem to be in dialogue.

Anchor me is another phrase from the semantic field of the sea. Mitchell seems to compare herself to a ship owned by a sailor. For some reason, ships are considered female, and given female names, which may have inspired Mitchell when figuring out this comparison. She seems to have reused the conventional metaphor of speaking of ships as if they were women: A WOMAN IS A SHIP. This may indicate that her partner is the sailor, controlling the ship's direction. Also, this may involve the following entailment: BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS SAILING. And, more specifically, perhaps, AN ANCHORED SHIP IS A MARRIED WOMAN, or AN ANCHORED SHIP IS A WOMAN IN A STABLE RELATIONSHIP. 'Anchor me,' she begs, 'save me from despair' – 'or let me sail away'. These imperatives are strong opposites, representing black and white clear-cut outcomes as alternatives to the confusing grey zone of an 'in limbo' situation. This call for a solution to her state of flux, something like an ultimatum, also expresses the wish for someone else to take control. *Anchoring* something not only means holding something in place in water, it can also mean to 'fix as with an anchor, to fix firmly or abidingly' (OED). *Anchor* therefore connotes stability, rest, security and protection from being lost at sea. She seems to be asking for commitment – to tie her down, make her stay – or let her go. This lack of willingness to take control of her own situation seems to be an emergency solution to her chaotic sense of bewilderment. Earlier on, Mitchell has rejected matrimonial stability and traditional values, for instance when seeking closure from her relationship with Graham Nash. In a *Mojo* interview in 1998 Mitchell said: 'Graham is a sweetheart... [But he] needed a more traditional female... he wanted a stay-at-home wife to raise his children' (O'Brien 2002: 120).

Interestingly, Mitchell makes use of this marine metaphor when she recalls her feelings from the initial phase of her relationship with Nash: 'But I got really attached to Graham and I guess that's the first time I *harboured* the illusion of "forever". I really felt for the first time in my life that I could pair bond' (ibid.: 92, italics added). As Whiteley observes, this reflects the more general themes of the album: 'the failed relationships, the tensions inherent on "being on the road" (not least as a female musician) and underlying need to find a man who understands and completes her/anchors her'.⁷

⁷ E-mail correspondence 30 January 2006.

In a later song, 'The Silky Veils of Ardour', on *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977), Mitchell uses a similar frame as a description of difficulties in a relationship. Here, the element corresponding to the ocean is a *raging river*. With a direct reference to the Scottish folk tune 'The Water is Wide',⁸ Mitchell writes: *And the water is so wide/ We'll have to row a little harder*. Interestingly, two of Mitchell's most frequently used metaphors for travel are found in this folk tune, both related to flying: *neither I have wings to fly*, and sailing: *There is a ship, she sails the sea/ she's loaded deep as deep can be/ but not as deep as the love I'm in/ I know not how I sink or swim*. It seems likely that Mitchell may have used this song as a source of inspiration.

Or let me sail away: here, she is herself the agent, the subject, and asks to be set free to sail away on her own. A voyage at sea can be seen as more dangerous than a journey on land. A sea is vast, heavy winds can make your journey more challenging, and you can be capsized or even wrecked on the rocks. Her bewilderment and desperation is underlined by the dissonant harmony of the piano accompaniment, a feeling that seems to be echoed and fortified by repeated quarter triads (see example 3).

The musical score for 'Or let me sail away' is presented in three staves. The top staff is the vocal melody in treble clef, key of D major (two sharps), and common time. It begins with the lyrics 'Sail a way' and features a melodic line that starts on a half note 'Sail' (D4), followed by a quarter note 'a' (E4), and a half note 'way' (F#4). The middle staff is the piano accompaniment in treble clef, featuring a series of quarter triads: A/B, D/G, and E/A. The bottom staff is the piano accompaniment in bass clef, featuring a series of quarter notes: A2, D2, G2, and then a sequence of eighth notes: A2, D2, G2, F#2, E2, D2, C#2, B1, A1, G1, F#1, E1, D1, C#1, B0, A0.

Example 3

Initially, her melody line conflicts with the triad in the accompaniment (A/B), on the word *sail*, but gives way to consonance in the following two chords (D/G and E/A), on the word *away*. However, the melodic line and the triads of the two bars are in dissonance with the bass progression (A/B, D/G and E/A). Whitesell (2002) comments on the same dissonant chord progression, emphasizing a switch in mode from Aeolian to Dorian. The overall effect of the dissonance combined with the shifting of modes serves as a musical metaphor for her inner ambivalence, her confusion and despair.

⁸ Arr., Hamilton, Seeger, Bonhof, in Gravlie: 1997.

The upward pitch movement of her voice can be seen as representing her flight, her sailing away. Escapism seems to be a current theme of Joni Mitchell's songs. In the analysis of 'River', I will look more closely at this other variant of the JOURNEY archetype, as a metaphor of flight: *I wish I had a river/ I could skate away on.*

In the following phrases, the pattern from the first two lines of the song is repeated, but slightly altered through a rolling bass in the left hand. The harmonic background of the melodic line is equally dissonant, something noticed also by Whitesell: 'The pure tonic triad moves to a multiply dissonant, internally conflicted chord (interpretable as Bm^{7,9,11}) – as if emotionally sullied, depressed, ambivalent' (2002: 181).

*Hey Blue,
Here is a song for you*

Here, Mitchell addresses Blue with a capital B, drawing attention to the 'pivotal bluesness' (Whiteley 2000: 83) of the album, as well as themes of INSTABILITY and MELANCHOLY. There are several layers of 'blueness' here, both at literal and metaphorical levels, and various ways to interpret this, but I find it most useful not to be too specific. Some people claim that this is a reference to David Blue, a folksinger-friend who died of a heart attack at the age of forty-one. However, this is a 'legend' Mitchell herself 'promptly scotched'.⁹ Whitesell calls 'Blue' a 'totemic name for her beloved' (2002: 182). I can agree with this, but I also see the initial capital letter as a sign of a personification of the state of being blue, which is followed by the personal pronoun *you*, adding closeness to her utterance. Her song is an elegy, where she directly addresses both her lover and her own melancholy. BLUENESS IS A PERSON seems to be the underlying conceptual metaphor. It seems likely that Mitchell dedicates this song to an unnamed lover, perhaps someone suffering from depression. Also, I think the phrase can address melancholy and depression in people in general, maybe artists in particular.

As mentioned earlier, blue is also the colour of the ocean, a quality shared by another liquid referred to in the lyrics, ink:

*Ink on a pin
Underneath the skin
An empty space to fill in*

Here, Mitchell reuses her image of a tattoo. However, she now refers to the creation of it. As I suggested earlier, a tattoo can be seen in this song as an image of a love song's permanent impact on the listener. With these phrases, Mitchell implies that this song might have a similar

⁹ www.jonimitchell.com/glossary, 'Blue' [accessed on 20 April 2005].

effect on *you* as a listener, on artists, or melancholic people. This song is *ink on a pin*, she seems to say (I see this *ink on a pin* as an attribute of the previous phrase *a song for you*), creating a long-lasting tattoo, filling *an empty space*. In other songs, Mitchell has described such spare physical space to denote such a feeling of emptiness, for instance in 'Cactus Tree': *And her heart is full and hollow/ Like a cactus tree*, and in 'My Old Man': *The bed's too big/ The frying pan's too wide*. Making use of a part-for whole metaphor, Mitchell lets ink stand as a reference to her own writing, as previously pointed out by Whitesell. A trace of the same metaphor can be found in 'A Case of You': *Cause part of you pours out of me/ In these lines from time to time*. The blue ink entering underneath the skin is an image which resembles the union of blood and wine in 'A Case of You'. I would interpret both these different liquid blends as images of strong emotional impact.

Ink on a pin/ underneath the skin/ an empty space to fill in also sets a scene from a drug scenario, maybe hinting that the use of narcotics can function as a form of escapism. Drug abuse is also a theme in her next album, *For the Roses* (1972), for instance in the song 'Banquet': *Some turn to Jesus/ And some turn to heroin*, and in 'Cold Blue Steel and Sweet Fire': *Looking for sweet fire/ Shadow of lady release/ "Come with me/ I know the way" she says/ "It's down, down, down the dark ladder"*. Her partner during the making of *Blue*, James Taylor, was notorious for his problems with drug abuse.

This phrase is surrounded by the same accompaniment of dissonance as *crown and anchor me/ or let me sail away* (see example 1), repeating a painfully disturbing atmosphere, describing a feeling of emptiness equally devastating. The emptiness is partly created by what Whiteley calls an 'equivocal sus4 chord' (see D/G in example 1, first measure) implying an 'underlying instability' (2000: 84). She points out that this particular type of chord is characteristic of Mitchell's music (ibid.). The symbolic dynamic of the underlying piano harmony echoes the narrator's mournful yearning.¹⁰

An empty space to fill in indicates a void, that there is some spare physical space under the skin that needs to be filled, which is a concrete image of an abstract feeling of emptiness. There is something missing that needs to be completed, perhaps an emotional need urging to be met. 'A feeling of emptiness' is a fairly common way to express such an emotional state. Kövecses mentions the common conceptual metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS (2002: 184). Here, more specifically, THE SKIN IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS. The skin here is, metaphorically speaking, emptied of its usual content. Consequently, the vacuity and hollowness reflect a confusing feeling of

¹⁰ See my paragraph on quartal harmony, p. 32.

numbness and nothingness. This emotional state may be caused by a failed love affair. However, as the following part of the lyrics will show, the emotions may also be an expression for a more collective depression caused by the ideological downhill of the post-hippie era with the consequences of its 'sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll', 'live fast, die young' lifestyles.¹¹

*Well there're so many sinking now
You've got to keep thinking
You can make it through these waves*

Here, we are taken back to the seafaring metaphor from the beginning of the song. *There's so many sinking now* is a metaphorical expression belonging to the conceptual metaphor A PERSON IS A SHIP. *To sink* may therefore indicate to 'go under', to fail in life or even put an end to it. In the early seventies, a number of rock stars were 'sinking'. By 1972 Brian Jones, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Jimi Hendrix were gone, and Whiteley refers to these deaths as a 'chilling testimony' of 'the morbidity of rock culture' (ibid., see footnote 11). *You've got to keep thinking/ You can make it through these waves*. The hard times of this period are emphasized, the waves being a metaphor for occurring difficulties or challenges. Thus, it can be expressed through the metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE WAVES. As previously mentioned, the metaphor A PERSON IS A SHIP is a more specific component of the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Crisp (2003) mentions the metaphor DIFFICULTIES ARE OBSTACLES TO MOVEMENT, another constituent part of the journey-metaphor. EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES seems to be another relevant metaphor in this case, considering the power of the ocean (leading to *waves* and *sinking*) and their metaphorical connection with emotions of melancholy. A combination of these two constitutes a most original specification of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor.¹²

The accompanying triads here symbolically occur in a downward rubato movement as the tempo accelerates (see example 4). This, together with the imagery of sinking, seems to be in accordance with the conceptual metaphor GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN. A number of similar orientational metaphors are mentioned by Lakoff & Johnson (1980), for instance HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN.¹³ For this conceptual metaphor, the following physical basis is mentioned: 'Drooping posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state' (1980: 15). This orientational metaphor seems to reverberate

¹¹ Whiteley, 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music', lecture, April 2005, University of Oslo.

¹² In my interpretation, I was inspired by Crisp's (2003: 102) analysis of a poem by D.H. Lawrence, where a similar example of combination of two such metaphors occurs. These shared features tell us something about the similarity of these writers' cognitive and creative processes.

¹³ See also Kövecses 2000: 25.

all the way through one of Mitchell's most famous songs, 'Both Sides, Now', on her album *Clouds* from 1969: *I've looked at clouds from both sides now/ From up and down*. Also, the downward movement and pessimism echoes a phrase from her later song 'Cold Blue Steel And Sweet Fire', where she sings *It's down, down, down the dark ladder* in a sliding downward pitch movement.

so ma-ny sink-ing now you've got to keep think-ing you can

Bm7 A/B A/B D/B D/G A/G A/D

Example 4

The pattern below (example 5) is repeated in the following phrases, this time slightly varied, but in triple time, now freely slowing down the pace, as if preparing for the tranquil afterthought on *lots of laughs* (back in 4/4 measure). Calmness is here underlined by tied whole notes, mainly in the bass:

Acid booze and ass, need-les, guns and grass Lots of laughs Lots of laughs

Bm7 A/H A/B Gmaj7 D/G A/G D/E G9sus4/E Asus4/E Asus4

Example 5

Acid, booze, and ass
Needles, guns, and grass
Lots of laughs lots of laughs

Mitchell cynically paints an image of the hedonistic youth culture at the end of the sixties, the rock 'n' roll lifestyle with drugs, violence, intoxication and parties. This is not actually a sentence, but several, stark noun phrases without action. She just states that the phenomena were there, at the time, perhaps indicating immobility as opposed to progress. As she lists her

long string of words, it almost seems as if she is repetitively painting these as objects on a canvas with her brush, creating a dark painting of a destructive phase.

*Everybody's saying that
hell's the hippest way to go*

Again, Mitchell refers to a current idea of the *époque*, in accordance with the previous lines, repeating the downward triad and melodic movement seen in example 4. Here, the metaphorical downward movement is repeated in the accompaniment, in accordance with the lyrics, which provide another example of a GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN metaphor.¹⁴ *Heaven* and *hell* are examples of such binary opposites. Whiteley points out that this phrase resonates with the deaths of Joplin, Hendrix, and the death of optimism (2000: 88).

*Well I don't think so
But I'm gonna take a look around it though*

I think these sentences echo a phrase from 'A Case of You': *I'm frightened by the devil/ and I'm drawn to the ones that ain't afraid* (see p. 78). The *devil* and *hell* are certainly linked, as metaphors for evil and destruction. In both songs, Mitchell seems to want to distance herself from such negative attitudes and her own 'devils', or destructive sides. However, she wants to *take a look around it though*, and she's *drawn to those ones that ain't afraid*.

*Blue
I love you*

Here, she declares her love, whether she addresses a partner or her own depression. However, the declaration is not as harmonic and doubtless as it seems on print. The chords and the scales add a specific colouring to the utterance and alter its meaning. They are deeply significant, adding a vital element of poignancy and insecurity to the phrase (see example 6).

¹⁴ See Lakoff & Johnson (1980: 16) and Kövecses (2000: 25).

Example 6 shows a musical score with a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has the lyrics "I love you" and is sustained. The piano accompaniment features a chord progression: Bm7, A/B, F#m9, F#m9, F#m9, D/E, A/E. The piano part is marked "Freely Acc."

Example 6

Her declaration is sustained and poignant, illustrated by the chord progression from the tonic Bm7, A/B to the dominant minor, F#m9 (i-VII-v), creating new tension. In my interpretation, the dominant minor, not previously used in the song, adds further devastating disillusionment to her elegiac bewilderment.

The intermezzo before the final phrases is characterised by a rather optimistic piano melody in the right hand, which alludes to the introduction to an earlier song on the album, 'My Old Man'. This quotation, another example of intertextuality, is also commented on by Whitesell, and he elaborates: 'The piano cadences in these four measures... capture and import the brief memory of a happier time' (2002: 183). *We don't need no piece of paper from the City Hall*, Mitchell sings in this song, perhaps singing about the happy days she shared with Nash in their house in Laurel Canyon. The quotation from 'My Old Man' may then serve as a nostalgic glimpse from the past, immediately following the strong, yet painful declaration of love from the previous phrase.

Blue
Here is a shell for you

Again, she addresses 'Blue', as if dedicating this song to someone. She seems to be offering her message wrapped in a shell, in accordance with the other marine metaphors of the song. In a *Rolling Stone* interview in 1971, Mitchell describes the surroundings of the Grecian village where she lived for a few weeks on her sabbatical trip to Europe: 'The caves were on high sedimentary cliffs, sandstone, a lot of seashells in it'.¹⁵ It seems likely that Mitchell was inspired by her surroundings on her journey when creating the imagery of her lyrics.

Inside you'll hear a sigh
A foggy lullaby

¹⁵ Larry LeBlanc, 'Joni Takes a Break', *Rolling Stone*, 4 March, 1971

There is your song from me

This song is her sigh, her complaint, her elegy. What we hear is a 'foggy lullaby' coming from inside a shell. *Foggy* can literally refer to the weather. In a figurative sense, it can indicate that there is a lack of clarity of vision, indicating confusion and bewilderment. SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING can then be the underlying conceptual metaphor. *Lullaby* connotes childhood and bedtime. Kövecses mentions the metaphor THE LIFE OF HUMAN BEINGS IS A DAY: 'Morning corresponds to infancy, midday to mature adulthood, and evening to old age' (2002: 9). Hence, death arrives at night, through sleeping. Perhaps *lullaby* could be an expression for the disillusionment, the belief that 'the end is near', everything is going down. The childhood connotations may then illustrate that her partner or her peers are still young, even though some of them may be about to be lulled into the big sleep. Also, this may indicate some sort of longing back to innocence, perhaps similar to *we got to get ourselves back to the garden* in 'Woodstock'.

The last word of the phrase *There is your song from me* is sustained, with an intense vibrato which almost switches from one tone to the next. The intensity of emotion communicated here seems to underline her own state of mind, describing her own self by colouring the word *me* with endured, vibrating emotion. A similar effect occurred earlier in the song, with the performance of the phrase *I love you*, where the words were enhanced with vibrato. The pitch movement of both phrases was upward, creating further intensity.

The final phrase comes to rest at a slightly surprising, bright B7 chord, giving a more optimistic feeling. This final phrase is interpreted by Whitesell as 'a symbol of hope not quite deferred', making a 'bid for freedom and openendedness, with a wry nod to the classic musical vehicle of ambivalent emotion, the blues' (2002: 183). In a blues chord progression in E minor, the B7 has a vital importance as the dominant, which may explain his interpretation.

Summing up, this song seems to be a core example of how Mitchell composes on metaphor. Dipping her compositional brush in blue colour, she paints with words belonging to the domain of the sea, creating a frame of marine metaphors. The waves of the ocean can be said to indicate blueness and instability, cleverly underlined by the dissonance and ambivalence of the musical context. Also, ambivalence of tonal orientation is reflected through striking harmonic clashes between a rocking piano movement and quavering melismatic melodies. All together, these devices enhance themes of inner disruption, insecurity and bewilderment. *Crown and anchor me/ Or let me sail away* seems to be at the very centre of Mitchell's dilemma: craving independence and freedom as well as longing for a man that completes her.

Chapter 5: Analysis of 'A Case of You'

This song can be interpreted as a highly personal and strong declaration of love for a man Mitchell chose to break off from in favour of following her musical and creative muse. 'A Case of You' is often considered one of Mitchell's most moving songs. What contributes to this intensity of emotion? Intuitively roaming along a wide vocal register, vacillating in her extensive use of large intervallic leaps, intense vibrato and sustained whole notes, Mitchell's voice evokes empathy with her listener. Her use of tone colouring intensifies the message of the lyrics and fortifies and colours the imagery. A stream of metaphors related to liquids flows through the song: it is through these images of merging liquids that a sense of relational intimacy is communicated, albeit with a devastating feeling of ambivalence and instability. Such an ambivalent duality is underlined in the rhythmic accompaniment: the dulcimer representing travel, hence independence, and the syncopated rhythms of the band connoting heartbeats, i.e. feelings of affection. My analysis investigates how contrasting themes of CONSTANCY vs. INSTABILITY and RELATIONAL INTIMACY vs. INDEPENDENCE are communicated in the song through metaphors and music. I also compare an early live version of 'A Case of You' with the recorded version, where the lyrics and performance differ slightly, altering the overall meaning of the song to some extent.

Mitchell uses the dulcimer,¹ a type of string-instrument, as accompaniment for her song. This dulcimer is what we hear in the introduction to the song: it carries a stepwise melodic line, with C major as basic tonality,² accomplished by parallel thirds exchanged with parallel fourths in every other measure. This was a practical instrument for Mitchell to bring along as she went travelling in Europe, and four of the songs on *Blue* are accompanied by the dulcimer. She explains how she chose her technique for playing the instrument:

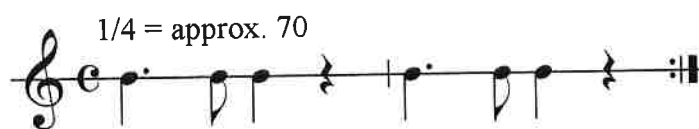
I'd never seen one played before. Traditionally, it's picked with a quill, and it's a very delicate thing that sits across your knee. The only instrument I ever had across my knee was a bongo drum, so when I started to play the dulcimer I beat it. I just slapped it with my hands. (O'Brien 2002: 124)

¹ 'The Appalachian dulcimer is a fretted string instrument with usually three or four strings.' The instrument achieved a renaissance through the urban folk music in the 1950s and 60s.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachian_dulcimer [accessed 19 December 2005].

² Listening to this song on the album, people with perfect pitch may notice that Mitchell and her band play in Db major, a semitone above c, which is the key signature of current transcriptions of the song (e.g. in *Joni Mitchell: Anthology* (1974: 72)) Perhaps she feels more at ease with the tonality of Db? Many musicians think that key signatures using flats (b) have a softer quality than the sharp ones. This is probably a deliberate choice to underline the basic mood of the song, which has to do with 'tone colour' or timbre. For simplicity's sake, I have chosen to follow the notation in C major. (I am grateful to Berge Espeland for this information.)

This slapping sound is what is heard throughout 'A Case of You'. The steady heart-beat rhythm of this instrument is continued throughout the song and the throbbing sound creates a reflective atmosphere of calmness (see example 7).³



Example 7

The heart is the symbolic seat of emotions (de Vries 1974: 243), and the pulsating feeling in the accompaniment underpins the emotional content of the lyrics.

Sheila Whiteley suggests that the 'acoustic guitar is analogous to the sketch-pad and implies movement' (2000: 84), and I believe that this may also apply to the dulcimer. As the instrument was mainly chosen for its portable qualities, I interpret the sound of the instrument as a pervading echo of travelling in the song, a continuation of the journey metaphor that runs through the entire album.

Just before our love got lost

In this phrase, love is treated as a physical, tangible object that can be found, held on to and lost, expressed through the metaphor LOVE IS AN OBJECT. It is quite common for metaphors to work in this way, where something abstract, love, is treated as if it were something concrete, an object.

A sense of intimacy and closeness is created in the opening lines of the narrative through Mitchell's use of the personal pronouns *our* and *you*. The effect is to impart a sense of sincerity and subjectivity to her story.

*You said
'I am as constant as a Northern Star'*

The *as + adjective + as + noun phrase* structure is a specific type of simile. Goatly raises the question of whether a simile with this structure is just an ordinary comparison. This can be tested by reversing the phrase: 'the northern star is as constant as I (am)'. The meaning obtained from this phrase is clearly different from the original, and the structure is an example of a decreasing degree of metaphoricity. The speaker specifies which feature of the source domain she wants mapped onto the target; precisely which quality *I* and *a northern star* have

³ Transcription, Karen Marie Espeland (2006).

in common, and this, she suggests, is constancy, i.e. stability. The northern star is the only star in the northern sky to remain in position, whereas the others tend to move around in circles. For this reason, it was used as a guide to a ship's latitude, to facilitate navigation. It is obvious that no human being can be that constant, which is why the line works like a hyperbole. This property is lost when the clause is reversed, and brings about a change in meaning. This hyperbolic pledge of fidelity seems ironic when the listener has just learned that the couple's 'love got lost' shortly after his utterance.

As constant as the northern star is actually a quote from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*:

*I am constant as the northern star,
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality
There is no fellow in the firmament.*⁴

Caesar is bold enough to compare himself to the 'brightest stars of all', 'the unmoving Pole Star' (ibid.), and this has the effect of enhancing his ego, creating a somewhat hubristic statement. However, this is not the first time Mitchell has quoted Shakespeare. 'That Song About the Midway' on *Clouds* (1968) contains the phrase *And you stood out like a ruby/ In a black man's ear*.⁵ This echoes the following phrase from *Romeo and Juliet*:

*It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
As a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear -
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear.*⁶

Interestingly, another reference to this play is found in 'Talk To Me' from *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977), where Mitchell shows a jocular sense of self-irony, poking fun at her own inclination to quote Shakespeare: *I stole that from Willy the Shake/ You know - 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be'/ Romeo Romeo talk to me. 'Neither a borrower nor a lender be'*⁷ is an explicit reference to *Hamlet*, here used as a meta-reference, creating irony and a complex web of intertextuality. In an interview in the *New York Magazine* in May 2005, Mitchell gives an account of some of her influences, mentioning Shakespeare⁸ who was often quoted by her mother, as she later recalls in an interview with Camille Paglia.⁹ Taking into consideration the intertextuality in 'A Case of You', the comparison in Mitchell's song

⁴ William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (3.1.51, 60-62) (1998: 236).

⁵ I am grateful to Patrick Leader on the JMDL for pointing this out to me.

⁶ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (1.5.44-46) (2003: 97).

⁷ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* (1.3.75) (1962: 19).

⁸ Ethan Brown, 'Influences: Joni Mitchell', *New York Magazine*, 9 May, 2005.

⁹ Camille Paglia, 'The Trailblazer Interview', *Interview*, August 2005.

appears equally inflated/egotistical, not least when her own instability is taken into account. In context, it suggests an underlying irony in its pledged constancy, which vibrates uneasily with the prevalent themes of the album: the narrator's repeated inclination to sail away/fly away, maintaining the independence to be a traveller in life, freely moving onwards to wherever the road may take her. However, as discussed earlier, in 'Blue' (p. 56), the narrator also has a wish to find a man who anchors her and, as such, there is an underlying tension.

A star is something far away and out of reach. Perhaps the comparison with a star in the sky may be a metaphor for the distance in the relationship. In the *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*¹⁰, de Vries claims that *star* in general can symbolise 'heavenly light (the spirit) fighting the forces of darkness' (1974: 440). It can thus be a sign of hope and optimism in a surrounding darkness of despair and depression, something that seems relevant to the succeeding textual context. Perhaps this is how the addressee of the song sees himself? Nonetheless, the *darkness* and *devils* referred to later in the song contribute to the irony of her lover's comparison. In accordance with this, Whiteley contends that the star traditionally is 'aligned with hope and faith, often in the hour of crisis when darkness appears to immobilise the senses' (2000: 86). She particularly mentions the phrase *constant as a northern star* as an example of such a 'moment of crisis', and adds: 'At the same time, [star] can signify a struggle with life, a seeking of destiny and an attempt to become more independent' (ibid.). Whiteley also comments that 'the star is also [traditionally] associated with the birth of a child', which brings to mind another song from the album, 'Little Green'. This is a lullaby for Mitchell's daughter, who she gave up for adoption at the age of twenty-two. Mitchell carried her secret with her for several years, and a journalist's review of the album from 1971 wrote that the song contained such 'cryptic references that it passeth all understanding' (O'Brien 2000: 138).

The imagery associated with *star* is clearly significant to Mitchell, and there are several instances throughout the album. In 'this Flight Tonight', for instance, she uses *starbright* as a nickname for her lover:¹¹ *Oh starbright starbright/ You've got the lovin' that I like all right*. This song is reminiscent of the words and the rhyming in this nursery rhyme:

*Starlight, star bright,
First star I see tonight,*

¹⁰ I have used the terms *symbol* and *symbolic* in accordance with Wales's definition: 'a symbol is a sign, whether visual or verbal, which stands for something else within a speech community'.

¹¹ Also noted by Whiteley 2000: 86.

*I wish I may, I wish I might,
Have this wish I wish tonight*¹²

While there is no evidence to suggest that Mitchell was inspired by the nursery rhyme, the intertextuality seems to add a certain innocence and nostalgia to the song.¹³

Another type of intertextuality occurs earlier in the song, where Mitchell refers to the *northern star*, elaborating on the phrase from 'A Case of You':

*I saw a falling star burn up
Above the Las Vegas sands
It wasn't the one that you gave to me
That night down south between the trailers
Not the early one
That you can wish upon
Not the northern one
That guides in the sailors*

The verse picks up on associations with *star* that was commented on earlier: hope, guidance and loss.

The subsequent line in 'A Case of You' introduces one of several metaphors with religious references in the song:

And I said, 'Constantly in the darkness'

Here, Mitchell picks up on and develops one feature of the previous phrase, *as constant as a northern star*, and elaborates on it. The constancy of the northern star is moved into a new textual context, turned into an adverb, and applied to *darkness*. *Darkness* connotes negativity, destruction, and evil. The word *darkness* has clear religious connotations. From the conceptual metaphor HAPPINESS IS LIGHT (Kövecses 2002: 85) it follows that darkness relates to the opposite feeling, consequently, DEPRESSION IS DARKNESS, or SAD IS DARK (Kövecses 2000: 25). I will elaborate on the conceptual domain of *darkness* and *devils* later in the chapter. Here, *Constantly in the darkness* may be interpreted as an indication of how the narrator perceives constancy, maybe revealing her reasons for wanting to get away – perhaps from the 'dark constancy' of her own or someone else's depression – or from the ups and downs of a long-lasting or negative relationship.¹⁴

¹² I am grateful to Catherine McKay on the JMDL for this information.

¹³ It is important to bear in mind that such interpretations are dependent on the listener. She activates her preliminary knowledge in responding to a cultural artefact. So, such intertextual activations rely on the negotiation of meaning between the listener and the mediated artwork and are thus relative and fragmented.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Halvor Eifring for his observations here.

Melodically, the aspect of constancy is underlined in the repeated notes of the motif on the word *constantly*. The singer's iterative and recitative-like *I said constantly* reinforces the constancy referred to in the lyrics. The narrator seems incapable of understanding her lover's utterance *as constant as a northern star*, so she withdraws, telling him where she can be found:

*Where's that at?
If you want me I'll be in the bar*

Bar is semantically linked with the field of drinking, an area of liquids that will be of major importance later in the song. Whiteley provides an appropriate comment on this phrase, describing it as 'a very flippant retort to her lover, it cuts through his sentimentality by situating her in the bar, not in the heavens!'¹⁵ A bar is a place where people gather to consume alcoholic drinks, meet other people and have a good time. Conversely, it can be somewhere a lonely person goes to drown his/her sorrows. As such, while drinking can be interpreted as a metaphor for absorbing life, for living, it can also be a means of escapism. This depends on the type of drink: there seems to be a contrast here, between absorbing purifying liquids linked with biblical imagery: sacramental wine and water ('streams of living water will flow'¹⁶), and alcoholic liquids that may lead to intoxication or, indeed, an adverse dependency. There is an underlying sense that the main character may be trying to dull her senses, trying to blot out the reality of her relationship with her lover. This is what she chooses rather than sustaining 'dark constancy'. This can be related to other liquid images and themes of the album: ocean and river related to TRAVEL and INSTABILITY, and wine and blood related to INTIMACY and MUTUAL IMPACT.

In the next phrase of 'A Case of You' Mitchell draws a frame of images of everyday life:

*On the back of a cartoon coaster
In the blue TV screen light*

This *blue TV screen light* reflects the name of the album *Blue*, and gives a hint of an underlying feeling of blueness; melancholy. The fact that she refers to a blue light seems like some kind of a paradox: *light* connoting happiness (HAPPINESS IS LIGHT), and *blue* depression.

¹⁵ In an e-mail of 10 April, 2006.

¹⁶ John 7:37b,38.

The next phrase in the song is rooted in Mitchell's background. As I mentioned earlier, she was born and grew up in Canada. Consequently, Canada can be seen as symbolic of her own background, her own past, as part of her identity, her self, and the phrase is sung as an expression for a nostalgic longing for a stability that used to be:

*I drew a map of Canada
Oh Canada*

The effect of repetition (*Canada/ Oh Canada*) is fortified through a mounting melodic line, the pitch movement rising one octave, with a noticeable dynamic change, a crescendo increasing the intensity of the phrase (see example 8)¹⁷:



Example 8

The chord progression from G7 to Am, from the dominant to the tonic substitute ends in a minor mode, underpinning the feeling of sadness. Simultaneously, other instruments enter to back her up as she sings: James Taylor on guitar and Russ Kunkel on drums. These instruments underpin the beat, and stay with her throughout the rest of the song.¹⁸ The intensity communicated at this point seems pertinent: Why has Mitchell chosen to let these instruments enter on the word *Canada*? Perhaps it evokes colourful childhood memories from when she grew up on the Canadian prairie? Maybe thoughts drift off to what she experienced there: her bout of polio as a child, her dancing and painting, her illegitimate daughter, the short and unhappy marriage with Chuck Mitchell. In a *Sounds Magazine* interview with Penny Valentine, Mitchell explains that 'the land has a rich melancholy about it. Not in the summer because it's usually very clear, but in the spring and winter it's very brooding and it's conducive to a certain kind of thinking' (Valentine 2000: 48f). Perhaps this sense of gloom is what Canada represents for Mitchell. The minor harmonies certainly seem to connote this mood. In addition, the emphasised *Oh Canada* may be an expression of nostalgia, a longing back to the way things used to be, a theme that also seems important in another song on the

¹⁷ All transcriptions are based on 'A Case of You' in *Joni Mitchell: Anthology* (1974: 72ff).

¹⁸ Analysing the title track of *Court and Spark*, Daniel Sonenberg (2003: 137) interprets the 'meshing together' of Mitchell's voice, piano and band as a 'communion of souls'. Perhaps the same can be said about this song. Maybe Mitchell's vocals and dulcimer merging with Taylor's guitar and Kunkel's drums can represent the amorous union referred to later in the lyrics. Interestingly, he later refers to such 'blending of timbres' as a 'sonic metaphor of total selfless coexistence with another' (ibid.: 138).

album, 'River'. In 2005, *Songs Of A Prairie Girl* was released, an album where Mitchell has collected songs that were inspired by her Canadian background. She comments: 'In looking at the album I found that it's all about winter and wanting to get out of there!'¹⁹ This utterance reflects a main theme of the album.

A similar device is used in 'California', where the narrator is *sitting in a park in Paris, France*, longing back home to California. Mitchell chooses to perform the word *California* with a similar octave interval (see example 9, measure 3).



Example 9

It is then suggested that this may function as a leitmotif, connoting nostalgia for home.

Mitchell sings *I drew a map of Canada*, her thoughts drifting off to times gone by, and in a subsequent phrase:

With your face sketched on it twice

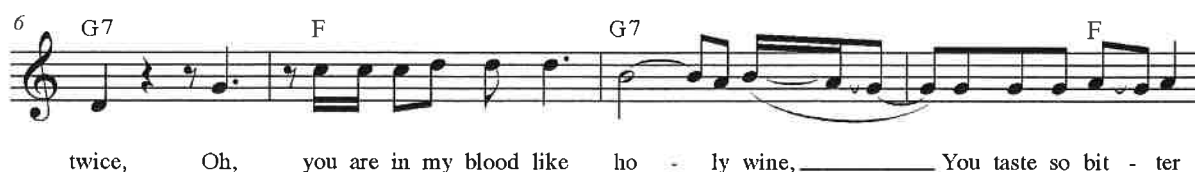
The words *drew* and *sketched* belong to the semantic domain of the visual arts. Later in the song, Mitchell describes herself as a *lonely painter*, something that I will comment on further on p. 77. *Your face* can be seen as a metonymy, where one part stands for the whole: THE FACE STANDS FOR THE PERSON. This can be an image of the impact this man has had on her life, on her identity. The act of sketching indicates a tentative drawing suggesting temporariness, and it seems likely that this is an image of a relationship.

There is a further example of a metaphor with religious connotations in the following phrase, the Christian imagery reflecting the sacredness of love:

Oh you are in my blood like holy wine

Mitchell's voice and melody reinforce the intensity of these powerful images: the pitch movement's sudden leap from D upwards to G and the high C and D on *Oh you're in my blood like*, together with the vibrato on *holy* and the arabesque melodic movement on *wine*, all enhance the emotional intensity of the lyrics (see example 10).

¹⁹ Camille Paglia, 'The Trailblazer Interview', *Interview*, August 2005.



Example 10

It is problematic to find an appropriate paraphrase for *to have someone in one's blood*. It seems to reveal a certain sense of intimacy. To have something (or someone) *under one's skin* is a somewhat similar idiomatic expression. Wikberg contends that many idioms were 'first used as metaphors before they were lexicalized. Thus many idioms cannot be discussed without referring to metaphor...' (2001: 187). Some idiomatic expressions are based on metonymy (Kövecses 2002: 208). Metonymies may emerge in different ways, a part stands for a whole, a whole stands for a part, or a part stands for another part. The metonymy PART OF A THING FOR THE WHOLE THING is traditionally referred to as synecdoche. Here, the metonymy used seems to be BODY LIQUID (BLOOD) FOR THE HUMAN BEING.

Blood seems to have two main areas of connotations: one secular field related to life and vitality and the other related to religion. Biblical theology of blood is governed by the principle that 'the life of a living body is in its blood' (*New Catholic Encyclopaedia* 2003: 443). This seems to support the connotations referred to in the previous paragraph. *Blood* is said to be a strong symbol of sacrifice, both in relation to the animal sacrifice of cultic life and the atonement and martyrdom of Christ (*Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*). The references of blood and wine make us think of communion and sacrifice. In The New Testament, we can read the following: 'In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me"'²⁰. Drinking the 'blood of Christ' has a purifying effect on a person's sins due to Christ's atonement, involving propitiation for the sinner.

Blood is a life-giving force, a 'vital fluid; hence the vital principle, that upon which life depends; life' (OED). It has also been regarded as a seat of emotion, temper and passion. Blood has been brought into various mythical relations with the sun, according to the *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*: 'In Egypt Ra (the Sun) was said to have originated from drops of blood' (Marthaler 2003: 442). The association between blood and fire is mentioned, underpinning connotations of passion. The conceptual metaphor LUST IS FIRE (Kövecses 2002: 262) seems relevant here. For the example *He was a red-blooded male who could not*

²⁰ I Corinthians 11.25.

be expected to live like a monk (ibid.: 212), Kövecses refers to the metonymy BLOOD FOR SEXUAL DESIRE (ibid.: 263). Also, the metonymy SEXUAL FLUID FOR THE HUMAN BEING seems relevant here. *You are in my blood* may thus have erotic, sexual or metaphysical connotations.

These connotations seem to have been detected by other listeners. Bishop R. Vincent Lavieri, calling Joni Mitchell 'one of the best [Christian imagists] of the 20th century', seems to have captured some of the essence of these lyrics in his interpretation, marked by his knowledgeable background in Christian imagery:

Joni grasped what few have: that the sexual act in love is sacramental. And in her brilliance, she expressed it in a gender-non specific wording that says that all sexual actions in a deep abiding love communion of two where we can drink physically of each other in purest biological emittances is yet the ultimate in the love made carnal (flesh) in the highest spiritual union of two souls – and then take us to the tragedy of that probable ending – she could drink a case of her lover, and still stand for more, and yet we know, it will not happen.²¹

A more explicit expression of praise is singer, composer and musician Tori Amos's comment on the song, underlining its erotic connotations: in an interview with *Word Magazine* in February 2005, Amos highlights 'A Case of You' as the best lyrics she has ever heard, and explains: 'Why? It's obvious! We all drink our men! I've gotten drunk off my men loads of times and if you can make that happen in a song, fantastic!'²²

like holy wine

There are, then, connotations both of the sacred and the profane, with the impact of *you* and its comparison to the impact of holy wine, highlighting the sacredness of their relationship. De Vries refers to *wine* as 'sacrificial libation, to replace blood' (1974: 503), which seems suitable here. In my research on the connotations of *blood* and *wine* I found that their symbolic meanings seem to coincide to some extent. This appears to match what goes on in the song: *blood* (*my blood* – metonymically representing the singer, the woman) and *wine* (*like holy wine* – representing the addressee, the man) seem to be fused into one liquid. The union between holy wine and blood seems to correspond to 'carnal love', a sacred union between the man and the woman in the relationship, a conclusion that fits with Lavieri's interpretation above. This biblical reference to the Holy Communion activates the listeners'

²¹ In an e-mail to the JMDL 3 September 2005.

²² Gray, Mike, *Lyricists*, Word Magazine, February 2005, reprinted at http://www.thedent.com/more.php?id=1751_0_1_0_C [accessed 8 February 2006].

shared preliminary input space. I believe that this intertextual echo triggered by the lyrics here contributes to the evocation of emotions.²³

The idea of union is further reflected in Lakoff's conceptual metaphor LOVE IS A UNITY (OF TWO COMPLEMENTARY PARTS)²⁴, exemplified through metaphorical expressions *We are one* and *She is my other/better half*. Also, a related conceptual metaphor mentioned is EMOTIONAL INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS (ibid.), which seems relevant here. The physical closeness involved through the fusion of wine and blood can be seen as a metaphorical representation of the emotional intimacy of the two lovers.

It is problematic to establish one conceptual metaphor for *You are in my blood like holy wine*. A PERSON IS WINE does not seem to be an appropriate conceptual metaphor, even though the addressee of the song, *you*, is compared to *holy wine*. Seemingly, there is no set of correspondences from the source domain (*wine*) that are mapped onto the target domain (*you*, a human being). It is thus suggested that Kövecses's reference to 'a blend' (2002: 228), where two or more input domains make up a blended, impossible space, provides a particular route into the problem.²⁵ *You are in my blood like holy wine* has three input domains, one input domain of HUMAN BEINGS, a second input domain of HOLY WINE and a third input domain of BLOOD. These are fused into one blended space, an imagined domain where persons can be consumed as alcoholic liquids and flow as fluids in their veins. The blended space contains some properties of the input domain of holy wine: its drinkable, intoxicating, addictive, purifying and sacred qualities; some properties of the domain of blood: its connotations of life, passion and sacrifice; and some properties of the domain of two human beings interacting in a love relationship. This is just a tentative solution to some of the problems that one encounters when applying the theory of conceptual metaphors to a text. Nevertheless, this phrase shows characteristic qualities of poetic metaphor and how a writer draws on various conceptual metaphors and metonymies to form complex and original metaphorical compositions.

A liquid being absorbed (wine) is an image of the reciprocal impact of two persons in a love relationship. There are several words belonging to the semantic field of drinking in the lyrics: *bar*, *holy wine*, *taste (bitter/sweet)*, *drink*, *case*, *pours*. LIVING/LOVING IS DRINKING can be the overall metaphor, where the source domain of drinking is used in order to

²³ See Burke (2003), 'Literature as Parable'.

²⁴ <http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors> [accessed 14 February 2006].

²⁵ See my explanation of BLENDING in the introduction section, p. 18.

understand the target domain of living or loving, of the impact human beings have in relation to each other.

*You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh I could drink a case of you darling*

You taste so bitter and so sweet and *I could drink a case of you* are metaphorical expressions belonging to the LOVING IS DRINKING mapping. To drink a case of SOMEONE is a 'non-congruent' type of drink. Thus, this is, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, a 'deviation of rules of language' (Leech 1969: 6), one example of how the artist exercises her freedom as language user. This may be seen as an example of blended space, as mentioned earlier. *Bitter* and *sweet* are contrasting opposites, perhaps revealing the implied double nature of the addressee. The last time Mitchell sings the refrain, the phrase is slightly altered: *You taste so bitter and so sweet* evolves into *you're so bitter, bitter and so sweet*. The qualities mentioned, *sweet* and *bitter*, can be ascribed to both drinks and humans. Towards the end of the song, Mitchell seems to narrow down her focus to one input domain, that of human beings, making her description of the addressee seem more naked, direct and less camouflaged.

The musical score for 'Example 11' consists of three staves of music. The first staff (measures 13-15) has a treble clef and a 2/4 time signature. It features a melody with a long note on 'you' and a sustained note on 'feet'. Chords C, G7, and Am are indicated above the staff. The second staff (measures 16-18) continues the melody with a triplet on 'feet' and a sustained note on 'feet'. Chords G7, C, and G7 are indicated above the staff. The third staff (measures 19-21) shows the melody ending with a sustained note on 'feet'. Chords C, F, Dm7, C, G7, and C are indicated above the staff. The lyrics are: 'I could drink a case of you', 'darling, and I would still be on my feet', and 'Oh, I would still be on my feet'.

Example 11

Mitchell uses tone colouring on the words *you* and *darling*, her voice resting on these words, as if caressing them, like a tender expression of affection (see example 11). The minor tonalities underlining the word *you* contribute towards creating a plaintive mood. The word *feet* is sustained to last for five measures, on the same tone (C) (see example 11). Sustaining a word like this requires muscle strength to create tension and support in your stomach region. Consequently, this staying power can be seen as an illustration of strength of character,

providing the stability inherent in being on one's feet. At the same time, this echoes the theme of CONSTANCY.

*And I would still be on my feet
Oh I'd still be on my feet*

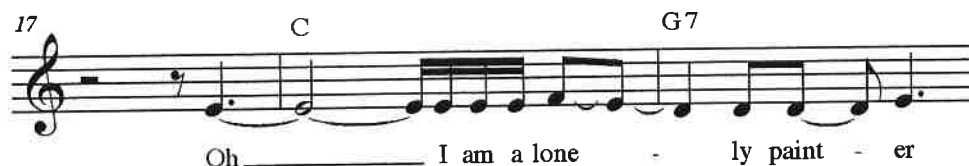
On my feet is related to the impact of alcohol on one's body. His impact on her would not prevent her from standing, i.e. affect her life in a negative way. She would not fall, literally or metaphorically, due to the level of drunkenness. Or, as Lavieri suggests, it may be an expression for the failure of the love relationship; the 'tragedy of that probable ending – she could drink a case of her lover, and still stand for more (still be sober), and yet we know, it will not happen'.

Mitchell's texts are open to interpretation, and there is not one fixed meaning here. Listeners bring with them a perspective, and link their ongoing aesthetic experience with presuppositions and preliminary knowledge, influencing their interpretation. Certain features of the songs can be attributed to Mitchell's poetic insights. The fact that Mitchell is a poet, painter and musician makes her aware of colour and nuance, which has certainly marked her artistry. Music and painting are her two passions, she reveals in Karen O'Brien's biography: 'The difference is that I write my frustration and I paint my joy' (2000: 10). In this song, she uses metaphors from her own private world in order to communicate her feelings:

*Oh I am a lonely painter
I live in a box of paints*

As previously discussed, there seems to be a semantic field in the song consisting of words related to painting and drawing: *sketched, painter, box of paints, cartoon coaster, draw, and map*. Seeing is usually necessary in order to experience any form of visual art, and painting or drawing most commonly involve seeing. Our vision is closely linked with understanding. The conceptual metaphor SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING is common in our everyday language. A painting is sometimes created in order to make others see, or understand, and perhaps improve one's own vision or understanding of life. Perhaps the painter wants to communicate how she sees life? Maybe more general metaphors can be expressed as follows: SEEING IS PAINTING, or LIVING IS PAINTING.

In this phrase, the word *lonely* is sustained, and the melodic downward movement underpins the sad state of loneliness, creating an elegiac mood, constituting a poignant complaint (see example 12):



Example 12

The melodic line is sustained by repeated notes, going down a major second and going back to the starting point, dwelling on the same tone, implying the constancy and monotony of her situation.

The next phrase again uses metaphorical expressions with religious connotations, as discussed earlier:

*I'm frightened by the devil
And I'm drawn to those ones that ain't afraid*

Devil has different meanings, figurative and literal: "the devil" is in Jewish and Christian theology, the proper appellation of the supreme spirit of evil, the tempter and spiritual enemy of mankind, the foe of God and holiness, otherwise called Satan' (OED). Also, it can be used figuratively, as a 'baleful demon haunting or possessing the spirit; a spirit of melancholy'. *Devil* has another figurative use applied to qualities: 'The personification of evil and undesirable qualities by which a human being may be possessed or actuated.' In the *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery*, it is mentioned that *devil* is an archetype illustrating 'the dangerous aspect of the unrealized dark side of man; his "shadow".' This 'dark side' is clearly linked with the *darkness* referred to in the beginning of the song. Also, it can be linked with *devils* referred to later in the song: *She knew your devils and your deeds*. So, what kind of devil is it that the narrator is afraid of in this song? To me it seems likely that she is frightened by the diabolic qualities of human beings, or the 'spirit of melancholy' referred to. Also, *blue devils* are mentioned, connoting 'despondency, depression of spirits, hypochondriac melancholy'. The fact that she is drawn to those not afraid of *the devil* might reflect her attraction towards the counterculture of the time, possibly resonating with the phrase *hell's the hippest way to go* in the song 'Blue'. An analogy to *I'm frightened by the devil/ And drawn to those ones that ain't afraid* can be found in the song of duality, 'Shadows and Light', from the album *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* (1975). Here, Mitchell writes: *Threatened by all things/ Devil of cruelty/ Drawn to all things/ Devil of delight*. She seems to pick up on the duality of feelings – *threaten* and *attracted* – and the opposition between the human experience of *cruelty* and *delight*, analogous to contrasting qualities of good and evil.

Also, this seems to hint at the tension between the erotic (from the Greek *Eros*) love or the creative principle, and thanatic (from the Greek, *Thanatos*) – death, the destructive principle.²⁶

*I remember that time that you told me, you said
‘Love is touching souls’
Surely you touched mine*

Again, the metaphors are complex: the transitive verb *touch* can have both physical and non-physical senses. Here it seems likely that the non-physical sense is the one in question: ‘to affect, make difference to ..., to influence, move’. Love involves emotional closeness, and he managed to get close to her. It is suggested that this type of metaphor relates to personification: souls become animate, and capable of committing a physical act of touching. Metonymic souls can thus be interpreted as the part in a PART FOR WHOLE-metonymy, where soul stands for the person. Also, it is common to refer to body, mind and spirit/soul as a whole, and soul is part of this threefold view of human beings. Certainly, the phrase seems to indicate how love makes people’s emotional selves affect one another, and how he (her lover) influenced her, deeply. The intensity of emotions is underlined by the melodic movement (see example 13):

21 G7 F G7 A m

me, you said ‘Love is touch-ing souls’ Sure - ly you touched mine _____ ‘cause

Example 13

The interval from *souls* to *surely*, E to C is a major sixth. As I see it, this melodic leap underlines the word ‘surely’, making it sound more convincing, more sincere and more pungent. The tone colouring on *mine* also adds to this poignancy.

Her evidence for this strong emotional impact is apparent in the next lines:

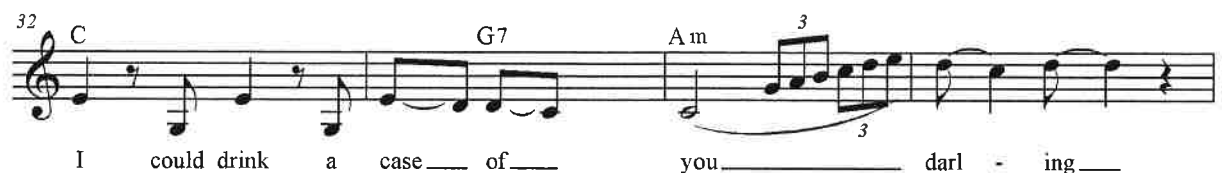
*Cause part of you pours out of me
In these lines from time to time*

This may be seen as the continuation of the blended space consisting of the input domains of blood, wine and human beings mentioned earlier. This time, the addressee, or the liquid (*wine/blood*), pours out of her, not into her. It may be synonymous with bleeding, perhaps. As mentioned before, *blood* symbolises life. Additionally, Marthaler contends: ‘Some scholars

²⁶ I am grateful to Sheila Whiteley’s input here, in an e-mail dated 10 April 2006. See also Whiteley (2005: 3).

make blood the symbol of death. But blood is a sign of death only when it is poured out. This is precisely how blood came to stand for life' (2003: 444). The pouring of a fluid may be an image of the relationship coming to an end, but also perhaps echoing libation. *In these lines* seems to be a reference to the art of writing, how the experience she has had with him has influenced her writing (and life) in a profound manner. Also, this would then be seen as representing the mind, one dimension in humans. Interestingly, the phrase shows another sign of her Nietzschean influences. 'Of all writings I love only that which is written with blood. Write with blood: and you will discover that blood is spirit,' Nietzsche says in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1969: 67). Furthermore, Nietzsche's words seem to mirror the human threefold of BODY, MIND and SOUL prevalent in 'A Case of You'. BODY is represented in *blood*, MIND in the act of *writing* (*part of you pours out of me/ in these lines from time to time*) and SOUL in *spirit*, the references to the Holy Communion and the phrase *love is touching souls*.

The verse *Oh you're in my blood like holy wine* is repeated, emphasising the importance of these words. As I see it, the verse she has just sung reveals something important that touches the narrator deeply. Consequently, this repetition is slightly altered and intensified (see example 14):



Example 14

This intensification is carried through on the word *you*, where there is a forceful stepwise triplet escalation from C via G to E, a total interval of an octave plus one third. *My darling* is lifted to a higher pitch than the first time the verse was sung. It takes some energy to produce such a rise in pitch, creating an effect of being in touch with deep emotions about her loved one.

After this vehement and seemingly profound emotional content, we are as listeners left with an instrumental intermezzo, as if to get some time to ease down and reflect before Mitchell tells a new part of her story:

*I met a woman
She had a mouth like yours
She knew your life
She knew your devils and your deeds*

Based on my findings earlier in this chapter, *your devils* may be a metaphorical expression for her lover's melancholic nature, his dispositions for despondency and depression. It may be formulated like this: ONE'S DEVIL IS ONE'S DEPRESSION. The person for whom it is likely that she wrote this song was also a musician and a song-writer, so he may have used his *devils* for artistic purposes. 'If you let go of the demons ..., the angels fly away too,'²⁷ Joni Mitchell says in an interview, referring to the advantageous impact 'lowness in spirit' may have on one's creativity.

She had a mouth like yours

This sentence may either be interpreted as the addressee of the song and this woman's physical appearances being somewhat similar, or that they speak in the same manner or of the same issues. These two possibilities can be expressed through the following metonymies: THE MOUTH STANDS FOR THE PERSON, or THE MOUTH STANDS FOR THE ACT OF SPEAKING. This woman, possibly his mother, one might speculate, resembles the man in the song, and seems to know a lot about him, as she gives the narrator some advice:

*And she said
"Go to him, stay with him if you can
Oh but be prepared to bleed"*

Be prepared to bleed seems to suggest that Joni Mitchell must be prepared to suffer if she chooses to continue the relationship with this man. SUFFERING IS BLEEDING seems to be the conceptual metaphor here. The *heart bleeds* is sometimes used figuratively meaning 'to express great anguish, sorrow or pity... to bleed inwardly' (OED). *Bleeding* seems to have been used figuratively for some centuries. Chaucer wrote in 1374: 'For whiche myn herte now right gynneth to blede'.²⁸ Marthaler contends that the blood pouring out in connection with blood rites symbolises 'the broken heart of the sinner' (2003: 444). Bleeding may then imply a broken heart, emergence of sadness and pain in the heart, the 'seat of the emotions' (de Vries: 1974: 243).

What seems most striking in these lyrics is the liquid-metaphor that reverberates throughout the song, through blood, wine, paint and ink. This seems linked with the fact that we often perceive our bodies as containers of liquid. According to the *Merriam-Webster Online*, *drunk* can also have the meaning of being 'dominated by an intense feeling'. This is

²⁷ Interview with Joni Mitchell in the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003).

²⁸ OED online, Troylus IV. Prol. 12.

clearly related to the conceptual metaphor THE BODY IS A CONTAINER FOR THE EMOTIONS.²⁹ A different way of expressing this same conceptual metaphor is EMOTIONS ARE ENTITIES WITHIN A PERSON, which can be exemplified through, for example, *I'm drowning in sorrow* and *She was overflowing with joy* (ibid., see footnote 29). From this metaphor, Lakoff derives the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS WITHIN A PERSON, for example *He poured out his hate on us* and *She was bubbling with excitement* (ibid.).

In her song 'For the Roses' on the album with the same title, Mitchell seems to use this conceptual metaphor rather explicitly in the phrase: *And pour your simple sorrow*. Also making use of this conceptual metaphor, a journalist wrote: 'When the inevitable break up came, 27 year old Joni poured her heartache into "Blue"...'³⁰ Frequently called 'the language of feeling', music often seems to be spoken of as a liquid. An example of this occurs in 'Ladies of the Canyon' from the album with the same name, where Mitchell sings: *pouring music down the Canyon*, treating music as if it were a type of fluid. Mitchell also makes use of this metaphor when explaining the process of creation, for instance when talking about the writing of 'Furry Sings the Blues': 'When the second verse came that was a thrill 'cause it all just poured out at once' (Levitin 2000: 189). In 1974, Joni Mitchell was interviewed by Malka, who asked: 'Do you ever envision or fear that the well of creativity might dry up?', and Mitchell replied: 'Well, every year for the last four years, I have said, "That's it." I feel often that it has run dry, you know, and all of a sudden things just come pouring out' (Malka 2000: 73). Both seem to regard the source of creation as a liquid in some container, which might dry up. In an interview from the *Toronto Star* the same year, Mitchell explains that the song 'For Free' on *Ladies of the Canyon* (1970) was written when

the money and success seemed distasteful. The fame and fortune seemed out of all proportion to what I was doing, although there were times where I felt I deserved every bit of it... I felt a little whorish about selling my soul, putting a price on it. I would get up and pour out fragments of it for money and applause, not only my life but the life of someone I was with in a close personal relationship. (O'Brien 2000: 119)

So, we see that Mitchell also speaks of her soul as if it were a liquid. Her use of metaphor seems to relate to this quote from clergyman Henry Ward Beecher³¹: 'Every artist dips his brush in his own soul, and paints his own nature into his pictures.' This may be true of

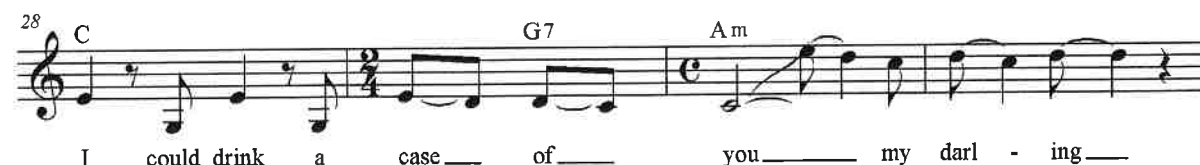
²⁹ http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/Emotions_Are_Entities_Within_A_Person.html [accessed 14 February 2006].

³⁰ Nick Johnstone, 'All Time Classics', *Uncut*, October 2003.

³¹ *Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit*, 1887 http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Henry_Ward_Beecher/ [accessed 14 February 2006].

Mitchell's paintings as well as her music. Summing up, there seem to be three related areas perceived as various types of fluid: feelings, soul and music.

The verse *You are in my blood like holy wine* is repeated a third time. Also this time, the melody is slightly altered, most notably on the words *you* (see example 15):



Example 15

Previously, the interval was one octave plus one third. Here, the interval is the same, but now, the leap is more instant and direct: there are no triplets to take us to the top, step by step. The intensity of her swoop makes her statement equally puissant.

At the end of the song, Mitchell's humming forms a sort of denouement, a comforting fade-out for her wistful and emotionally intense song. The song ends with a Bb major chord, which is a harmonic deviation according to the expected chord progression in C major. Ending with the dominant mediant is unexpected, but it gives colour and creates a certain effect, communicating an openness (non-conclusive), possibly illustrating that the closure of the relationship is not definite.

Earlier version of 'A Case of You'

In order to get a glimpse of the creative process behind a song, as well as the genealogy of metaphors, a comparative analysis with an early version of the song has been included. The song shows the way in which Mitchell has shifted her emphasis, lyrically and musically. This is significant to my overall analysis not only because digging into the archaeology of a song provides insights concerning the emergence of metaphors. More importantly, it helps me identify what contributes to setting the mood of a song.

In 1970, Mitchell was heard performing a different version of 'A Case of You'. This early version was from a BBC program called 'Joni Mitchell Sings Joni Mitchell', taped in September 1970 and broadcast on 9 October 1970.³² Notably, the tempo of the song is more rapid, and her phrasing different, less metric, almost constantly off the beat, appearing more strolling and relaxed, giving the song a less plaintive feeling. Her way of singing *I... could*

³² I am grateful to Bob Muller on the JMDL for this information.

drink... sounds more careless, more distant, and closer to speech. The lyrics also differ significantly from the version published on *Blue*. Most striking is the occurrence of metaphors related to the domain of the sea, a feature which is totally absent in the album version. There are words like *ship*, *northern fish*, and *squall*, all of which come from the semantic domain of the sea. Later, Mitchell has chosen to leave out this feature from 'A Case of You' and develop it further, to constitute the oceanic imagery in the song 'Blue', published along with 'A Case of You' on the 1971 album.

*Just before our ship got lost you said
"I am as constant as a northern star"
"You're silly as a northern fish" says I
"If you want me I'll be in the bar"*

A number of phrases of the lyrics are different, which tells us something about the creative process of the artist. The song's opening phrase is *Just before our ship got lost*. The word *ship* has been replaced with *love* in the later version, something that tells us the metaphoric implications of the word *ship*. This metaphor seems related to BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP IS SAILING, which I commented on in the song 'Blue'. The difference here is that the ship is owned by both of them, while in 'Blue' there seems to be an element of ownership, i.e. dominance of one of the parts over the other one: *Crown and anchor me or let me sail away*. She seems to compare herself to a ship, whereas the ship is something belonging to both of them, as a metaphor for their relationship, in this early version of 'A Case of You'.

This time, the narrator's response to the hubristic phrase *I am as constant as the northern star* also provides a play on the phrase, pointing at the pretension and irony of it. As *silly as a northern fish* is her answer, enhancing the stupidity of her partner. The reporting phrase *says I* signals a poetic and archaic language style, a feature she seems to have revised in her later version, where the colloquial *where's that at* indicates her lack of understanding in a more speech-like manner.

*On the back of a cartoon coaster pad
That didn't make me laugh at all
I drew a map of Canada
Oh Canada
And I charted our last squall*

Here, the words *cartoon coaster* are swapped with *cartoon coaster pad*, which provides a slight change in meaning. The *blue TV screen light* is absent – and instead, there is a disapproving comment on the content of the cartoon: *that didn't make me laugh at all*.

Coaster not only denotes a 'plate to protect a surface' – it also has meanings related to the domain of the sea: 'a resident of a seacoast' and 'ship'. However, I believe the first denotation is the meaning intended here. Another sign of oceanic imagery is to be found in this phrase: *And I charted our last squall*. Originally a nautical expression, *squall* means a 'sudden and violent gust, a blast or short sharp storm, of wind' (OED). From this literal meaning, a figurative meaning derives: a 'disturbance or commotion; a quarrel; a storm'. The word *charted* is interesting: it can mean 'map or chart', and more specifically an abbreviation for 'sea-chart'. Also, as a colloquial expression, it relates to Mitchell's occupation with music, meaning a 'musical arrangement or score'. A meaning linked with the previous one is 'a list of the gramophone records or tunes that are most popular at a particular time' (OED). Summing up, the narrator seems to express in this phrase how she scrutinised their latest commotion to judge the strength of their relationship.

*I'm frightened by the devil
And I'm scared to death by saints*

The second line here is different from the album version, which reads: *I'm drawn to those ones that ain't afraid*. The binary opposites devil-saints are replaced by a different duality, namely the opposite feelings of fear and attraction: *frightened* and *drawn to*. In this example, we have near-synonymous *frightened* and *scared to death*. (The latter is clearly stronger, and a hyperbole.) She doesn't seem to feel at home with either the *devil* or *saints*. I suppose these notions can represent different groups of people, maybe contrasting communities. Or, perhaps they may express opposite qualities within human beings; good and evil. Such a duality has been previously expressed in Mitchell's songs, as I have commented on in the previous chapter. One instance where good and evil are juxtaposed occurs in 'That Song About The Midway' from *Clouds*, *You were playing like a devil wearing wings*. A similar expression can be found in 'Down to You' on *Court and Spark*: *You're a brute you're an angel/ You can crawl you can fly too*.

*Cause part of you pours out of me
In black and red designs*

In these lines from time to time replaces the phrase 'In black and red designs' on the 1971 album. The early version contains a phrase referring to her work as a painter, whereas the corresponding phrase in the *Blue*-album refers to her occupation as a writer or a poet. What is similar is the use of her experience of love in her creative process.

Why the colours red and black? In her thesis 'Colour Words in English and Norwegian', Stine Pernille Raustøl mentions the metaphor *red heat of rage* linked with the conceptual metaphor ANGER IS FIRE (2005: 43). Also, she refers to the conceptual metaphor SAD IS DARK (31). Such implications of colour use can be supported in Mitchell's imagery. In the song 'Marcie' (1968), *red* is directly associated with certain features from everyday life, maybe from childhood, and contrasted with *green*: *Reds are sweet and greens are sour, Red is autumn green is summer, Red is stop and green's for going*, and finally, related to feelings: *Red is angry green is jealous*.

In 'California' on the album *Blue*, there is a reference to a *red red rogue*, possibly referring to this person's temperament. During her trip to Europe, Mitchell met the red-haired Carey Raditz in the village of Matala. At a live concert at the Troubadour in 1972, Mitchell played 'Carey', referring to the title character as having a 'flaming red personality, and flaming red hair and a flaming red appetite for red wine'.³³ In this song, the phrase *bright red devil* is mentioned, possibly with reference to, and maybe playful mockery of, the same person. Also, *devil* can be colloquial for a lively and mischievous person. Whiteley observes that *devil* '(as in devil may care attitude) also means someone who is light-hearted, carefree',³⁴ which seems to bring Carey into association. The occurrence of the colour red on an album called *Blue* is interesting, and forms a contrast.

The juxtaposition of colours, namely red and black, is enhanced in 'That Song About the Midway' on *Song to a Seagull* (1968) where Mitchell writes: *And you stood out like a ruby/ in a black man's ear*. Red is the colour of blood, and again, this may be related to Nietzsche's dictum, 'write in [your] own blood', reflecting truthfulness of expression.

The colour black has also been used earlier in Mitchell's imagery: in 'The Beat of Black Wings' on *Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm* (1988) and in 'Black Crow' on *Hejira* (1976). In 'Off Night Back Street' on *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977), black seems related to difficult feelings of pain and jealousy: *You give me such pleasure/ You bring me such pain/ Who left her long black hair/ In our bathtub drain?* In the song 'Roses Blue' on *Clouds* (1969), *black* seems to be equally related to negativity: *When all the black cards come you cannot barter*. In 'Down to You' on *Court and Spark* (1974), *blackness* is linked with loneliness and the concealing of something: *Clutching the night to you like a fig leaf/ You hurry/ To the blackness/ And the blankets/ To lay down an impression/ And your loneliness*.

³³ www.jonimitchell.com/glossary 'Mermaid Café' [accessed on 18 April 2006].

³⁴ In an e-mail correspondence of 17 April 2006.

'I Think I Understand' on *Clouds* provides another example of duality, namely that of darkness and light:

*Daylight falls upon the path
The forest falls behind
Today I am not prey to dark uncertainty
The shadow trembles in its wrath
I've robbed its blackness blind
And tasted sunlight as my fear came clear to me*

Blackness here is clearly linked with negative emotions, and together with *darkness*, *shadow* and *fear* it forms a contrast to *daylight* and *sunlight*, and *clear*. In 'This Flight Tonight' on *Blue*, there is an example of imagery similar to the previous one, *blackness* conveying negative emotion:

*Oh blackness blackness dragging me down
Come on light the candle in this poor heart of mine*

The lyrics I have investigated here differ from Mitchell's later version, and can tell us something about the history of a song and the artist's creative process. She must have changed her mind at some point, revising her work, and chosen to withdraw the metaphorical expressions related to seafaring (*ship*, *fish*). As evidenced by her lyrics, this feature is absent in her 1971 version of the song. Mitchell seems to have enhanced the imagery related to the domain of the sea, etc. in the song 'Blue' instead, e.g. *anchor*, *sail away*, *shell*, *sinking*, as I have shown in my analysis on p. 52. Also, as I have pointed out, her explicit use of colours is also interesting in the 1970 version: *red and black designs*. Colours are expressed less directly in the later version, such as *wine*, *blood* and *darkness*. Still, the semantic contrasts seem salient in both versions. The increased tempo in this early version contributes to making the mood of the song quite different from the album version: the swift rhythm makes the message more uplifting and less poignant. The tension inherent in her ambivalence does not seem as tormenting as in the later version. Consequently, the overall meaning conveyed appears less melancholic.

Summing up, 'A Case Of You' seems to communicate an inner disruption related to themes of RELATIONAL INTIMACY vs. INDEPENDENCE and STABILITY vs. INSTABILITY, and as such, the song can be seen as thematically similar to 'Blue'. The ambivalence connected with such themes is communicated most strongly through Mitchell's performance, where the increased efforts needed to produce such melodies have an impact on the listener. The

intensity of emotion thus seems to derive primarily from the way she uses her voice: her melodic tone colouring, leaden vibrato, sustained notes and wide ambitus. The metaphors related to fluids represent the contrasting opposites of relational intimacy and independence. The potential for mutual impact, intimacy and carnal love is represented through images of the metonymic and sacred liquid blend of blood and wine, naturally involving a certain sacrifice of independence. The latter theme seems evident in other fluids, namely those of ink and paint, representing the narrator's creative path. The same opposites seem present in the rhythmic accompaniment: the dulcimer echoing travel and independence, whereas the throbbing heart-beats connote love, or life. Also, Mitchell's melodic contouring seems to communicate ambivalence: stability through her sustained notes, and instability through her vibrato and fluctuating melodies. These opposites are mirrored in the lyrics: the stability linked with Canada and the northern star is a stark contrast to the instability of travel, ambivalence and restlessness. Altogether, the narrator vacillates between themes that can be linked up with the album title *Blue*, resonating with issues of melancholy, ambivalence and escapism (*if you want me, I'll be in the bar*). As suggested from the comparative analysis of the two versions of the song, this potential for melancholic mood is closely linked with tempo and vocal performance. All in all, the liquid metaphors reverberating through this song, marked by biblical imagery and a conscious use of colour, show relevant features of Mitchell's metaphorical universe.

Chapter 6: Interpretive analysis of 'River'

Karen O'Brien describes this song as 'the saddest "festive" season song imaginable' (2002: 140). Here, I will discuss which devices Mitchell uses to produce such an effect of nostalgia and melancholy. The intertextual activation of 'Jingle Bells' promotes sympathetic resonance with the listener, creating a mood of nostalgia. The pentatonic scale with its lack of leading tones and melodic tension effectuates a floating feeling, perhaps mirroring the image of a river and the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS. This song contains two images of major importance in Mitchell's works: river and flying. The wish for a frozen river seems to indicate a desire to escape from both a location and a feeling, a nostalgic longing for an emotional STABILITY that can be linked with her childhood and Canada. A more specific type of travel, the image of flying can also be linked with ESCAPISM, as well as themes of FREEDOM and INDEPENDENCE. As these images of river and flying are seen as central in Mitchell's imagery, I will give examples of how these metaphors occur in some other songs.

The song opens with a melodic quotation from 'Jingle Bells' (Mitchell's version in example 16¹, the original in example 17²):

Example 16

Example 17

As we can see from the two examples, the extracts are clearly similar melodically. However, the last part of measures 2 and 3 are sustained in Mitchell's version, by use of augmentation

¹ All transcriptions are based on 'River' in *Joni Mitchell: Anthology* (1974), pp. 60-65.

² Based on 'Bjelleklang' in *Barnas store sangbok* (1972).

and fall in the melody line, ending on the dominant tone g in bar 4, which is the end of the introduction. The light, bouncy energy of the original version is replaced by a reflective feel. Harmonically, Mitchell does something unusual: in the opening bars she uses Fmaj7 to harmonise a melody in C, providing a somewhat strange and discordant atmosphere for the subsequent lyrics. The melancholic harmonic and rhythmic wrapping of the melody is surprising, evoking a nostalgic feeling of Christmas. The cheerful lyrics belonging to the tune are in stark contrast to the mood created by Mitchell, establishing a sense of irony: 'Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way, oh what fun it is to ride in a one horse open sleigh!' This intertextual dimension is thus an important means for creating such an impact on the listener, referring to a song most people know and have feelings connected to. Whiteley points out that 'the "out of tuneness" of the intro provides a musical metaphor for not belonging in the context of Christmas, a time when the awareness of being alone is particularly acute' (2000: 89). As the lyrics will show, the narrator feels alienated in her surroundings, with an urge to get away, and this fact is foreshadowed and illustrated in the introduction to the song.

The evocation of Christmas continues through the descriptive lyrics, painting a picture of typical images of this festive season: trees, reindeer, and Christmas carols:

*It's coming on Christmas
They're cutting down trees
They're putting up reindeer
And singing songs of joy and peace*

Here, the use of *they* and later *I* as personal pronouns add further emphasis to the feeling of alienation and distance, creating a sense of not belonging, of being alone. Christmas is a time when tradition and togetherness with your family is important, and you often want things to be the way they used to be. Nostalgic tendencies lurking the rest of the year may blossom around Christmas time.

The melody is characterised by pentatonic motifs in several parts (bars 9-10, 15-19 and 21-27). Pentatonic scales lack melodic tension, as there are no leading tones. This gives a rather floating, hovering feeling, maybe reflecting the alienated mood of the narrator. Mitchell uses a lot of repetition in the melodic development in this song, each identical melody line adding further arguments to her feelings of alienation, longing and self-reproach, even though slight variations are added occasionally. The verse consists of three identical motifs followed by a more expanded variant, where the pitch moves upwards, creating emphasis on the last sentence, before the conclusive wish to get away (see example 18):



Example 18

As she sings *I wish I had a river*, the melody centres on a pentatonic turn in A minor, mostly around the minor third, which is the most important interval in pentatonic scales (see example 18). The opening phrase has an ambitus of a fourth. The first time the melody motif accompanying *I wish I had a river* is presented, it is moved up to the minor third, continuing up to the fourth. As we will see, this is an interval the narrator breaks free from later in the song.

The next musical motif on *I could skate away* has an ambitus of a fifth, an upward and downward movement, lingering on the long leading note B (thus leaving the pentatonic scale, going back to the major). The tone colouring gives a clear picture of a floating movement, as if the skater rests on the word *on*, sliding away.

Oh I wish I had a river I could skate away on

The narrator expresses a longing to get away from where she is, both with respect to her state of mind and her geographic surroundings. California does not provide the same Christmas mood she used to know in earlier times, back in her childhood Canada. But her wish is utopian, as the temperature of sunny California would rarely get below freezing, and an icy river would never occur. Nevertheless, this image of a frozen river comes to represent escapism, a means for getting away from it all, through an impossible gateway to the past, back to childhood innocence. *River* also provides another example of the journey archetype; the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor. When skating, you are able to get around just using your own feet, a lot quicker than on foot. However, it is of course a means of transport restricted to certain geographical areas and certain temperatures. Combining LIFE IS A JOURNEY with the metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS or EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES, one might see a frozen river as an image of suppressed feelings. Hence, her urge to skate away becomes a wish to escape from and distance herself from her own emotions.

As we will see, skating occurs several times in Mitchell's lyrics. Interestingly, it is likely that Mitchell went skating as a little girl in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where she grew up, something that might have inspired her use of imagery. In the song 'Circle Game' from

Ladies of the Canyon, a boy does his skating on a river every year, on *ten clear frozen streams*, each of these representing a year in his life: *Then the child moved ten times round the seasons/Skated over ten clear frozen streams*. It seems as if the image of skating on an icy river can represent a yearning for stability, and childhood nostalgia of home.

In a different song, 'Song for Sharon' (a conversation in song form with her childhood friend Sharon Bell (O'Brien 2002)) on the album *Hejira* (1976), a childhood image of skating also occurs, but now comes to stand for something different:

*When we were kids in Maidstone, Sharon
I went to every wedding in that little town
To see the tears and the kisses
And the pretty lady in the white lace wedding gown
And walking home on the railroad tracks
Or swinging on the playground swing
Love stimulated my illusions
More than anything
And when I went skating after Golden Reggie
You know it was white lace I was chasing
Chasing dreams*

Mitchell here looks back in time, to her childhood days, telling how she chased her illusions of *white lace*, metonymy for 'matrimonial love'. Her skating hunt for *white lace* then comes to represent the pursuit of (illusionary) life-long marital happiness, the fairy-tale idea that 'one day my prince will come'. Perhaps the name 'Golden Reggie' is a fictional name for a boy she used to like as a girl, where *Reggie* may be a modernisation of Latin *regis*, meaning 'king'. This links up with previous images of *king*, for instance as seen in my analysis of 'Blue', p. 55, where Mitchell wrote *crown and anchor me*. However, the narrator here seems to be chasing 'prince charming', and not the other way around. She is not lying in her glass coffin, waiting for her 'prince' to come along. As O'Brien points out,

[a]s a member of the first generation of women to be liberated by the Pill, the sexual revolution and feminism, Mitchell highlighted the residual longing for enduring love, for the happy-ever-after ending that was not incompatible with the new freedoms – even if they might, at times, have made uneasy and restless bedfellows (2002: 150).

The act of skating is therefore not just a flight; it is also an image of the pursuit of one's dreams and romantic illusions, 'the residual longing for enduring love'.

In April 2005, the album *Songs of a Prairie Girl* was released, with a photograph of Mitchell herself, skating, dressed in black, on the cover and inner sleeve. The pictures were first used for the album *Hejira* in 1976, and constitute 'some of the most striking artwork of

Mitchell's career' (O'Brien 2002: 137).³ They were taken by Mitchell's tour photographer Joel Bernstein, who originally had this idea for a sleeve shot for *Blue* five years earlier, as an image referring to 'River' (ibid.: 177). This song title was first intended to be the name of the album, and inspired Bernstein in his plan for a sleeve shot with Mitchell skating. However, the album title was changed into *Blue* (ibid.: 136). Originally named *Travelling*,⁴ *Hejira* can be seen as a parallel to *Blue*, as the concept of travel seems to reverberate throughout the albums as a metaphor. Both albums are thus pervaded by the journey archetype. In these photos, Mitchell is dressed in black, with a black shawl, resembling a black bird, or a black crow, which is also the name of a song on *Hejira*. Later, I will comment on the metaphor of flying, which is present in a number of songs, particularly on *Hejira* and *Blue*.

The image of a river occurs in several of Mitchell's songs. In 'Sisotowbell Lane' from *Song to a Seagull* (1968) Mitchell describes what appear to be childhood memories: *We have a rocking chair/ Somedays we rock and stare/ At the woodlands and the grasslands/ and the badlands 'cross the river*. In 'Lesson in Survival' on the album following *Blue*, *For the Roses* (1972), 'river' comes to represent harmonious tranquillity: *I need more quiet times/ By a river flowing*. A similar instance occurs in 'Judgement of the Moon and Star' from the same album: *Your solitary path/ Draw yourself a bath/ Think what you'd like to have/ For supper/ Or take a walk/ A park/ A bridge/ A tree/ A river*. In *Court and Spark* (1974) from the album with this title, the idea of moving along a river as pursuit of romance seems to be recaptured:

*Love came to my door
With a sleeping roll
And a madman's soul
He thought for sure I'd seen him
Dancing up a river in the dark
Looking for a woman
To court and spark*

Here, *dancing up a river* is linked with a search for romantic liaisons. The river is *in the dark*, something that adds an ominous frame of sombreness, maybe implying some risk, or negative emotion. This impression is continued in 'Trouble Child' from the same album: *So why does it come as such a shock/ To know you really have no one/ Only a river of changing faces/ Looking for an ocean*. Here, the river is a stream of people, with an urge to find their ocean.

³ Also, a scene of Mitchell skating wearing a black shawl occurs on the live concert DVD *Shadows and Light* from 1980, images similar to her album covers. The songs played along with this image are 'Hejira' and 'Black Crow'.

⁴ Instead, Mitchell decided to call the album *Hejira* after finding the word in a dictionary: it is Arabic, meaning 'exodus or migration, a breaking of ties.' (O'Brien 2002: 179).

Maybe this is an image of her serial-monogamous life, changing partners, who all, like her, look for constancy, their final destination, their home, their ever-lasting love.

In 'The Silky Veils of Ardour' from *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1976), some of the same elements of search for love are captured, through similar imagery: *I wish I had the wings/ Of Noah's pretty little white dove/ So I could fly this raging river/ To reach the one I love*. Also, in the title of the song, there is the same reference to *veils* as in the *white laces* of 'Song for Sharon'. The river is *raging*, possibly meaning 'wild' or 'mad', also echoing the metaphors EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS and EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES. On the basis of the other instances of *river*, I would interpret this as an expression of a wish for a peaceful shortcut to escape frustrating feelings and the vehement process of searching for love.

In 'Paprika Plains', a different song from the same album, *river* recurs as an image: *I dream paprika plains/ Vast and bleak and God forsaken/ Paprika plains/ And a turquoise river snaking [...] Below me/ Vast Paprika plains/ And the snake the river traces/ And a little band of Indian men/ With no expressions on their faces*. Here, Mitchell's occupation as a painter seems particularly evident through her visual and colourful descriptions: the river is *snaking* and *turquoise*, and the *paprika plains*, a depiction of the warm colour of her childhood prairie. By the use of the word *snaking*, we picture the river as a bending, sliding stream. However, the word *snake* gives other connotations here, particularly through the inversion in the later line: *And the snake the river traces*. *Snake* has biblical allusions, for instance to Adam and Eve, the Garden of Eden and the fall of Man, as a symbol of evil. There is a contrast between this phrase and the previous phrase I referred to. *Snake* and *Noah's pretty little white dove* appear to be striking opposites. In both cases, biblical images are linked with *river*. I referred to some of the same duality in my analysis of 'A Case of You', where I mentioned *a devil wearing wings* from 'That Song about the Midway' from *Clouds*. This duality of lightness and darkness, *shadows and light* is apparent in a great part of Mitchell's work.

In 'Cool Water' from *Chalk Mark in a Rainstorm* (1988) this image of the river is further developed: *In my mind I see/ A big green tree/ And a river flowin' free/ Waitin' up ahead/ For you and me/ Cool clear water*. Here, the river can be an image of a healthy relationship. *Cool and clear* seems to suggest that the metaphor SEEING IS UNDERSTANDING. Combined with EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS, *clear water* might indicate clarity of vision and rationality, not being blinded by emotions. However, there seems to be some negativity present here as well, revealed in these lines: *Some devils had a plan/ Buried poison in the sand/ Don't drink it man/ It's in the water*. This image considered, *clear water* seems to

indicate a relationship free of negativity and viciousness, *poison* and *devils*, although tempered by a sense of caution.

In her more recent album, *Taming the Tiger* (1998), *river* also seems to be an image linked with relationships in her songs 'Facelift' and 'Love Puts on a New Face':

*We pushed the bed up to the window
To see the Christmas lights
On the east bank across the steaming river
Between the bridges lit up Paris-like
This river has run through both our lives
Between these banks of our continuing delights
Bless us, don't let us lose the drift
You know, Happiness is the best facelift*

Here, *river* can also be an image the pursuit of love in life, in general. *[D]on't let us lose the drift – let us keep going*, she seems to say, 'don't let us lose the urge to search for love, or the ability to love'. Some of the same can be said about the next lines from 'Love Puts on a New Face': *He said "I wish you were with me here/ The leaves are electric/ They burn on the river bank/ Countless heatless flames"*. Mitchell uses nature to express inner feeling, a common poetic device. The river is in motion, the river bank represents a place where the river is going through. The burning leaves can be a metaphor for love, or passion. Mitchell makes use of similar metaphorical expressions in 'Help Me' from *Court and Spark* (1974): *'Cause I've seen some hot hot blazes/ come down to smoke and ash*. It is not unusual to express passion through heat, as in the conceptual metaphor LOVE IS FIRE (Kövecses 2002: 203). Interestingly, Kövecses mentions the example *My love is such that rivers cannot quench*, quoting from a love poem by Anne Bradstreet (1613-72). A harmonious and optimistic declaration of her love for her husband and one of her most well-known works, the poem appears to be frequently used for weddings, on various websites, listed as a 'classic wedding reading'.⁵

As we have seen, *river* stands as a reoccurring image in Mitchell's songs, often linked with the pursuit of romance and a longing for stability and enduring love. Often, the image seems descriptive of her emotions, both positive and negative aspects of herself and the relationships she establishes. In 'River', the frozen stream becomes a means of escapism from herself, her negative emotions and her unsatisfactory surroundings. A frozen stream can be considered more 'stable' than a river, and it seems as if the narrator considers such stability more desirable and easier to relate to. Thus, the icy river becomes a means of distancing in

⁵ http://weddings.about.com/od/yourweddingceremony/a/classicreadings_2.htm [accessed 13 April 2006].

two respects: not only will the liquids be frozen, hence the emotions suppressed, she can also use this river to skate even further away.

*But it don't snow here
It stays pretty green
I'm gonna to make a lot of money
Then I'm gonna quit this crazy scene
Oh I wish I had a river I could skate away on*

Here, the pattern from the first verse is continued, both in relation to melodic motifs, rhyming and number of syllables. The narrator points out the incongruity of the current surroundings – they are not as they should have been. There is a discrepancy between the traditional atmosphere of Christmas and the summer-like ambiance of Southern California. Her use of colloquial language is proved by *it don't snow here* and laid-back formulations, *I'm gonna* and *stays pretty green*. This makes her narrative more personal and close to speech (see also theory chapter, p. 11).

*I wish I had a river so long
I would teach my feet to fly
I wish I had a river I could skate away on
I made my baby cry*

Here, Mitchell expands her melodic motif. Simultaneously, her wish to *skate away* goes even further: she imagines a transition in her means of transport from skating to flying, allowing her to get away in a more efficient manner. The journey-metaphor continues through a different, though similar, source-domain. Mitchell is auto-didactic and independent in other areas of life. She has acquired most of her music skills, such as her guitar playing, on her own.

Her first phrase of self-reproach here, *I made my baby cry* probably refers to an incident with her lover, *baby* being a colloquial expression for 'lover'. As Whiteley points out, *baby* is 'diminutive, common in jazz/blues/pop'.⁶ In this phrase, Mitchell uses tone colouring to reinforce the meaning of her words: First, the word *long* is prolonged and ornamented to underline the message (see example 19):

⁶ E-mail-correspondence 30 January 2006.



Example 19

Whiteley suggests that the lack of resolution on the Gsus may be a sign 'that she won't find her destiny unless she can impel herself into flight' (ibid.: see footnote 6). The tension is maintained, and there is no release. Whiteley also comments on the rests between the words: 'the rests are like brief moments of contemplation – but how would I do this – I would teach my feet to ... fly' (ibid.). This point seems to highlight the thought process behind her idea of teaching her feet to fly. As with *long*, the word *fly* is similarly sustained, and the ambitus (the pentatonic fourth interval, see p. 91) of the melody is expanded considerably (see example 20):



Example 20

The word 'fly' is underlined by minor tonalities (Am). Whiteley points out the importance of the quaver C:

If she had leapt from A to D it would have a different feel. The C is almost like a final shove upwards but she can't sustain the flight and falls back (Dm7) with that little melisma down the octave. The flight is unsuccessful and she's back on the "wishfulness" of the river. (ibid.: see footnote 6)

The C is a link in the tonal development: her escape upwards and the fall downwards are illustrated through the tone.

Some of the same upward movement was found in 'Blue'. The melodic leaps from A to C and D on the word *fly* resemble the leaps from F sharp to A and B on the words *sail away* in 'Blue' (example 21):

(seagull, black crow), angels and aircraft. Her first album, from 1968, is called *Song to a Seagull*, and seabirds play an important role in the lyrics of the song by the same name:

*Fly silly seabird
No dreams can possess you
No voices can blame you
For sun on your wings
My gentle relations
Have names they must call me
For loving the freedom
Of all flying things
My dreams with the seagulls fly
Out of reach out of cry*

Another song on the album, 'The Dawntreader', picks up on some of the same imagery:

*Seabird I have seen you fly above the pilings
I am smiling at your circles in the air
I will come and sit by you while he lies sleeping
Fold your fleet wings I have brought some dreams to share*

In both examples, flying can be seen as a metaphor for exercising freedom in one's life. *For loving the freedom/ of all flying things*, Mitchell writes. As we will see, this metaphor seems important in a number of songs and illustrates an important aspect of Joni Mitchell's life and career as a musician.

In 'Urge for Going', first published on the album *Hits* in 1996, Mitchell sings:

*I get the urge for going
when the meadow grass is turning brown
Summertime is falling down and winter's closing in
[...]
See the geese in chevron flight
Flapping and a-racin' on before the snow
They got the urge for going
And they've got the wings so they can go*

The geese's wings represent their means to get away, and the narrator seems to envy their *gorgeous wings* and ability to leave. Notably, this feature is also present in other lyrics.

'Sweet Bird' appears on *The Hissing of Summer Lawns* from 1975:

*Sweet bird you are
Briefer than a falling star
All these vain promises on beauty jars
Somewhere with your wings on time*

*You must be laughing
Behind our eyes
Calendars of our lives
Circled with compromise
Sweet bird of time and change
You must be laughing
Up on your feathers laughing*

According to Whitesell, this song refers to the play *Sweet Bird of Youth* by Tennessee Williams. Again, Mitchell alludes to canonical literature in order to promote the intertextual activation with the attentive listener. The song communicates a theme similar to the play, in Whitesell's words 'the message of the song will turn out to be our inability to grasp firmly the ideals of youth and beauty; but the musical experience extends the seductive illusion that we can inhabit a world of ideals' (2000: 242).

In 'Black Crow' from *Hejira*, 1976, we hear of a more specific type of bird, mirroring aspirations and ideals:

*There's a crow flying
Black and ragged
Tree to tree
He's black as the highway that's leading me
Now he's diving down
To pick up on something shiny
I feel like that black crow
Flying
In a blue sky*

Mitchell lets her narrator compare herself to a bird which doesn't necessarily have strictly positive connotations. She admits to having crow-like qualities, namely *diving down to pick up on something shiny*. This may refer to her creative process, or her ability to conquer men. But, as Whiteley points out, 'crows are attracted to something shiny, but this may not be of value (could be a bit of silver foil rather than a coin) and as such, maybe she is attracted to the superficial?'⁸ The image can then be seen as an expression of self-reproach. Jim Leblanc sums up the vital aspects of 'Black Crow' and important implications of the concept of freedom and the image of travelling:

Indeed, Mitchell's "Black Crow" is an allegorical musical tale of an existential traveller battling to live up to Zarathustrian ideals – to run rather than walk, then to fly rather than run, and not to let herself be "pushed before moving along." Her dream is to fly, to skate away, with gods dancing through her and to remain sky-bound, high above the fray, outside

⁸ In an e-mail correspondence of 30 January 2006.

the limiting reach of others who would strive to undermine her freedom, to compromise her being. But realization of this primal existential desire is impossible, of course. The subject always descends, always compromises herself, always falls victim to the Other in spite of her efforts to wriggle free of the being-in-itself, the object-ness that others would impose upon her (2005: 5).

In 'The Silky Veils of Ardor' from *Don Juan's Reckless Daughter* (1977), Mitchell refers to a bird with more positive connotations:

*I wish I had the wings
Of Noah's pretty little white dove
So I could fly this raging river
To reach the one I love
But I have no wings
And the water is so wide
We'll have to row a little harder
It's just in dreams we fly
In my dreams we fly!*

Again, Mitchell lets her narrator express a longing for the qualities of a white dove, the symbol of peace. This time, however, the comparison does not have an element of self-reproach, as the previous example may imply. As pointed out in my analysis of 'Blue', these lyrics seem to be in an intertextual dialogue with the Scottish folk tone 'The Water Is Wide'.

The words *fly* and *sail away* seem to find their synthesis in the phrase *fly away* in 'The Last Time I Saw Richard' from *Blue*:

*All good dreamers pass this way some day
Hidin' behind bottles in dark cafes dark cafes
Only a dark cocoon before I get my gorgeous wings and fly away
Only a phase these dark cafe days*

Mitchell compares an enclosed stage of passive and depressive disillusionment to that of a butterfly's dark cocoon. Nevertheless, she seems to long for transition through the acquisition of wings, with a bid for flight and freedom. Mitchell puts an adjective, *gorgeous*, with clearly positive connotations, in front of *wings*, to underline her longing. This is further emphasized through her use of tone-colouring.

In 'That Song About The Midway' from *Clouds* (1969), another flying being occurs:

*You were playing like a devil wearing wings, wearing wings
You looked so grand wearing wings
Do you tape them to your shoulders just to sing
Can you fly*

*I heard you can! Can you fly
Like an eagle doin' your hunting from the sky*

Mitchell creates a hybrid between an angel and a devil, a metaphor for good and evil qualities in humans. Hence, *wings* comes to represent angelic qualities. The same duality occurs in this quotation from 'Down to You' in *Court and Spark* (1974):

*You're a brute you're an angel
You can crawl you can fly too
It's down to you
It all comes down to you*

Here, the contrasts good and bad are personified as an angel and a beast in a similar way.

We shall now leave flying beings and turn to occurring aircraft images in Mitchell's songs. As early as 1966, Mitchell writes of flight departure in an unreleased song, 'Poor Sad Baby': *Goodbye I'm bound away/ On the morning plane/ I'll fly around the world/ Then I'll fly around again*. In 'This Flight Tonight' from *Blue*, a flight setting is described:

*Look out the left, the captain said
The lights down there that's where we'll land
Turn this crazy bird around
I shouldn't have got on this flight tonight*

The ambiguity of *flight* is interesting, the theme of escapism taken into account. 'Amelia' from *Hejira* (1976) picks up on some of this imagery. The song seems to reflect important, though conflicting, themes for Joni Mitchell: the pursuit of her dreams, torn between her artistic muse and her romantic inclinations, her wish for both RELATIONAL INTIMACY and INDEPENDENCE.

*A ghost of aviation
She was swallowed by the sky
Or by the sea like me she had a dream to fly
Like Icarus ascending
On beautiful foolish arms
Amelia it was just a false alarm*

Here, Mitchell refers to Amelia Earheart, a fellow pioneer, and the first woman to ever fly solo across the Atlantic (1932) and the Pacific (1935).⁹ The mysterious circumstances of her death in 1937 caused intense speculation. Mitchell, 'loving the freedom of all flying things,' sees herself as a parallel to Earheart. 'Like Icarus ascending': Mitchell draws on Greek

⁹ <http://www.answers.com/topic/amelia-earhart> [accessed 20 April 2005].

mythology, and Icarus, whose waxed wings melted as he flew too close to the sun, in an attempt to escape from captivity.¹⁰ Mitchell compares herself to both figures and, by association, their common themes of flight, failure, freedom and regret.¹¹ She continues:

*I've spent my whole life in clouds at icy altitudes
And looking down on everything
I crashed into his arms
Amelia it was just a false alarm*

Here, Mitchell seems to refer to an early song, 'Both Sides, Now' from her album *Clouds* (1969), where she sings:

*I've looked at clouds from both sides now
From up and down, and still somehow
It's clouds' illusions I recall
I really don't know clouds at all*

In the next verses, *clouds* is replaced by *love* and *life*. In 'Amelia', her perspective on clouds is also *up and down*, echoing the song from her early career. She seems to admit to being ambitious, with a *wish to fly*, to pursue her dreams of freedom. However, there is a duality to it – *it tastes so bitter and so sweet*, it is both a *brute* and an *angel*. She seems to resign from her urge to fly, to escape, to pursue liberty and creativity: *I crashed into his arms*. Here, Mitchell seems to compare herself to an aircraft crashing. Jim Leblanc refers to David Crosby's comments in the documentary *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003): '[Throughout her work] "there is an effort to make the music be sky-bound, to relieve the body of temporality ... a need for release and transcendence ... to ride above the culture ... to reflect".'¹² This comment seems to reflect some of the *icy altitudes* attained in 'Amelia', and what her urge to fly is all about. Briefly commenting on the metaphor of travel, Whitesell observes: 'The speaker is a woman on the road; each verse teases out a different view of travel as a metaphor for life or love. The ethereal bird character has been translated into an airplane, and by extension into the romantic figure of Amelia Earhart' (2000: 245). Leblanc argues that 'this quest to transcend time, to realize personal, cultural, and existential freedom, and to communicate the very terms and landmarks of this journey is particularly evident in *Hejira*' (2005: 3f.). These issues are to a large extent communicated through metaphors of flying.

¹⁰ <http://www.jonimitchell.com/glossary> 'Icarus' [accessed 20 April 2005].

¹¹ This 'threefold crash of Icarus, Amelia, and Joni' is also observed by Whitesell 2000: 247.

¹² Quoted in Leblanc 2005: 3.

As briefly mentioned, this theme is picked up by Whitesell, who in his article 'A Joni Mitchell Aviary' explores four of Mitchell's songs, picking up on her idea of 'the visionary flight to a better world'. He concludes: Mitchell's 'individual songs are connected by rich networks of thematic associations which have resonated throughout her career. Joni revisits important symbolic articulations, placing them in new contexts and applying the pressure of dialectic perspectives' (2000: 238). The theme of 'visionary flight', he says, 'clearly relates to the heady climate of utopian idealism in the late-sixties communities in which Joni's talent was first fostered' (ibid.). Whitesell claims that this 'transcendent perspective' evoked in her songs 'often coalesces into an airborne, avian persona' (ibid.).

Returning briefly to 'River', one might also identify such a wish for transience, to exercise freedom, to rise above her negative emotions, for the sake of idealism or artistic visions. In the context of the song, it seems desirable for the narrator to escape such difficult emotions of self-judgement. In the third verse, such feelings seem particularly prevalent.

Mitchell's first phrase of self-reproach, *I made my baby cry* is characterised by a similar tone-colouring to the words *long* and *fly*, with a stepwise falling melody line. This may emphasise the sadness of the situation, illustrating the act of crying (see example 21).



Example 21

The conceptual metaphor SAD IS DOWN seems relevant here, as the downward pitch movement illustrates the lowness in spirit described in the lyrics. When Mitchell talks of her state of mind, she makes use of the same conceptual metaphor: 'My individual psychological descent coincided ironically with my ascent into the public eye.'¹³ This also echoes the Icarus-passage in 'Amelia': *Like Icarus ascending*. The quest of artistic and personal freedom made her 'burn her wings'.

*He tried hard to help me
You know, he put me at ease
And he loved me so naughty
Made me weak in the knees
Oh, I wish I had a river I could skate away on*

¹³ Joni Mitchell: *Woman of Heart and Mind* (2003).

Here, Mitchell seems impressed by memories and nostalgic feelings for the positive aspects of a previous relationship. She seems grateful, and maybe sentimental and haunted by regret. The phrase *weak in the knees* is often used to describe romantic or sexual attraction. Here, it is linked with *loved me so naughty*, an allusion to the physical part of their relationship, still maintaining an allure of innocence. A rather unusual utterance, it seems to be a constellation of words that has a 'Joni Mitchell signature' on it.

*I'm so hard to handle
I'm selfish and I'm sad
Now I've gone and lost the best baby
That I ever had
I wish I had a river I could skate away on*

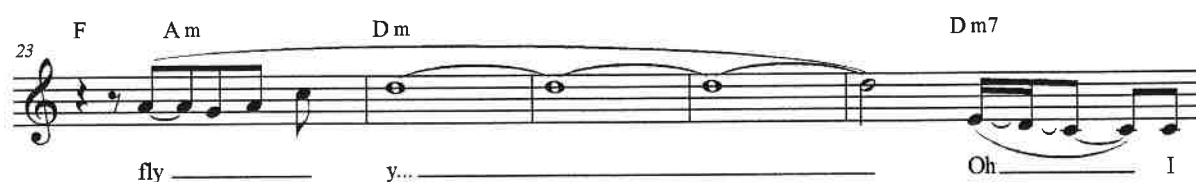
This verse seems pervaded by self-reproach (*I'm selfish and I'm sad*) and regret (*I've gone and lost the best baby that I ever had*). She consistently blames herself, not her lover. In a *Rolling Stone* interview from 1971, Mitchell comments on such harsh self-judgement:

But if you're watching yourself over your own shoulder all of the time and if you're too critical of what you're doing; you can make yourself so unhappy. As a human you're always messing up, always hurting people's feelings quite innocently.¹⁴

It seems likely that Mitchell lets her narrator express a wish to escape from such painful feelings.

*Oh, I wish I had a river so long
I would teach my feet to fly
I wish I had a river
I could skate away on
I made my baby say goodbye*

Here, Mitchell uses repetition as a means of emphasising her urge to get away. However, this time she sings *fly*, the word is sustained even further, to last for five measures (see example 22):



Example 22

¹⁴ Larry LeBlanc, 'Joni Takes a Break', *Rolling Stone*, 4 March, 1971.

I made my baby say good-bye

Moving downwards in pitch, this phrase comes as a sigh, and a plaintive cry, leaden with mournful emotions, similar to the falling melody on *I made my baby cry*.

At the end, Mitchell repeats the first verse, giving an impression of going in circles, and not getting anywhere, captured by her alienating situation. She sustains *away* in a monotonous way, her voice turning slightly grave at the end, as if to underline her discontent and aloneness. She returns to the melancholic piano quotation from 'Jingle Bells', offering no solution to her wish to escape. In the last six measures of her song, Mitchell lets her 'Jingle Bells' motif go from F major to D major (through a mediant connection), introducing new tension. As Whiteley observes, the song ends with a 'stark perfect fifth over D (D7 omitting the F#) to provide a final and reflective coding of emptiness' (2000: 90).

The evocation of Christmas through the recontextualisation of 'Jingle Bells' establishes a nostalgic mood, a feeling of longing for something that used to be. ESCAPISM is further illustrated through upward melodic movement and lack of chordal resolution. Also, the reoccurring melodic leitmotif on *sail away* and *fly* seems to illustrate this. Pentatonic melodic motifs give a hovering feeling, underlining a sort of fluidity that seems prevalent through the album. Also, her vocal style underlines this: the use of tone colouring, sustained notes and vibrato seem to suggest a liquid instability. The metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS/ NATURAL FORCES is conveyed through the image of river. Cross-references to a number of other songs showed that this is a prevalent metaphor running through a number of her works, perhaps representing a longing for either a STABILITY that used to be in the past, or the pursuit for enduring love in the future. In any case, the present does not satisfy her desires, so she wants to get away. The transition from skating to flying expands this theme even further, adding an element of acceleration and distance in her escape. Such a specification of TRAVEL can perhaps indicate a wish for FREEDOM, INDEPENDENCE, but also 'sky-bound' elements of ASPIRATIONS and IDEALISM. Also, flying may be an image of her artistic visions, a spiritual longing to rise above difficult situations in life to the prospects of a greater purpose.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In these analyses of 'Blue', 'A Case of You' and 'River' I have sought to illuminate important themes of Mitchell's work as manifested through the use of conceptual metaphor in words and music. Through my analyses, I have shown how voice, melody, harmony, instrumentation as well as metaphors collaborate to communicate affective and cognitive meaning. Emotions mediated through metaphors related to travel and liquids centre on the main themes of DISRUPTION/AMBIVALENCE, echoing tensions inherent in opposite themes of STABILITY/INSTABILITY and RELATIONAL INTIMACY/INDEPENDENCE. The imagery associated with travel and liquid is prominent throughout Mitchell's lyrics and, once again, this is effected through her use of metaphors, as well as being underpinned and illustrated by her musical devices. Images of the ocean, a river, blood, wine and ink are metaphorically related to a flow of fluids with no fixed border and are connoted musically by hovering melodies, ambiguous modes and a flexible and intuitive vocal style. Roaming around in Europe with no set itinerary suggests a restless soul urging onwards, thriving on change. A specific type of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, the image of travel pervades the album both literally and figuratively, and this sense of disruptive instability seems to underpin the intense allure of melancholy on the album.

Establishing the contextual frame under which the album was produced proved to be useful in order to understand the influences behind Mitchell's form of expression. She was not the only one making music driven by a maxim of honesty in the late sixties and early seventies. Nevertheless, her personal circumstances seemed to provide her with particular influences which, in turn, inspired her art. Nietzsche's dictum of writing in one's 'own blood', for example, might have inspired her quest for creating with candour, drawing on her own personal experience in order to make her songs. The disturbing incident of giving up her baby for adoption created an inner tension that was partially resolved through her music. Her various encounters with love and the tensions this promoted, conflicting with her desire to follow her creative muse, also seem to have compelled her to create songs. At a more collective level, it is likely that the reverberation of the growing disillusionment and dead idealism of the period probably marked Mitchell, contributing to a certain *tristesse* of being: *there are so many sinking now/ you've got to keep thinking/ you can make it through these waves*. Suddenly becoming a public figure and experiencing a great success as a solo artist made her, in particular, question who she was, while simultaneously demanding greater

honesty of herself. At the same time, Mitchell had ambitions for her project. She says she wished to 'make [her audience] change the directions of their life'¹ by her music, adding that she wanted the songs to '[strike] against the very nerves of their lives. And in order to do that you have to strike against the very nerves of your own' (ibid.). In connection with this, it is suggested that Mitchell's ambitious ideals evoke the metaphors of flying.

I have also suggested that the metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY is particularly apposite to Mitchell's music. With reference to her songs, it has been exemplified how she seems to base her songs on metaphors of travel. It is, however, important to take note of the kind of journey Mitchell alludes to here: we are not talking about a planned journey with a fixed timetable. Moreover, the type of travelling prevalent in Mitchell's albums involves roaming around, deciding where to go next on the spur of the moment: *Maybe I'll go to Amsterdam, or maybe I'll go to Rome*. This type of journey was shown to be particularly striking in the albums *Song to a Seagull*, *Blue* and *Hejira*. In particular, *Blue* offers a window into such themes as restlessness, ambivalence, self-exploration and emotional disruption. Such aspects are mediated through imagery and musical devices related to travel and blue/bluesness/blues, literally and figuratively, pointing in the direction of polysemy.

The interpretive analysis of the title song showed a specific variant of the LIFE/LOVE IS A JOURNEY metaphor, namely LOVE IS A VOYAGE AT SEA. This is expressed through various metaphorical expressions related to the domain of the sea as well as the rocking piano movement in the accompaniment, creating an oceanic frame around this 'foggy lullaby'. In particular, the striking dissonance in the musical context, where dissonant harmonies often conflict with the melody, provides a musical metaphor for the inner disruption linked with the bewilderment expressed through the lyrics.

Crown and anchor me or let me sail away exemplifies the theme of STABILITY/INSTABILITY and RELATIONAL INTIMACY/INDEPENDENCE, expressed through the metaphor A PERSON IS A SHIP. Even though I see conceptual metaphor as a useful tool when aiming to detect the cognitive concepts behind creative verbal utterances and the links between these, it is sometimes hard to figure out a particular conceptual metaphor for each original phrasing. Occasionally, nuances are lost through the simplification implied in the process, and the result seems somewhat stiff and abrupt compared to the sophistication of the original expression.

Mitchell's vocal performance in the song 'Blue' is marked by a leaden vibrato that, on certain severely sustained notes, almost switches from one tone to the next. Her arabesque tone paintings serve to illustrate the devastating dilemma of the narrator in a poignant manner.

¹ An interview in the documentary *Joni Mitchell: Woman of Heart and Mind*, 2003.

Characteristic downward melodic and harmonic movement serves to effectuate the conceptual metaphors HAPPY IS UP, SAD IS DOWN and GOOD IS UP, BAD IS DOWN inextricably linked with the content of the lyrics: *there are so many sinking now*. This is an example of how music and lyrics are interwoven, underlining the same mood of lowness in spirit and negativity. Such multimodal observations serve to imbue the song with meanings that would have remained undiscovered if only limited to one perspective. The interpretation of the phrase *I love you* showed how a musical context may alter the meaning of an utterance radically. If only analysed with respect to words, this would have been a positive and harmonious declaration of love. Here, however, the performance of the lyrics brings about a shift in meaning. Realised with a quavering and poignant melody line and coloured by the significant minor mode chord progression, the phrase comes across as elegiac and insecure. Here, conceptual metaphor applied to lyrics alone would not have been sufficiently rewarding.

In 'A Case of You', it was suggested that the underlying concept of travel permeated the instrumentation: the prevailing heartbeat-rhythms of the dulcimer's stepwise melody line, the instrument itself, underpinning the concept of travel/travelling. The theme of travel can further be linked with INSTABILITY, an aspect that is contrasted with images in the lyrics, marked by STABILITY, e.g. *northern star* and *Canada*. The *northern star* also connotes emotional distance, which stands as a contrast to the image of intimacy: *You're in my blood like holy wine*. Here, Mitchell uses a strong vocal vibrato, with a wide ambitus, numerous vocal leaps and sustained notes that seem to communicate themes of STABILITY/INSTABILITY. Liquid metaphors also reverberate through this song. Fluids connected with RELATIONAL INTIMACY, the fusion of blood and wine, seem to be an image of carnal love. Liquids seen as related to INDEPENDENCE; paint and ink, seem to connote creativity. Consequently, through the metaphorical expressions related to liquids, the conceptual metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LIQUIDS IN A CONTAINER is merged with EMOTIONAL INTIMACY IS PHYSICAL CLOSENESS. Again, these metaphors enhance themes of RELATIONAL INTIMACY vs. INDEPENDENCE mediated through the complex metaphorical expression *You're in my blood like holy wine [...]/I could drink a case of you*. Also, when writing *underneath the skin/ an empty space to fill in*, in 'Blue' Mitchell manages to communicate a devastating emptiness using some of the same metaphors. These are further fused with EMOTIONS ARE NATURAL FORCES in 'Blue' and 'River' through liquids of the ocean and the frozen stream of a river.

The intertextual evocation of Christmas through the distorted 'Jingle Bells' intro of 'River' contributed towards a mood of nostalgia and melancholy in the song. The pentatonic scales and lack of tension created a floating feeling, symptomatic of lack of orientation, acting

as a musical metaphor of ambivalence. A wish to escape from a location and a state of mind, together with longing for STABILITY, were expressed through the image of a frozen river: *I wish I had a river I could skate away on*. It was also shown how river is a recurring image in several of Mitchell's songs, often linked with a wish for stability, resonating with a longing for a future prince charming, a *Golden Reggie*, or a regressive nostalgia of the past. Such intertextual links were also drawn between various instances of flying. Through a wishful utopian transition, the act of skating evolves into flying, an even more efficient instance of the LIFE IS A JOURNEY archetype, evoking ESCAPISM. The act of flying resonates with themes of FREEDOM, INDEPENDENCE, as well as ASPIRATIONS and IDEALISM. The act of flying was mediated through Mitchell's soaring voice on *fly*, the sustained notes underlying the STABILITY longed for. Further, a recurring leitmotif was detected along with the prolonged word *fly*. A melodic line containing a specific ascending motif that serves like a musical metaphor of restlessness and escapism. The same motif was found in *sail away* in 'Blue'.

Being attentive to intertextual activations provides a rich web of meaning making the interpretive process even more thought-provoking. I have provided a few examples of certain of Mitchell's central metaphors in the lyrics, which has been useful in order to support my interpretations. When analysing *crown and anchor me*, for instance, *crown* activated one of Mitchell's early songs, 'I Had a King'. I also showed how her former partner, Graham Nash, recycled this metaphor in his song 'I Used to Be a King'. Songs can also promote the activation of entire stories or parables. In 'A Case of You', Mitchell's reference to the Holy Communion adds a certain sacredness to the love affair she describes, and may thus promote an affective response with the listener.

Conceptual metaphor particularly served as a useful tool in the analysis of the early version of 'A Case of You'. The presence of a nautical domain was interesting, in essence withdrawn in the album version and included in a different song on the album, 'Blue'. Also intriguing was the explicit use of colour in the older version, along with a different, less plaintive mood, to some extent brought about by the increased tempo. The history of songs and the genealogy of metaphors are certainly thought-provoking to work with, shedding light on the process behind the created art songs.

I could have chosen more light-hearted songs as objects of scrutiny. As already mentioned, the album is not solely melancholic. Even though 'the blues' seem present in almost every lyric, songs like 'All I Want' celebrate life: *alive alive I wanna get up and jive, wanna wreck my stockings in some jukebox jive*. 'Carey', with its calypso-like rhythm, seems rather jocular in tone; *you're a mean old daddy but I like you*. However, I found the ones I

selected more interesting, containing pertinent features worthy of such detailed decoding. Interpreting other songs would probably have given other results. The songs selected provided a rich web of meanings, which also promoted the intertextual activation of other songs by Mitchell, as well as other cultural artefacts.

Working within an interpretive analysis of some of Mitchell's songs has been highly rewarding. To plunge into the work of an artist as multi-faceted as Mitchell has been a fascinating experience. Also, discovering how metaphors as well as music contribute to the articulation of feelings has been intriguing. Vocal performance, melodic movement and chord progression all collaborate in order to support and illustrate the meaning of the lyrics, and Mitchell's work has been particularly apposite for such discoveries. Playing some of her songs on piano and guitar has also provided me with deeper insight into the craft behind Mitchell's artwork, and helped me in my understanding of the music. Her musical arrangement is a personal expression at all levels, amplifying the impact of the verbal utterances. As such, her album is an outstanding example of self-searching singer-songwriter craft from the period.

It would have been interesting to continue to examine Mitchell's albums using this method. Certainly, other themes are likely to emerge in the course of such a long and diversified career, but I would also expect that certain of the tendencies expressed here would be supported. More specifically, it could have been rewarding to look at *Song to a Seagull* and *Hejira* more closely with the LIFE IS A JOURNEY metaphor in mind. A very different experiment would be to investigate to what extent this album provokes affective responses with listeners, and try to find out what devices evoke such an impact. I also believe it would be rewarding to apply conceptual metaphor as a method for analysing other types of popular songs, with varying degrees of poetic and vernacular/colloquial language. According to my experience, conceptual metaphor, even though at times reductive of poetic nuances, is a suitable tool for analysing popular songs. However, I am well aware that my findings, in spite of the multimodal approach, only represent a fraction of what can be considered a holistic meaning of a song. Also, my research is fundamentally based on my personal interpretive perspective, notwithstanding representing one possible angle for the interpretive analysis of Joni Mitchell's *Blue*. Through the entwined dimensions of words and music, emotions are encoded and evoked. Indeed, the album provides colour for the eyes, colour for the ear, colour for the heart.²

² I am grateful to my friend Oddmund Kårevik for his appropriate suffix to Mitchell's utterance.

Bibliography and selected discography

- Bakhtin, Mikhail, 'Epos og Roman' in *Moderne litteraturteori. En antologi*, ed. by Kittang, Atle et al. (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991) 125-148
- Brackett, David, *Interpreting Popular Music*, 2nd edn (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000)
- Burke, Michael, 'Literature as parable' in *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*, ed. by Gavins, Joanna & Gerard Steen (London: Routledge, 2003), 99-115
- Burns, Gary, 'Trends in Lyrics in the Annual Top Twenty Songs in the United States, 1963-1972' in *American Popular Music: Readings from the Popular Press Vol. 2*, ed. by Timothy E. Scheurer (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1989), 129-144
- Cook, Norman, *Tone of Voice and Mind: The Connections Between Intonation, Emotion, Cognition and Consciousness* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002)
- Crisp, Peter, 'Conceptual metaphor and its expressions' in *Cognitive Poetics in Practice*, ed. by Gavins, Joanna & Gerard Steen (London: Routledge, 2003), 115-127
- Feld, Steven & Charles Keil, *Music Grooves* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994)
- Fleischer, Leonore, *Joni Mitchell* (New York: Flash Books, 1976)
- Frith, Simon, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Frith, Simon, 'Why Do Songs Have Words?' in *Popular Music Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2004) – *Popular Music* ; Vol. 3, 186-212
- Goatly, Andrew, *The Language of Metaphors* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Grady, Joseph et al., 'Blending and Metaphor' in *Metaphor in Cognitive Linguistics: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Cognitive Linguistics Conference*, ed. by Gibbs, Raymond W. & Gerard J. Steen (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1999)
- Gravlie, Tom et al., ed., *Sangbok for skolen* (Oslo: Gyldendal, 1997)
- Greig, Charlotte, 'Female Identity and the Woman Songwriter' in *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender*, ed. by Whiteley, Sheila (London: Routledge, 1997), 168-177
- Griffiths, Dai, 'From lyric to anti-lyric: analyzing the words in pop song' in *Analyzing Popular Music*, ed. by Moore, Allan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39-59
- Hawkins, Stan, *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* (England: Ashgate Publishing, 2002)

- Hoskyns, Barney, 'Our Lady Of The Sorrows' in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy, (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 161-175 (first pub. in *Mojo*, December, 1994)
- Kövecses, Zoltán, *Metaphor and Emotion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Kövecses, Zoltán, *Metaphor: A Practical Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Lakoff, George, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor' in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Ortony, Andrew (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 202-251
- Lakoff, George & Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989)
- Lakoff, George & Mark Turner, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980)
- Leech, Geoffrey N., *A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry* (London: Longmans, 1969)
- Levitin, Daniel, 'A Conversation with Joni Mitchell: 2. Isles of Miles' in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 177-189 (first pub. in *Grammy Magazine*, spring 1996)
- Malka, 'Joni Mitchell: Self-Portrait of a Superstar', in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 66-74 (first pub. in *Maclean's*, June, 1974)
- Meyer, Leonard B., *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1956)
- Middleton, Richard, ed., *Reading Pop* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Middleton, Richard, *Studying Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1990)
- Miller, Jim, ed., *The Rolling Stone History of Rock and Roll* (New York: Random House, 1976)
- Mitchell, Joni, *Joni Mitchell: Anthology* (Miami: Warner Bros, 1974)
- Moore, Allan, ed., *Analyzing Popular Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Mosher, Harold F. Jr., 'The Lyrics of American Pop Music: A New Poetry' in *American Popular Music: Readings from the Popular Press Vol. 2*, ed. by Scheurer, Timothy E. (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Press, 1989), 144-150
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 2nd edn (London: Penguin Books, 1969)
- O'Brien, Karen, *Joni Mitchell: Shadows and Light* (London: Virgin, 2002)
- O'Brien, Lucy, *She Bop: The Definitive History of Women in Rock, Pop & Soul* (New York: Penguin, 1995)

Price, Glanville, *MHRA Style Guide: A Handbook for Authors, Editors, and Writers of Theses* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2002)

Rhedding-Jones, Jeanette, *What is Research?: Methodological Practices and New Approaches* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2005)

Ruhlmann, William, 'From Blue to Indigo', in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 21-40, first pub. in *Goldmine*, 17 Feb 1995)

Shakespeare, William, *Hamlet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962)

Shakespeare, William, *Julius Caesar* (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1998)

Shakespeare, William, *Romeo and Juliet*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Skårberg, Odd, *40 år med pop og rock. Stilistisk utvikling og estetiske trekk* (Oslo: Unipub, 1997)

Sloboda, Juslin, *Music and Emotion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001)

Smith, Larry David, *Elvis Costello, Joni Mitchell and the Torch Song Tradition* (London: Praeger, 2004)

Snyder, Bob, *Music and Memory: An Introduction* (London: The MIT Press, 2000)

Spitzer, Michael, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004)

Sterling, Steve (executive producer) et al., *Joni Mitchell – Woman of Heart and Mind* (Red Distribution, 2003), documentary

Tagg, Philip, 'Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice' in *Reading Pop*, ed. by Middleton, Richard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)

The New Testament, New International Version, 1973 (Sweden (N.P.): InterBible AB, 1989)

Thomas, Jenny, *An Introduction to Pragmatics* (Harlow: Longman, 1995)

Tong, Rosemary, *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1989)

Unterberger, Richie, *Eight Miles High: Folk Rock's Flight from Haight-Ashbury to Woodstock* (San Fransisco: Backbeat Books, 2003)

Valentine, Penny, 'Exclusive Joni Mitchell Interview', in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000), 45-55 (first pub. in *Sounds Magazine*, 3 June, 1972)

- Van Leeuwen, Theo, *Speech, Music, Sound* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999)
- Vestly, Anne-Cath, ed., *Barnas store sangbok*, 4th edn (Stavanger: Cappelen, 1972)
- Wales, Katie, *A Dictionary of Stylistics*, 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2001)
- Whiteley, Sheila, ed., *Sexing the Groove: Popular Music and Gender* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Whiteley, Sheila, *Too Much Too Young: Popular Music, Age, and Gender* (London: Routledge, 2005)
- Whiteley, Sheila, 'The Lonely Road: Joni Mitchell, Blue and Female Subjectivity', Chapter 8 in *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 78-94
- Wikberg, Kay, 'Alive and Kicking – Metaphors Versus Idioms: A Comparison' in *Language, Learning, Literature. Studies Presented to Håkan Ringbom*, ed. by Gill, Martin et al. (Åbo Akademi University, English Department, 2001), 183-198
- Whitesell, Lloyd, 'A Joni Mitchell Aviary' in *The Joni Mitchell Companion*, ed. by Luftig, Stacy (New York: Schirmer Books, 2000) (first pub. in *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture*, vol. 1 (1997), 46-54)
- Whitesell, Lloyd, 'Harmonic palette in early Joni Mitchell' in *Popular Music* Vol. 21/2 (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 173-193

Unpublished works

- Leblanc, Jim, 'Facing Time and Other Thieves: Meaning as Freedom in Joni Mitchell's Hejira' (unpublished paper from IASPM conference in Rome, July 2005)
- Raustøl, Stine Pernille, 'Colour words in English and Norwegian – A Corpus Study' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Oslo, 2005)
- Sonenberg, Daniel, 'One With The Fallen Angels: Joni Mitchell Orchestrates a Transition in "Court and Spark"' (unpublished paper from IASPM conference in Rome, July 2005)
- Sonenberg, Daniel, "'Who in the World She Might Be": A Stylistic and Contextual Approach to the Early Music of Joni Mitchell' (unpublished doctoral thesis, City University of New York, 2003)
- Steinholt, Yngvar B., 'Cognitive Poetics in the analysis of Popular Music: A new approach to song lyrics?' (unpublished paper from IASPM conference in Rome, July 2005)
- Whiteley, Sheila, 'The Killing Fields of Popular Music' (unpublished paper from lecture held in April 2005, University of Oslo)

Articles reprinted at www.jonimitchell.com/library

Brookesmith, Peter, 'Singing Her Palette: Reflections on Joni Mitchell's Visual and Musical Art', *Perfect Vision*, November 1999

Brown, Ethan, 'Influences: Joni Mitchell', *New York Magazine*, 9 May, 2005

Coppage, Noel, 'Innocence on a Spree', *Stereo Review*, April 1976

Crouse, Timothy, 'Blue', *Rolling Stone*, 5 August, 1971

Crowe, Cameron, 'The Rolling Stone Interview', *Rolling Stone*, 26 July, 1979

Flanagan, Bill, 'Lady of the Canyon', *Vanity Fair*, June 1997

Holden, Steven, 'Joni Mitchell Finds the Peace of Middle Age', *New York Times*, 17 March 1991

Irvin, Les, 'Pass the Salt, Please', article published at JMDL, 26 September, 1997

Jackson, Joe, 'Witness of Life', *Irish Times*, 6 February, 1999

Johnstone, Nick, 'All Time Classics', *Uncut*, October 2003

Jump, Frank, 'Joni Mitchell', *New York Times*, 1 December, 1996

LeBlanc, Larry, 'Joni Takes a Break', *Rolling Stone*, 4 March, 1971

Levitin, Daniel, 'A Conversation with Joni Mitchell 1. Portrait of the Artist as a Young Woman', *Grammy Magazine*, March 1997

Morrissey, Steven, 'Melancholy Meets the Infinite Sadness', *Rolling Stone*, March 6, 1997

Paglia, Camille, 'The Trailblazer Interview', *Interview*, August 2005

Walker, Billy, 'Beautifully Blue Joni Mitchell', *Sounds*, 3 July, 1971

Watts, Michael, 'Glimpses of Joni', *Melody Maker*, 19 September, 1970

Websites

Callaway, Nina, 'Classic Wedding Readings',
http://weddings.about.com/od/yourweddingceremony/a/classicreadings_2.htm

Gray, Mike, 'Lyricists', *Word Magazine*, February 2005, reprinted at
http://www.thedent.com/more.php?id=1751_0_1_0_C

Irvin, Les et al., www.jonimitchell.com

Lakoff, George, <http://cogsci.berkeley.edu/lakoff/metaphors/>

Moncur, Michael, http://www.quotationspage.com/quotes/Henry_Ward_Beecher/

Tagg, Philip: 'Introductory Notes to the Semiotics of Music', Liverpool/Brisbane, July 1999, <http://www.tagg.org/xpdfs/semiotug.pdf>

Tagg, Philip, 'Tagg's Harmony Handout', October 2003, <http://tagg.org/articles/xpdfs/harmonyhandout.pdf>

Ware, Susan, 'Amelia Earheart', <http://www.answers.com/topic/amelia-earhart>

Wikipedia – the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Appalachian_dulcimer

[all of the consulted websites listed were still available 22 April 2006]

Dictionaries

Apel, Willi, *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (abbr. HDM) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966)

De Vries, Ad, *Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery* (Amsterdam: North-Holland Publishing Company, 1974)

Marthaler, Berard L. et al., *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, 2nd edn, Vols. 2, 4, 11, 14 (Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 2003)

Online Dictionaries

Oxford Dictionary Online <http://oed.com/>

Merriam-Webster Online <http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>

A Dictionary of the Bible <http://www.oxfordreference.com/>

Selected discography

Mitchell, Joni:

Song to a Seagull, Reprise (1968)

Clouds, Reprise (1969)

Ladies of the Canyon, Reprise (1970)

Blue, Reprise (1971)

For the Roses, Asylum (1972)

Court and Spark, Asylum (1974)
Miles of Aisles, Asylum (1974)
The Hissing of Summer Lawns, Asylum (1975)
Hejira, Asylum (1976)
Don Juan's Reckless Daughter, Asylum (1977)
Mingus, Asylum (1979)
Shadows and Light, Asylum (1980)
Wild Things Run Fast, Geffen (1982)
Dog Eat Dog, Geffen (1985)
Chalk Mark in a Rain Storm, Geffen (1988)
Night Ride Home, Geffen (1991)
Turbulent Indigo, Reprise (1994)
Hits, Reprise (1996)
Misses, Reprise (1996)
Taming The Tiger, Reprise (1998)
Both Sides Now, Reprise (2000)
Travelogue, Nonesuch (2002)
The Beginning of Survival, Geffen (2004)
Dreamland, Warner (2004)
Songs of a Prairie Girl, Warner (2005)
 Nash, Graham: *Songs For Beginners*, Warner (1971)
 Nyro, Laura: *New York Tendaberry*, Columbia (1969)
 Simon, Carly: *No Secrets*, Elektra (1972)

Picture on front cover originally a desktop picture by Mark-Leon Thorne.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

'A Case of You' - Joni Mitchell (1971)

Just before our love got lost you said
"I am as constant as the northern star"
And I said, "Constantly in the darkness
Where's that at?
If you want me I'll be in the bar."
On the back of a cartoon coaster
In the blue T.V. screen light
I drew a map of Canada
Oh Canada
With your face sketched on it twice
Oh you are in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
I could drink a case of you darling
And I would still be on my feet
Oh I would still be on my feet.

Oh I am a lonely painter
I live in a box of paints
I'm frightened by the devil
And I'm drawn to those ones that ain't afraid
I remember that time that you told me, you said
"Love is touching souls"
Surely you touched mine
'Cause part of you pours out of me
In these lines from time to time
Oh you're in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh I could drink a case of you, darling
Still I'd be on my feet
I would still be on my feet.

I met a woman
She had a mouth like yours
She knew your life
She knew your devils and your deeds
And she said
"Go to him, stay with him if you can
But be prepared to bleed"
Oh but you are in my blood you're my holy wine
You're so bitter, bitter and so sweet
Oh I could drink a case of you darling
Still I'd be on my feet
I would still be on my feet

Blue, Reprise (1971)

APPENDIX 2

'A Case of You' - Joni Mitchell (1970)

Just before our ship got lost you said
"I am as constant as a northern star"
"You're Silly as a northern fish" says I
If you want me I'll be in the bar"
On the back of a cartoon coaster pad
That didn't make me laugh at all
I drew a map of Canada
Oh Canada
And I charted our last squall
Oh you're in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh I could drink a case of you darling
And I'd still be on my feet
Oh I would still be on my feet

Oh I am a lonely painter
I live in a box of paints
I'm frightened by the devil
And I'm scared to death by saints
I remember when you told me
"Love is touching souls"
Surely you touched mine
'Cause part of you pours out of me
In black and red designs
Oh, you're in my blood like holy wine
You taste so bitter and so sweet
Oh I could drink a case of you darling
And I would still be on my feet
Yes I'd still be on my feet

I met a woman
She had a mouth like yours
She knew your life
Your devils and your deeds
And she said
"Go to him, stay with him if you can
But be prepared to bleed"
Oh but you are in my blood
You're my holy wine
You taste so bitter, bitter and so sweet
Oh, I could drink a case of you darling
And I'd still be on my feet
Yes, I'd still be on my feet

This early version was from a BBC program called 'Joni Mitchell Sings Joni Mitchell', taped in September 1970 and broadcast on 9 October 1970.

APPENDIX 3

'Blue' - Joni Mitchell

Blue
Songs are like tattoos
You know I've been to sea before
Crown and anchor me
Or let me sail away
Hey Blue, here is a song for you
Ink on a pin
Underneath the skin
An empty space to fill in
Well there're so many sinking now
You've got to keep thinking
You can make it thru these waves
Acid, booze, and ass
Needles, guns, and grass
Lots of laughs lots of laughs
Everybody's saying that hell's the hippest way to go
Well I don't think so
But I'm gonna take a look around it though
Blue I love you

Blue here is a shell for you
Inside you'll hear a sigh
A foggy lullaby
There is your song from me

Blue, Reprise (1971)

APPENDIX 4

'River' - Joni Mitchell

It's coming on Christmas
They're cutting down trees
They're putting up reindeer
And singing songs of joy and peace
Oh I wish I had a river I could skate away on

But it don't snow here
It stays pretty green
I'm going to make a lot of money
Then I'm going to quit this crazy scene
Oh I wish I had a river I could skate away on

I wish I had a river so long
I would teach my feet to fly
I wish I had a river I could skate away on
I made my baby cry

He tried hard to help me
You know, he put me at ease
And he loved me so naughty
Made me weak in the knees
Oh, I wish I had a river I could skate away on

I'm so hard to handle
I'm selfish and I'm sad
Now I've gone and lost the best baby
That I ever had
I wish I had a river I could skate away on

Oh, I wish I had a river so long
I would teach my feet to fly
I wish I had a river
I could skate away on
I made my baby say goodbye

It's coming on Christmas
They're cutting down trees
They're putting up reindeer
And singing songs of joy and peace
I wish I had a river I could skate away on

Appendix: Master Thesis
Blue - Joni Mitchell (1971)

1. All I Want
2. My Old Man
3. Little Green
4. Carey
5. Blue
6. California
7. This Flight Tonight
8. River
9. A Case of You
10. The Last Time I Saw Richard
11. A Case of You (1970 version)

(The last track here was not published on the 1971 album. I have included it here, since this live concert version of 'A Case of You' is compared with the album version in my analyses.)



Universitetsbiblioteket i Oslo
Bibliotek for humaniora og samfunnsvitenskap



924145KJ0