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## With Kitchen Prose and Gutter Rhymes

An Ecocritical Literary Analysis of Jethro Tull's Album *Songs from the Wood*

Master's thesis in MLSRPÅK

Supervisor: Rebecca Sioned Davies

Trondheim, November 2018



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## 1 Introduction

This thesis will explore the 1977 album *Songs from the Wood* by the band Jethro Tull. While this is neither an overview of the history of the band, nor an analysis that focuses explicitly on how the album responds to musical movements at the time, some context about both is needed to ease the discussion in the analysis. *Songs from the Wood* is Jethro Tull's tenth studio album. A band that has explored numerous different genres, including (British) Blues, progressive rock, hard rock, jazz, and classical music (Rees 9), *Songs from the Wood* is more folk-oriented (Webb 15) and the first album in the "folk trilogy" that *Songs from the Wood*, *Heavy Horses*, and *Stormwatch* constitute. Being folk-oriented does not mean, however, that this is an album with traditional folk music. A more reasonable description put forth by the album's creator, Ian Anderson, is a "kind of English, folky music influence – with a small f, rather than a historical grand capital F of traditional, academic folk music, but a very small f for English folky music" ("Talking Tull" 21). As a result of the complex nature of the album's musical genre, it will not be given much emphasis in the analysis, but it is worthwhile bearing in mind the general musical style of the album, which combines folk elements with classic and progressive rock. It is also important to note that the album was released in January 1977, when punk rock was in its stride (Rees 78). Far removed from the ostensibly electric guitar-driven punk rock, *Songs from the Wood* incorporates instruments such as pipe organ, mandolin, glockenspiel, marimba, bells, and of course the instrument most associated with the band, the flute – because "[i]f you can't beat 'em, ignore 'em!" (Rees 78).

The band had gone through several line-up changes since the release of their debut album *This Was* in 1968. By the time *Songs from the Wood* was released only Ian Anderson, the undisputed front figure and creative driving force of the band, remained from the original line-up. As well as writing all the songs on the album, including all the lyrics, he plays the iconic flute, acoustic guitar, whistles, mandolin, and various other instruments as well as handling all the main vocals. The second most senior member of the band on the album is Martin Barre on electric guitar and lute. John Evan, a permanent member since 1971, plays piano, organ, and synthesisers. Barriemore Barlow plays drums (as well as marimba, glockenspiel, bells, nakers, and tabor), as indeed he had done in the band since 1971, with John Glascock, having only joined the band the previous year, on bass guitar and backing vocals. Joining the band on a permanent basis after years of contributing with musical

arrangements for studio albums is David Palmer, who plays the piano, synthesisers, and pipe organ, in addition to playing an important part in the arrangements (*Songs from the Wood*).

As previously mentioned, all the songs on the album are written by Ian Anderson. However, Martin Barre and David Palmer are also credited with “additional material” (Webb 24-25). This reflects the collaborative spirit of the album, which brought the members back together after they had attempted to live in tax exile in Switzerland for a few years (Rees 77). Bearing the context in mind, this thesis sets out to explore how the Jethro Tull album *Songs from the Wood* deals and engages with environmental and ecocritical themes.

## 1.1 Approach

*Songs from the Wood* is an album which, as the name suggests, relies heavily on natural imagery. It celebrates pagan culture, the wood, and nature in general. Lawrence Buell, a prominent critic in the first wave of literary ecocriticism, has devised a checklist for ingredients in an environmentally oriented work. The list includes four criteria, namely that the work must firstly have a nonhuman environment present to an extent greater than a framing device, in turn suggesting that human history is implicated in natural history, secondly that the work acknowledges that human interest is not the only legitimate interest, thirdly that human accountability to the environment constitutes part of the text’s ethical orientation, and finally that the environment as a process as opposed to a constant is at least implicit in the text (qtd in Marland 1510). Using this checklist, it is clear that *Songs from the Wood* represents an environmentally oriented work.

*Songs from the Wood* being an environmentally oriented work opens up different possibilities for how to analyse the album in a literary perspective. Delving further into the branch of literary criticism that is ecocriticism, there are several views on how literary environmental works should be treated and analysed. Bartosch and Garrard advocate that slow reading should be the preferred method of analysis because “the contribution of ecocriticism is inherently and valuably gradual: making us think anew about the world, nature, and the place of the human animal. Ecocriticism should continue to prompt searching reflection in its institutions and practitioners” (2). Embracing this view, the method applied in the analysis of the songs is a combination of slow reading and “slow listening”, firstly reading the lyrics as standalone entities before repeatedly listening to the songs. The analysis reflects the hybrid nature of songs, acknowledging the musical aspects as well as the lyrical, but sustaining the main focus on the lyrics to keep the analysis within the realm of literary criticism. The result is a holistic analysis of each song on the original album, shedding light

on as many aspects and interpretations of the lyrics as possible within the allotted space, while also relating it to the music. The relationship between the music and lyrics has resulted in that certain aspects of the lyrics as standalone entities, such as metrics and melody, have been largely disregarded in the analysis because the music tends to override them. As another result of the holistic approach, each song has been analysed individually in the same sequence they appear on the album, because the order they appear in has significance for the album as an entity. The analysis focuses on relevant images and aspects of the lyrics, in pertinent instances borrowing analytical tools from narratology and more traditional analyses of poetry.

An important question that arose during the analysis was which version of the songs to use. *Songs from the Wood* has been released in many different versions and editions, including, but not limited to, cassette, CD, remastered CD with bonus tracks, remixed 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary CD, remixed and extended 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary CD, digital streaming, and the original LP. In addition there are several versions of some of the songs available as bonus tracks on the aforementioned releases or included on different compilations. For this thesis, primarily the tracks from the original CD release have been used because they most closely replicate the original LP release, while being easy to use and navigate. Both the remastered versions and the (stereo) remixes have also been consulted, as they in some cases provide more clarity on certain aspects of the songs. All in all though, the songs themselves and the mixes are very similar across all releases. The lyrics, however, are a different story. There are a variety of different sources available, including dozens of online lyrics databases. Because it is difficult to know what the original source is for the online versions, the decision was made to disregard these sources. Instead, four different print sources were consulted: The book *Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics*, the inner sleeve of an American pressing of the original LP, the liner notes of the remastered CD release of the album, and the included booklet on the extended 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary remixed edition. Even when taking care to consult only officially released versions of the lyrics, it became clear that they differ significantly in terms of line and verse breaks, and a few words do not correspond across all versions. All the releases have their own unique physical restrictions that impact features such as line breaks and printing of repeated choruses, so when choosing which version to use for the analysis, the performance of the songs was given most significance. The version that *best* matched the performance was subsequently used. Due to the significant differences in the source material, certain formal features such as line breaks were not assigned great significance in the analysis, but simply commented on where relevant.

## 2 Analysis

### 2.1 Humour, Ale, and the Forest – The Ambiguity of *Songs from the Wood*

The album begins with the title track *Songs from the Wood*. Clocking in at what is by Jethro Tull standards a quite modest 4 minutes and 55 seconds, the song is a snappy and humoristic, yet surprisingly complex, celebration of rural Britain and British folk culture. The complexity of the song stems from both the shifting and dynamic music and the possible interpretations of the lyrics. Where the complexity of the music is obvious with its constant progression and refusal to settle down into a comfortable and repetitive beat, the lyrics' complexity is owed to a persistent conceivable triple interpretation of the words. The end result is that the opening track is a humorous, self-aware, merry, though slightly ambiguous, celebration of definitively British folk traditions and landscape.

The song begins with a *very* rare occurrence in Jethro Tull's discography: pronounced a capella vocal harmonies. In fact, the entire first verse entirely a capella with the small exception of a note on the glockenspiel between the second and third line:

Let me bring you songs from the wood  
To make you feel much better than you could know.  
Dust you down from tip to toe.  
Show you how the garden grows.  
Hold you steady as you go.  
Join the chorus if you can.  
It'll make of you an honest man. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 60).

Right from the outset one of the more prominent (poetic) devices on album is introduced, namely what will be referred to in this analysis as the *lyrical I*. The use of the lyrical I is a deliberate device employed to give the lyrics more authority, not to be mistaken for being an autobiographical device (Anderson "Kitchen Prose and Gutter Rhymes" 54). From the very first line, the possible triple nature of the song is established. The first interpretation of the line is that the lyrical I (in this case grammatically realised as "me") is about to present the listener with tunes inspired by the forest. This interpretation is supported by the back cover of the album where a tonearm for a turntable has been fitted to a tree stump with clearly visible tree rings, suggesting that the tree stump can be played like a vinyl record. The second interpretation is that the lyrical I is about to introduce the listener to the album "Songs from the Wood" in almost a gentlemanly waiter kind of fashion. The third interpretation, as offered

by Nick Green, is that “from the wood” refers neither to the forest nor the album itself, but rather to “the tradition of drawing the ale straight from a wooden barrel” (257). In that case the interpretation of the very first line would be that the lyrical I is about to present a song (or indeed an entire album) drawn “straight from the wood”, with all the accompanying connotations to ale and British culture that entails. The rest of the verse creates an unmistakably positive image of the forest, album, or British culture, depending on which interpretation of the first line one chooses. Regardless, “feel much better”, “dust you down”, “garden grows”, “steady”, and “honest” are in the context unequivocally positive images. The positive image is more clearly underlined by the way the harmonised vocals accent and repeat certain lines, or parts of certain lines.

As an aside it is interesting to note that because Anderson was the only member of the band with an appropriate singing voice, the vocal harmonies were played back from a pre-recorded tape to which the other band members would deliberately clearly mime nonsense for the live shows, with only the lead vocals actually being live (Webb 26).

A clear prolepsis of the musical direction to come is given in the most Jethro Tull like fashion possible, by a small two-bar flute interlude to introduce the second verse, putting the listener’s mind at ease that the band might be heading in a strange new direction with this unusual introduction to an album released in the midst of the emerging punk rock scene. Though a musical prolepsis introduces the verse, the trichotomy in the positive lyrics remains:

Let me bring you love from the field:  
Poppies red and roses filled with summer rain.  
To heal the wound and still the pain  
That threatens again and again  
As you drag down every lover’s lane.  
Life’s long celebration here.  
I’ll toast you all in penny cheer. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary  
the Country Set Edition” 60).

The lyrics are still positive in this verse, but where the first verse is completely void of negativity; there are certain downbeat words in this verse such as “pain”, “wound”, “threatens”, and “drag down”. Despite there being words that normally have negative connotations in almost every line, the verse itself is still upbeat and positive. The reason for this is that the “love from the field” in the form of “poppies red and roses filled with summer rain” as brought to the listener by the lyrical I, help overcome the pain and negativity that threatens as “you drag down every lover’s lane”. The musical arrangement backs up the

positivity in this verse as layers of percussion and instruments are progressively added to the main vocals and harmonies, from the tambourine and acoustic guitar that close the second line through mandolins, clapping, and the iconic flute in the next three lines, all the way to drums, bass, electric guitar, string synthesizer, and piano from the close of the sixth line.

An interesting aspect to consider here is what facilitates the overcoming of the pain and negativity as represented by the “love from the fields”. Again this depends on the interpretation of the trichotomy in the lyrics. If interpreted as “songs from the wood” meaning “tunes from the forest”, then the verse can be taken quite literally to the extent that it is in fact the poppies and roses from the fields that facilitate the overcoming. This is revealing for the thematic direction of the album, unequivocally establishing positivity around the wood already in the second verse. If interpreted as “songs from the wood” referring to the album itself, then “love from the fields” becomes a metaphor for the songs on the album, and it is the music that facilitates the overcoming of negativity. Lastly, following the interpretation of “from the wood” as meaning “from a wooden barrel”, then “love from the fields” can refer either to the literal poppies and roses from the British landscape, or to products made from produce that grows in the fields, such as ale. This interpretation gives the verse a more agricultural touch, also in keeping with the general celebration of nature on the song and indeed the album.

With the band firmly introduced, the vocal harmonies make way with two notable exceptions in the third verse, lending more credibility to one of the three interpretations, for this verse at least:

Let me bring you all things refined.  
Galiards and lute songs served in chilling ale.  
Greetings well met fellow, hail!  
I am the wind to fill your sail.  
I am the cross to take your nail.  
A singer of these ageless times  
With kitchen prose and gutter rhymes. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 60).

Here, the vocal harmonies are only on “all things refined” and the lines “A singer of these ageless times / With kitchen prose and gutter rhymes”. The effect of the harmonies is that they emphasise and draw particular attention to the harmonised parts, because they stand out in spite of the heavy drumming and precise bass playing that accompany the vocals. The emphasis on the last two lines, along with the general pervasion of “I” in the verse, suggests a distinct air of self-awareness which in turn supports the interpretations following “songs from

the wood” in the first verse as referring to the actual album. Continuing down this line of interpretation, the final couplet becomes a self-deprecating, yet humorous, observation where the lyrical I sees himself as being lyrically unskilled in “these ageless times”. By using “kitchen” while singing about prose, and by extension literature, connotations are made to “the kitchen sink”, which is a term “used to describe naturalistic drama with focus on domestic squalor or disorder” (Goring et al. 382-383). The line therefore comments on the lyrical I’s work, suggesting that he focuses on domestic drama and squalor through poorly crafted “gutter rhymes”. The humorous aspect of this interpretation is that the comment is made in a perfect couplet, and that indeed all the verses follow a strict rhyme scheme of ABBBBCC (although admittedly the fourth line in the first verse does not rhyme fully with the other Bs in order to preserve the grammar). Bearing in mind the relative lyrical eloquence of the song, the final couplet of the third verse can be construed as cheeky and indeed slightly ironic, quite possibly a subtle jibe at the music critics who had been lukewarm to Jethro Tull’s music ever since the 1973 album *A Passion Play* (Rees 61, 77).

Even though the musical arrangement and the pervasiveness of “I” in the third verse means that it easily lends itself to be interpreted in the way described above, it is still possible to analyse it in the two other senses of the trichotomy as well. If analysed in the “tunes from the forest”-sense, the “I” becomes a metaphor for the forest itself, inviting the listener to step outside and get acquainted with nature. Analysed in the sense of “drawn from a wooden barrel”, the “I” becomes more like a minstrel come barkeep, presenting the listener with traditional dances, songs, and drinks in a celebration of British culture.

After the third verse there is an extended musical interlude moving through different themes and arrangements, featuring a diverse array of instruments including harpsichord, mandolin, electric guitar, flute, drums, piano, organ, string synthesizer, and bass. The interlude includes a paraphrasing of the first two lines, the vocals twice repeating “songs from the wood makes you feel much better”, and “songs from the wood”, retaining the lyrical ambivalence.

The song ends with a repetition of the second verse, arranged identically. The second verse being arguably the one that least lends itself to one particular interpretation, the tension that was slightly biased in the third verse is restored. The very end of the song is a repetition of the paraphrasing of the first two lines of the song, ensuring that the lyrical trichotomy is unsettled, simply stating that “songs from the wood make you feel much better”.

In the end then, the opening track of the album is a very open one. Lyrically it has an unresolved tension created by having three comfortably possible simultaneous interpretations

available. This creates an intriguing “triple existence” of the song, where it is a celebration of the forest, a celebration of British (folk) culture, a humorous and bold introduction and celebration of the album itself, or indeed all three, or any combination thereof, at once. Musically, it starts out unlike any other Jethro Tull song before it moves through different themes in a manner classic to the band. As the first song on the album, it certainly captures the listener’s attention and creates a wish for hearing what happens next.

## **2.2 Mythical Spirits, Nature, and Urban Threats – The Optimism of *Jack-In-The-Green***

The second song on the album is *Jack-In-The-Green*. A shorter and almost entirely acoustic piece, this song is “all about a woodland spirit, one charged with the grave responsibility of looking after all things that grow during the cold and dark winter months” (*Jack-In-The-Green* [Live] 00:00:13-00:00:24). The origin of the figure of Jack in the Green, also referred to as the Greenman, is disputed. It is thought that he stems from a Celtic, Egyptian, or Greek god, and he is seen as a symbol of rebirth and transformation (Jeal 70). Using the mythical figure of the Jack in the Green to highlight the almost magical properties of nature and the wood, this song foreshadows and criticises possible consequences of the industrialised interference in nature that is constantly escalating.

The first verse introduces the Jack in the Green, with a brief description of him, as well as providing a short glimpse into some of his tasks:

Have you seen Jack-In-The-Green?  
With his long tail hanging down.  
He quietly sits under every tree –  
    in the folds of his velvet gown.  
He drinks from the empty acorn cup  
    the dew that dawn sweetly bestows.  
And taps his cane upon the ground –  
    signals the snowdrops it’s time to grow. (Anderson, “Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics” 137).

Introducing the Jack in the Green this way places him firmly in the mind of the listener. While little is revealed about his disposition at this point, the description of him quietly sitting under trees helping the flora grow after the winter creates positive connotations in the mind of the listener.

The rhymes in this verse are worthy of address. In this particular transcription, the rhyme scheme is ABABCDBD. A quite unusual rhyme scheme in its own right, it is made more unusual still by how the rhymes are achieved. The rhyme in A (green/tree) is achieved

by assonance. The rhyme in B (down/gown/ground) is achieved by a full rhyme between the first two words, and then a half-rhyme with the third. The rhyme in D (bestows/grow) can be argued as being achieved by assonance, or by half rhyme. C (cup) stands out as being the only line in the verse that does not rhyme with any of the other, although it can be argued that there is assonance, or near assonance, in the actual performance of the song between “cup” and “bestows”. In addition to various forms of end-rhymes there are a number of internal rhymes in the lines, such as the full rhyme seen/green in the first line, the alliteration the k-sounds in the fifth line make (drinks/acorn/cup), and the alliteration between the s-sounds in the last line (signals/snowdrops/it’s). As a result of the complexity of the rhymes in this song, despite the scheme itself being somewhat erratic and inconsistent, an undeniably strong rhythm is established, that blends into the melody of the song, making the verse rather organic, which plays well into the subject of the lyrics. The musical melody follows the intricate rhyme scheme predominantly with the acoustic guitar mirroring and accenting the various parts similarly to the rhymes, capitalising on the advantages of acoustic music without a traditional rock rhythm beat.

The image of the Jack in the Green as a significant creature in the wood for helping the plant life grow is offset in the second verse where the toll the job takes on him is brought to light:

It’s no fun being the Jack-In-The-Green –  
no place to dance, no time for song.  
He wears the colours of the summer soldier –  
and carries the green flag all winter long. (Anderson, “Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics” 137).

Here, some of the shortcomings in the life of the Jack in the Green are clearly stated, such as the lack of room for fun as a result of the continuous workflow he has to keep up with. This enlists sympathy for the Jack in the Green, and by extension for nature itself, in the mind of the listener. This sympathy is important for the success of the criticism in the next verse.

The rhyme scheme in the second verse is AEF E. The rhyme between the second and fourth line is a full rhyme (song/long). The lack of a second rhyme within the verse coupled with the varying lengths and feet of the lines creates an uneasy rhythm. This uneasy and almost forced flow reflects the challenging life of the Jack in the Green with no time for leisure activities.

The second verse having cast doubt over the Jack in the Green’s desire to continue

doing his job with no time for enjoyment, the third verse seemingly continues to add to this doubt before refuting the implication altogether:

Jack do you never sleep –  
    does the green still run deep in your heart?  
Or will these changing times,  
    motorways, powerlines,  
    keep us apart?  
Well I don't think so –  
    I saw some grass growing through the pavements today. (Anderson, "Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics" 137).

The first two lines carry on in much the same vein as the previous verse, questioning the strain the job takes on the Jack in the Green. Lines three, four, and five then introduce another key theme as possible challenges for him to continue doing his job, namely "these changing times" with ever more industrialised human interference in nature. Building on the sympathy established in the previous verses, the listener is put in a position where "these changing times" is seen as something inherently negative and damaging to the Jack in the Green, and by extension nature. The implication of the Jack in the Green not being able to continue doing his job is then completely turned on its head in the last two lines as the lyrical I recalls seeing grass growing through the pavements. This is a definite image of the Jack in the Green's continued adherence to his duties and herein lays the clearest acknowledgment of the environment as a process as opposed to a constant on the album, while also questioning whether the changes mankind has brought upon nature is ethical. The grass growing through the pavements can be read as nature, personified by the Jack in the Green, fighting back and resisting "these changing times", reminding the listener that the industrialised interference with nature going on might well have unintended consequences for nature, and all the positivity it has to offer.

The rhyme scheme in this particular verse is GHIHJK, where all the rhymes are full rhymes (heart/apart in lines two and five, and times/powerlines in lines three and four respectively). An effect of the rhyme scheme is that a link is created between lines two to five, and more specifically the last words in those lines. The suggestion is that the green still flows deep in Jack in the Green's heart, and that motorways and powerlines will not change that, but rather strengthen it.

The last verse of *Jack-In-The-Green* goes more into detail about the Jack in the Green's actual work and duties:

The rowan, the oak and the holly tree  
are the charges left for [him] to groom.  
Each blade of grass whispers Jack-In-The-Green,  
Oh Jack, please help me through my winter's night.  
And, we are the berries of the holly tree.  
Oh, the mistlethrush is coming,  
Jack, put out the light! (Anderson, "Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics" 137).

The connection to the wood is more overt in this verse than the two previous, and arguably also more so than in the first. Three types of trees are mentioned, as is grass, berries, and a bird, making it easy for the listener to imagine the wood scenery where the Jack in the Green is. The types of trees mentioned are also significant. It is believed that bad luck befalls people who cut down oak and holly, whereas rowan, and indeed holly in certain contexts, is thought to have protective powers (Opie and Tatem "OAK TREE, harming", "HOLLY, harming", "HOLLY, protects", "ROWAN protects"). The Jack in the Green helping these trees grow and survive makes him important, not just for nature, but for the surrounding world and people as well. Moreover, the grass and berries are personified by their ability to speak. This is clearer in other transcriptions of the lyrics where quotation marks are added to indicate direct speech (see for example Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 60). The personification makes it easier for the listener to connect with the concept of life in the forest as imagined in folklore. The effect of the listener being able to connect with this idea is that the wood is perceived as a pleasant place in which magical acts take place. Remembering the motorways, power lines, and pavements mentioned in the previous verse, a contrast is created between the cold, dead, industrialised modern society and the more magical wood in this verse. This creates a tension in the lyric which is relieved by the grass growing through the pavements in the previous verse and the Jack in the Green still dutifully carrying out his work in the last verse, despite the threat of the expanding industrial lifestyle.

The music in the last verse reaches an instrumental climax. Two new instruments are added in this verse, namely the electric guitar and the drums. The drums were in fact first introduced in the instrumental interlude between the third and fourth verse and carry on to the very end of the song. Contrary to being played in a conventional style keeping time, the drums are used to build up each line using the toms and the snare before ending each line with a crash cymbal. The electric guitar is used in much the same way, adding more depth to the same bars played on the drums. The flute has a very similar role to the drums and the electric guitar, though the role is slightly freer also occasionally filling the space between the

lines. The mandolin and the percussive instruments that were introduced earlier mainly follow the melody. The effect of the arrangement in this verse is that it gives an extra punch to the end of the lines, creating a different flow and feel compared to the first verse. As an aside it is curious to note that this is one of the rare occasions where Ian Anderson actually plays the electric guitar and drums, a duty normally left to guitarist Martin Barre and drummer Barriemore Barlow respectively. The track could be recorded in a single day because the electric guitar and drums were fortuitously lying around in the studio over the weekend (Anderson, “Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes” 54). It is also worthy of note that this song is almost entirely acoustic, in contrast to the first song. The frequent changes between acoustic and what might be termed “amplified” arrangements are very typical of Jethro Tull, so much so that Allan F. Moore classifies it as the Jethro Tull idiolect (160). The change between acoustic and electric instruments in Jethro Tull’s music is more complex than the usual “plugged” and “unplugged” nature of many other bands however, where the two terms denote two ways of playing the same song. Because the opposition between electric and acoustic instruments is utilised on the same album, and frequently on the same song as well, it is at the very heart of Jethro Tull music, and is a musical device often employed therein to make contrasts in the music (Moore 160).

In short, *Jack-In-The-Green* is a song about a slightly adapted creature from folklore whose duty it is to “look after all things that grow”. The Jack in the Green is a protector of nature in this song, doing his best to fight off the threat of increased industrialisation and the toll it takes on its surroundings. The general imagery in the songs is centred on nature, and it has an optimistic feel suggesting that, with help from Jack in the Green, nature will overcome the challenges it faces as a result of human interference.

### **2.3 Rituals and Tradition – The Paganism of *Cup of Wonder***

*Cup of Wonder* is a very rare item in the early to mid Jethro Tull catalogue – a song that has never been played live. Anderson puts this down to it being “quite a hard song to play, technically” (“Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes” 55), which is really saying something considering the technical complexity of songs like *Thick as a Brick*, *Hunting Girl*, *Heavy Horses*, and *Minstrel in the Gallery*, all of which have been played live extensively. Coupled with technical musical complexity are lyrics littered with references to pagan history, rituals, and festivals. *Cup of Wonder*, more to the extent than any other song on the album, explicitly engages with and celebrates aspects associated with past cultures more closely linked with nature and the wood.

The song begins with a riff played on the acoustic guitar and flute, quickly joined by the bass and subsequently other instruments. After a relatively short instrumental opening, the vocals launch into the first verse which early on sets the tone for the song thematically speaking, with several references to paganism:

May I make my fond excuses for the lateness  
of the hour,  
But we accept your invitation, and we bring you  
Beltane's flower.  
For the May Day is the great day, sung along  
the old straight track.  
And those who ancient lines did ley will heed  
the song that calls them back. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary  
the Country Set Edition" 61).

A short comment on the differences between the lyrics from different sources is appropriate here. This is the song on the album that varies the most between different sources. The spelling is largely identical, but there is no consensus on line breaks. As mentioned in the introduction, the performance of the song served as reference when deciding which version to use in the analysis.

The connection to pagan culture is quickly established with the reference to Beltane, a Celtic ritual that signals the start of summer and the light half of the year (Cunliffe 54, 90). This tradition is also referred to as *May Day* (Jeal 68), which can be found in the next line. Another pagan reference is to that of ley lines in the line "[a]nd those who ancient lines did ley". In the pagan beliefs that survive today, ley lines are straight unbroken lines that connect major sacred sites, particularly in England (Aloi). Seen alongside the generally festive music, the numerous references to pagan culture creates a kind of longing towards a culture more in tune with nature, a feeling that prevails throughout the song.

There are, however, two points in the lyrics of the first verse that require special attention. The first point is the first two lines, "[m]ay I make my fond excuses, *for the lateness / of the hour*" (emphasis added). This is one of several implications of it being dark, or night-time, on the album. The implications of this will be discussed more in depth in chapter 2.9, but in this specific instance it creates a contrast with the Beltane and May Day celebrations of light. The light/dark contrast serves to generate a positive attitude towards the pagan traditions; it being dark at the very beginning before any pagan references are made, and the light being introduced immediately by the rituals of Beltane/May Day.

The second point which warrants extra attention is the final two lines "[a]nd those who ancient lines did ley will heed/the song that calls them back". The pun created by

“ley/lay” creates, not just a *double* meaning, but as with *Songs from the Wood*, a possible *triple* meaning. Firstly, if read or heard as “lay” it could be interpreted as referring to those who made the sacred sites in their aligned places. Secondly it can refer simply to the ley lines themselves. Thirdly, and intriguingly, it “can also refer to minstrels writing lays, a form of poetry [...]. The term “lines” then refers to the lines of words that make up the lay” (Adams). This interpretation also changes the meaning of the preceding line. “The old straight track” is generally assumed to be a reference to the book of the same name by Alfred Watkins on the subject of ley lines (Aloi), but if “ley/lay” is seen as a form of poetry, “the old straight track” can also simply mean an easy song or tune. Similarly to *Songs from the Wood* then, *Cup of Wonder* also comments on and engages with music itself. This trichotomy serves to add to both the positivity towards, and the mysticism surrounding, pagan culture.

The song then goes straight into the second verse (in some sources also referred to as the “chorus”), which depicts a form of ritual or gathering:

Pass the word and pass the lady and pass the plate  
to all who hunger.

Pass the wit of ancient wisdom, pass the  
cup of crimson wonder.

Pass the cup of crimson wonder. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 61).

At first glance, this verse is quite disconcerting. “Pass the lady” seems to have distinctly sexual connotations, whereas the “cup of crimson wonder” can be taken as referring to a cup of blood and druidic human sacrifice (Benninghouse). These associations with druidic practices are, however, somewhat unjustified and granted a bit too much interest in popular culture (Cunliffe 82-83). Remaining a little sceptical at this interpretation therefore, and delving a little deeper, “the lady” can instead refer to the Sabbath-cake, which was called “the lady” by pagans (Alexander). Similarly, “the cup of crimson wonder” can refer to wine as opposed to blood (Davis). This tradition ties in with the current Christian ritual of communion. Remembering that Anderson described the song as being filled with “historical and pagan references [...] that was interesting to tap into, not just from a historical perspective but because of the way it ties in to contemporary practices” (“Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes” 55), it makes sense to follow the second set of interpretations provided here. In that case, along with the abundant repetition of the word “pass”, this verse becomes a joyous recognition, and subsequently a longing for, the sharing and camaraderie in the pagan culture.

The third verse continues much in the same vein as the two previous, in a similar

structure as the first. There are still more references to pagan culture in a positive light, this time to places and customs more familiar to most listeners:

Ask the green man where he comes from,  
ask the cup that fills with red.  
Ask the old grey standing stones  
Who show the sun his way to bed.  
Question all as to their ways,  
and learn the secrets that they hold.  
Walk the lines of nature's palm crossed  
with silver and with gold. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 61).

"The green man" is a nod back to the previous song on the album, *Jack-In-The-Green*, and "the old grey standing stones / [w]ho show the sun his way to bed" refers to Stonehenge, ingesting a touch of the familiar in a song otherwise dominated by slightly more obscure references. In addition to the more or less overt references to pagan culture, a central theme in this verse is curiosity, as exemplified by the repetition of the word "ask" in lines one, two, and three, and "question" in line five. The curiosity and inquisitiveness of this verse urges the listener to be critical and consider the implications and reasons behind the traditions of Jack in the Green, Stonehenge, and the cup that fills with red. The focus on these images recognises how humans throughout history have attributed significance to natural procedures and landmarks, and how they have manipulated their surroundings to work out a better understanding of how nature works. Stonehenge is the clearest example of this in this verse, with the suggestion that the structure "show[s] the sun his way to bed", i.e. tracks the sun in order to keep time, much like a calendar. This is in keeping with Buell's aforementioned criterion of an environmentally oriented work suggesting that human history is implicated in natural history. The final aspect of this verse that will be drawn attention to in this short analysis is the final end rhyme between lines six and eight, "hold/gold". The attention of the listener is automatically drawn to this rhyme because of its placement, and the connotations with "gold" instil the listener with positive associations to the nature-oriented pagan culture, and by extension nature itself.

As with the first verse, the third verse launches almost straight into a new verse. This fourth verse is an almost identical reprise of the second (which is why it is referred to as a "chorus" in some sources), and serves very much the same purpose this time around, still depicting a ritual or gathering, with almost the same references:

Pass the cup and pass the lady and pass the plate  
to all who hunger.

Pass the wit of ancient wisdom,  
pass the cup of crimson wonder.

Pass the cup of crimson wonder. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary  
the Country Set Edition" 61).

The distinguishing feature between this verse and the second is that the third word in the first line is different. "Word" has been replaced with "cup", keeping more of the attention focused on the cup. The effect of this subtle change is that the passing of the wine is highlighted, setting a merrier scene. However, it is still uncertain if the cup refers to druidic sacrifice and is thus filled with blood, or if it refers to the passing of wine. If the cup is analysed as containing human blood after a druidic sacrifice, the implications are rather more macabre than simply setting a very merry scene.

With this air of unresolved tension, an extended musical interlude follows. This interlude moves through different motifs, starting with a theme played on electrical instruments (and drums), progressively adding layers, before acoustic instruments (retaining the bass, however) take over. This opposition of electric and acoustic instruments is another instance of the Jethro Tull idiolect. It creates a contrast, and subsequent tension in the music that mirrors the tension in the lyrics. Combining the folk aspect of the acoustic instruments with the presence of rock music that the electric instruments bring, which is done throughout this song and not just in this particular musical interlude, makes the song a hybrid that benefits from both the gentle touch of folk music and the punchier directness of rock music.

The instrumental break concluded, the song leads into the fifth verse. In some ways it is a reprise of the first verse, figuratively speaking in the first half and literally speaking in the second:

Join in black December's sadness,  
lie in August's welcome corn.

Stir the cup that's ever-filling with the blood  
of all that's born.

But the May Day is the great day,  
sung along the old straight track.

And those who ancient lines did ley will heed  
the song that calls them back. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary  
the Country Set Edition" 61).

The first two lines are two further references to pagan festivals, with "black December's sadness" referencing the Yule festival, and "August's welcome corn" the festival of Lughnasa (Aloi). Aloi also sees the "cup that's ever-filling with the blood / of all that's born"

as referring to “the Christian myth of the sacrificial wine”, but that it also “clearly reflects the ancient Celtic belief in the endless cycle of death and life”, presumably because it is ever-filling. However, at this juncture the reading of the cup as part of a druidic human sacrifice is lent a bit more credibility because of the explicit mention of blood. The result is that the cup conundrum is unresolved, though arguably biased towards “red” and “blood” denoting wine due to the rest of the lyric being generally merry, creating an uneasiness in the lyric. It is also interesting to note that the contrast between light and dark present in the first verse is also present here. “[B]lack December’s sadness” is contrasted with the somewhat lighter “August’s welcome corn” and then by the even brighter repetition of the second half of the first verse with the May Day celebration reference. The imagery and puns in the second half of this verse are identical to those in the first verse. It is interesting that arguably the most ambiguous part of the lyric is repeated, further increasing the unresolved tension.

The song closes with a final repetition of the second verse (or chorus), before the instrumental theme eventually fades out:

Pass the word and pass the lady and pass the plate  
to all who hunger.  
Pass the wit of ancient wisdom,  
pass the cup of crimson wonder.  
Pass the cup of crimson wonder. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary  
the Country Set Edition” 61).

The most noteworthy aspect of this verse is that the line breaks are slightly different compared to the second verse. The effect of including “pass” in the fourth line is that when reading the lyrics, the cup is given slightly less significance in this iteration of the verse, shifting the emphasis to the sharing aspect.

To sum up, *Cup of Wonder* is a merry song crammed with references to pagan culture. Despite its merry tone and instrumentation, there is a tension to the song created by at times ambiguous lyrics as well as the contrast between light and dark, and by the changing instrumentation between acoustic and amplified instruments.

## **2.4 Horses, Sex, and Aristocracy – The Humour and Criticism of *Hunting Girl***

The fourth song on the album, *Hunting Girl*, differs slightly from the three previous in subject matter. Homing in on the contemporary country side lifestyle, more specifically the intercourse the inhabitants of the country side get up to, this song tells the story of an encounter of an intimate nature between a high-born woman and a low-born man. Anderson

described the song as “all about a young lady who is very, very much into the equestrian pursuits” (Hunting Girl [Live] 00:00:00-00:00:05) during the tour of the album, and later as “a bit of a caricature (. . . ) arising from what seemed to be part of the subculture of [the] rural community where there was sometimes a bit of hanky-panky going on amongst the horsey-set” (Anderson, “Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes” 55). Beneath the humorous and borderline absurd lyrics, however, there is an underlying criticism of rural upper class society.

The first verse starts off quite innocently with a setting of the scene where the lyrical I is out for a walk and comes across a hunt:

One day I walked the road and crossed a field  
To go by where the hounds ran hard.  
And on the master raced.  
Behind, the hunters chased  
To where the path was barred.  
One fine young lady’s horse refused the fence to clear.  
I unlocked the gate but she did wait until the pack had disappeared. (Anderson, Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition 61).

The equestrian theme is introduced already in the first verse with the hunt riding past the lyrical I. The sexual aspect is only subtly hinted at with the lyrical I’s observation that the horse that failed to jump over the fence belonged to “one fine young lady”. Some suspense is built in the last line, with the fine young lady choosing to remain behind the hunt, despite the lyrical I having opened the gate for her horse, lending credibility to the reading of sexual undertones in the lyrical I’s observation. The formal, borderline highbrow, language in this song makes the undertones harder to pick up, as its clean and formal tone creates a contrast to the naughtier subject matter.

The rhyme scheme in the lyric here is ABCCBDD where lines two and five rhyme fully (hard/barred), as do lines two and three (raced/chased), with lines seven and eight rhyming through assonance (clear/disappeared). The effect of these rhymes is that the rhyming words stand out in a fairly up-tempo track where the lyrics are somewhat difficult to make out without reading them while they are being performed. It is therefore interesting to dwell slightly on the words “hard”, “raced”, “chased”, and “barred”. At first glance, these seem to be fairly innocuous words. Taking the larger context into account, however, they all play on the equestrian and sexual themes. Riding hard, racing, chasing, and having to circumvent barred gates all relate to horses and riding. In a cruder sense, “hard” also plays on the state of a man’s reproductive organ during intercourse, “race” can refer to the intercourse

itself, “chase” to the activity of procuring a sexual partner, and “barred” to the state of the road to a sexual encounter until the chase is over. The effect of these words standing out in the context of the song is that the themes of horses and intercourse start to form in the listener’s mind early on.

During the verse, the first five lines are musically identical with a string synthesiser, electric guitar, drums, and bass, performed with a strict adherence to the melody which the vocals also follow closely. In lines six and seven, the rhythm signature changes, helping emphasise the vocals more. At the very end of the seventh line, the bass and drums mirror the stress in the vocals almost exactly adding significantly to the suspense building in the verse.

The second verse elucidates the sexual undertones from the first verse, but also stays with the equestrian theme in the same elevated linguistic style, while also introducing a subtle tone of social criticism:

Crop handle carved in bone,  
Sat high upon a throne of finest English leather,  
The queen of all the pack.  
This joker raised his hat and talked about the weather.  
All should be warned about this high-born hunting girl.  
She took this simple man’s downfall in hand.  
I raised the flag that she unfurled. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 61).

A shift subject matter in this verse can be detected between the third and fourth line. Up to and including the third line, the song has mostly entreated the equestrian theme and the general country side lifestyle with subtle sexual undertones. From the fourth line the sexual theme is treated more explicitly as the lyrical I engages in conversation with the lady. His desire for the “hunting girl” also becomes more apparent in this verse, not only through his rather clumsy attempt of striking up a conversation while deferring to her by raising his hat, but also by the lyrical I seeing the woman riding as “high upon a throne of finest English leather”, meaning that the lyrical I elevates the object of his fancy. It is worthy of note that the lyrical I refers to himself in the third person in lines four and six in this verse (“this joker” and “this simple man’s”). This adds a layer of humour, especially coupled with the elevated language contrasted with the slightly rude subject matter. Returning to the description of the saddle as a throne, and the woman sitting high upon it, a critical tone can be detected. Seen in the context of the extravagantly made crop and the description of the hunting girl as “the *queen* of all the pack” (emphasis added), a clear social distinction between her and the lyrical I is made, implying that her social standing is preferable to that of the lyrical I.

The rhyme scheme in this verse is very chaotic. A possible analysis would be EFGFHIIJ, where only lines two and four rhyme. The effect of the *written* chaotic rhyme scheme is that it mirrors the lyrical I's confusion and perhaps rising hope of intimate contact with the woman.

The music and performance in the second verse is virtually identical with the first. This helps counterbalance the chaotic rhyme scheme in the written lyrics and create a natural flow by generating perceived breaks in the lyrics in the performance so that the experienced rhyme scheme becomes EEFGGFHIIJ. The combination of the melody and the lyrics highlights the words "bone", "throne", "leather", "pack", "hat", and "weather". Several of these words can again have sexual connotations and the arrangement of the music helps emphasise this dichotomy.

Following the change in subject matter in the second verse, the third verse goes more into detail about exactly how "very, very much into the equestrian pursuits" the young woman actually is:

Boot leather flashing and spur necks the size of my thumb.  
This high-born hunter had tastes as strange as they come.  
Unbridled passion, I took the bit in my teeth.  
Her standing over, me on my knees underneath. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood  
40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 61).

The language still in an elevated style, some of the particulars of the intercourse between the lyrical I and the hunting girl, and the actions leading up to it, are revealed. They include several accessories normally associated with horses and riding, such as spurs, a bit, and riding boots presumably used in an unorthodox manner, culminating in the woman quite literally using the lyrical I as a horse. The elevated style of the language and the unusual scene creates a humorous contrast, further enhanced by the wordplay on "unbridled" in the third line. The same subtle critical tone from the previous verse can also be found here, with the high-born lady standing over, dominating, and using the low-born lyrical I as she wishes. Obviously a sexual interaction made humorous by its unorthodox nature, it can also be read non-sexually. A non-sexual reading entails the hunting girl, and by extension the upper class, using the lyrical I, by extension the lower class, at will.

In contrast to the previous verses, the rhyme scheme in the third verse is transparent and recognisable as KKLL. However, for there to be a full rhyme between the first and second line (thumb/come), the vowel in "come" has to be slightly changed, adding more sexual connotations to the word, further underlined by the word being repeated in the

performance. The more straightforward and conventional rhyme scheme offsets the sexually unorthodox subject matter, creating a contrast between form and content which generates an inherent tension in the verse.

The music in this verse is radically different from the previous two. The instrumentation is similar, but the melody and rhythm signature is entirely different which underlines the complete change in subject matter. Additionally, there is an extended instrumental interlude between line two and three where the electric guitar plays a solo on which the flute builds and comments, resulting in kind of a jostling between the two instruments. This instrumental interlude, due to its nature and placement, becomes a musical representation of the actual sexual act between the hunting girl and the lyrical I, relieving the lyrics of the duty of having to describe it. The result of leaving it to the music to tell this aspect of the story is that despite dealing with peculiar sexual behaviour, the song remains, linguistically at least, fairly clean and friendly for the public. It also allows the music to be playful and exciting in its mimicry of the act. The same technique of using an instrumental passage to symbolise the act of intercourse is also repeated later on the album (see chapter 2.6). The two lines remaining after the instrumental interlude are played almost identically to the first two, before the music returns to the familiar melodies and instrumentations. An aspect worthy of mention is that Barriemore Barlow's use of double bass drums, which sounds similar to horse gallop, has by this stage picked up a decidedly humorous undertone, considering that the lyrical I is at this stage quite literally fulfilling the role of a horse for the hunting girl to play out her sexual fantasies.

In the last verse the sexual interaction is completed and the lyrical I, apparently somewhat flabbergasted, bids his leave:

My lady, be discrete.  
I must get to my feet and go back to the farm.  
Whilst I appreciate you are no deviate,  
I might come to some harm.  
I'm not inclined to acts refined, if that's how it goes.  
Oh, high-born hunting girl,  
I'm just a normal low-born so-and-so. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 61).

The language remains in the same elevated style, and as this verse explicitly reveals the lyrical I to be a low-born farmer, it creates a contrast between the language and the lyrical I's social position. This contrast has numerous effects; firstly supporting the caricatural nature of the song by ascribing an uncharacteristically grandiose language to the lower-class lyrical I.

Secondly the contrast adds a humoristic layer, the idea of a low-born farmer with such a linguistic tone being unusual. The last function is that it injects a subtle tone of social criticism, turning the social hierarchy on its head. In the song, the high-born hunting girl indulges her rude, borderline dirty, sexual desires while the low-born farmer commands a sophisticated language and acts gentlemanly, which constitutes a clear break with the connotations to the lower class. An implication of this turning of the social hierarchy, further supported by the prevailing celebration of the countryside throughout the album, is that it is in fact the lower class that occupies the moral high ground in society.

The rhyme scheme in this verse is more complex than the previous, being MNONPQP. As with the second verse, lines two and four rhyme fully (farm/harm), whereas the fifth and seventh line rhyme through assonance (goes/so). The rhyming of “farm” and “harm” is significant, suggesting that the lyrical I is concerned about the consequences the escapade might have on his life. A more interesting aspect of the rhyme scheme in this verse is the internal rhyming in the lines which is far more prevalent here than in the other verses. As with the second verse, the actual performance of the song makes for a different experience of the rhymes, where the internal rhymes actually sound more like end rhymes. Examples of these internal rhymes are “discrete”/”feet”, “appreciate”/”deviate”, and “inclined”/”refined”. As with the previous verses, this creates a flow in the lyric, but there is also an additional effect in this verse. With three full internal rhymes, plus the full end rhyme between lines two and four, the verse has a more structured feel than the second verse, which is similar in many other respects. This mirrors the lyrical I’s more orderly state of mind having consummated the physical relationship with the woman. A final aspect of the rhymes in this verse worthy of note is the assonance in the last two lines. In the sixth line, “Oh, high-born hunting girl”, there is assonance created by the /h/-sounds. In the seventh line, “I’m just a normal low-born so-and-so”, assonance is created by the /o/-sounds. Both these assonances fairly obviously mimic the panting sounds presumably made by the lyrical I and the hunting girl moments earlier, serving to reiterate the sexual theme of the song. Furthermore, the assonance in the last line imitates the sound of the hustling lyrical I getting to his feet and back to his farm, emphasising his concern about the possible consequences the encounter might have.

The music in terms of instrumentation, melody, and performance in this verse is more or less identical to the music in the first and second verse. The strict adherence to melody coupled with the slightly more naturally flowing language due to the internal and end rhymes arguably makes this verse flow slightly easier than the first two verses, bringing this upbeat song to a semantic and melodic close.

*Hunting Girl*, then, is a humoristic song with an abundance of sexual references. Underneath the humour and bawdiness of the lyrics lies a subtle tone of social criticism implying that the higher classes do not occupy the moral high ground in society. That position is reserved for the lower classes who, appropriately and in keeping with the general celebration of nature and the wood on the album, lead a lifestyle more in tune with nature.

## **2.5 Pagan Traditions and Odd Time – The Playfulness of *Ring Out, Solstice Bells***

The fifth song of the album is in many ways a symbol of Jethro Tull's music career. Originally released as a single and not intended for album release (Rees 76), the song was supposed to be a Christmas single to drum up interest in the upcoming album. The record company, however, were not so keen on what would eventually be the released version because the verses are in 7/4 time, very unusual for popular music, even more so for music intended for single release. A version in 4/4 time throughout was therefore recorded, but after gathering opinions from "the office staff and the receptionists and people who were the record company workers" as opposed to the record company executives, it was decided that the original version in 7/4 time would be released (Webb 31-32). With a Christmas single predominantly in 7/4 time, one would assume the lyrics would be about Christmas in the popular tradition. However, the lyrics instead focus on the pagan rituals and traditions that were already in place around the time of the winter solstice that were assimilated by Christianity, giving the song a playful quality and an understated air of social criticism.

Wasting no time beating around the bush, the first verse gets straight to the point setting the scene of the winter solstice after a short instrumental intro dominated by the flute:

Now is the solstice of the year.  
Winter is the glad song that you hear.  
Seven maids move in seven time.  
Have the lads up ready in a line. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 62).

This verse is a celebratory one, celebrating winter and the return of light and longer days, as exemplified by "[w]inter is the glad song that you hear". The theme of light is present throughout the song, and there is no contrast with darkness which makes this one of the most unambiguously celebratory songs on the album. The verse is also playful inasmuch that it plays on its own unusual time signature with the line "seven maids move *in seven time*" (emphasis added). The odd time signature is further emphasised by the musical arrangements, with prevailing clapping during the verses which makes it easier to hear and feel that the time

is odd, as opposed to even. “Seven maids” also bears with it connotations to the Seven Sisters, a star cluster central to moon worshipping in pagan Britain (Cunliffe 54). Even though these connotations are not overt, they do tie in with the theme of pagan rituals and festivals. The verse closes with the lads being ready in a line. Arguably only a description of the men lining up to dance with the maids, remembering the focus on ley lines in *Cup of Wonder*, it is also possible to interpret the “line” the men make as being a kind of ley line pointing to the maids who would subsequently be construed as sacred.

After a very short flute break, the distinguishing feature that makes this song appropriate for single release follows – a recognisable chorus:

Ring out these bells.  
Ring out, ring solstice bells.  
Ring solstice bells. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62).

The chorus first brings the focus onto the bells, which are also played in the background. Bells being associated with contemporary Christmas celebrations in several senses, for instance through church bells and Christmas bells (often hanging from a mistletoe or a pine branch), the expectations are somewhat turned on their heads after the pagan rich imagery in the first verse. However, the second line gently conforms to the expectations set up in the first verse by bringing in the solstice, an event not overly emphasised in contemporary Christian Christmas celebrations. The third line concludes the short chorus by fully incorporating the bells into the more pagan notion of winter solstice celebration.

The second verse is arguably the one with most overt druidic references, possibly being the reason for certain readings of particularly *Cup of Wonder* (see chapter 2.3). What this verse does more than anything, though, is point out some specific images and aspects of the contemporary, predominantly Christian, Christmas celebration that harks back to pagan culture, and arguably druids:

Join together ‘neath the mistletoe,  
By the holly oak whereon it grows.  
Seven druids dance in seven time.  
Sing the song the bells call, loudly chiming. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62).

Already in the first line there is a reference to the mistletoe. A well-known practice in contemporary Christmas celebrations is for it to be hung in houses and for men to have the privilege of kissing a woman who stands underneath it (Opie and Tatem, “MISTLETOE, kissing under”). That is likely the connotation most listeners would have to the mistletoe in a

Christmas song, however the nature of the mistletoe changes with the second and third line “[b]y the holly oak whereon it grows / [s]even druids dance in seven time”. With the introduction of the oak and druids in these lines, the meaning of the mistletoe shifts from one of contemporary Christmas celebration practice to illustrating where the practice originates from. The druids are thought to have put great significance on the mistletoe when growing on oak trees, believing it to be a cure for most poisons and a provider of fertility (Cunliffe 59-60). It is also worth noting that several sources have the second line of the verse marked down as “Holy oak” instead of “holly oak”, emphasising the pun and adding to the significance of the oak, which was sacred to the druids (Cunliffe 59).

After a reprise of the chorus, there is a break in a different musical style which almost resembles lounge jazz with a short piano break on top of the laid back rhythm section while the vocals sing the lines “[r]ing out, ring out the solstice bells. / Ring out, ring out those solstice bells.” (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62). As the lines draw to a close, the rhythm section slowly builds up before launching into the last verse. The effect is that the mood in the song breaks up, shifting the focus so that it can be brought back to the verse which comes more unexpectedly than it would otherwise have done.

The last verse shifts the perspective out towards the actual solstice, with focus on the sun and planets:

Praise be to the distant sister sun.  
Joyful as the silver planets run.  
Seven maids move in seven time.  
Sing the song the bells call, loudly chiming. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62).

Joy and happiness is central in this verse, with “praise” and “joyful” introducing lines one and two, and “chiming” concluding the verse. Referring to the sun as “sister” is also poignant here. As well as adding associations to the Seven Sisters as mentioned earlier, it was also common in Celtic languages to refer to the sun as feminine and the moon as masculine, because of the sun’s heat and power bringing life to nature (Sowa, “Ring Out, Solstice Bells”).

The final repetition of the chorus that immediately follows the third verse serves to sustain the focus on the solstice, finally pressing home the theme of light that is consistent throughout the song, with no darkness to create a contrast. The song then concludes with another musical shift, changing the beat entirely. The vocals repeat the line “[r]ing on, ring

out” four times (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62), while bells played by David Palmer “having the time of [his] life” (Webb 32) can be heard increasingly loudly, finally ending the song with a focus on the bells.

The Jethro Tull single released for Christmas is in the end then not a Christmas song in the popular and Christian sense at all. It draws attention to celebrations and festivals that were already in place at a similar time of the year in pagan times that have been appropriated by Christianity over the centuries, giving the song an air of understated criticism. The song is nonetheless celebratory and has a prevailing focus on light and festivities. It is also playful in the sense that the lyrics comment on the unusual time signature, every verse mentioning druids or maidens dancing in seven time, while the music follows 7/4 time.

## **2.6 Landscape, Affairs, and Pipe Organ – The Earthiness of *Velvet Green***

The sixth song constitutes a slight shift on the album. On the original LP release, *Velvet Green* was the first song on “side B”, i.e. the second half of the album. In it, the album returns to the sexual theme, but also engages more actively with the theme of love, which is prevalent throughout side B. In this song, the love theme is predominantly physical. The sexual theme shares the focus with landscape, and the gender roles are reversed compared to *Hunting Girl*, the woman here perceiving the love as emotional as well as physical. Despite its relatively overt sexual nature, the song can also be interpreted as being metaphorical and the sexual elements as playing part in a traditional ritual surrounding fertility in a more general sense. This song is also distinctive in its musical arrangement; placing David Palmer’s specially made portative pipe organ (Webb 22) to the fore. Along with *Jack-In-The-Green* and arguably *The Whistler*, this is the only song on the album without the rhythm section playing an accented beat associated with the rock genre in its many forms. The absence of a rock rhythm section and largely, though not entirely, acoustic instrumentation makes *Velvet Green* among the more traditionally folky songs on the album.

After its instantly recognisable intro with the pipe organ carrying the melody line as acoustic guitars, mandolins, bass, flute, and an array of percussive instruments gradually add layers to the melody, the first part of the lyrics starts. In this section, the first two verses set the scene of a beautiful, fresh, and green country landscape. If not for a couple of reasonably well disguised proleptic puns, the song’s introduction would be perfectly innocent:

Walking on velvet green. Scots pine growing.  
Isn't it rare to be taking the air, sinning.  
Walking on velvet green.

Walking on velvet green. Distant cows lowing.  
Never a care, with your legs in the air, loving.  
Walking on velvet green. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 62).

On the surface, and certainly in the performance of them, these verses seem to paint a picture of the lyrical I enjoying a walk in the countryside. The first proleptic pun that suggests that there is more going on here is "sinning" in the second line of the first verse. In *Jethro Tull Complete Lyrics*, this word is transcribed as "singing" (141), and in the actual performance of the song it is very difficult to discern which of the two words is being sung. The second pun is in the second line of the second verse, "with your legs in the air". In one sense it can be interpreted as the lyrical I skipping along the path while singing. On the other hand it can be interpreted as referring to the position the feet would have in certain expressions of intercourse. The puns make the lyrics open after the first two verses, and it is also noteworthy that the instrumentation during these two verses is similar to that of the instrumental intro – acoustic apart from the bass.

After a reprise of one of the instrumental themes from the introduction of the song, both the music and the lyrics change expression. The musical arrangement is stripped down from a multilayered, multi-instrumental one with melodic interludes into a guitar-driven (acoustic in the third verse, then acoustic and electric in the fourth and fifth) arrangement with the vocals firmly in focus. The lyrics become more overtly sexual in nature as the lyrical I starts interacting with a love interest in what has been termed as "a wonderful pick-up song" (Sowa, "Velvet Green"):

Won't you have my company, yes,  
take it in your hands.  
Go down on velvet green with a country man.  
Who's a young girl's fancy and an old maid's dream.  
Tell your mother that you walked all night  
on velvet green.

One dusky half-hour's ride up to the north.  
There lies your reputation and all that you're worth.  
Where the scent of wild roses turns the milk  
to cream.  
Tell your mother that you walked all night  
on velvet green.

And the long grass blows in the evening cool.  
 And August's rare delights may be April's fool.  
 But think none of that my love, I'm tight against  
 the seam.  
 And I'm growing up to meet you down  
 on velvet green. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set  
 Edition" 62).

It is clear in these three verses that the lyrical I is a confident man thinking of himself that he is "a young girl's fancy and an old maid's dream". This section of the song is also rich in sexual puns such as "[g]o down", "the long grass blows", "I'm growing up to meet you", and "turns milk to cream". "Go down" can in this context mean both "walk down [to the point called Velvet Green]" and "have oral sexual stimulation [at the point called Velvet Green]". As an aside it is worth noting that "velvet green" is capitalised, i.e. "Velvet Green", in the lyrics printed in both *Songs from the Wood* (LP) and *Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered with Bonus Tracks)* (CD), making it possible to analyse it as a place name. "[T]he long grass blows" has a very similar double meaning as "[g]o down", whereas "I'm growing up" relies on the similar vocal realisation of "going" and "growing" so that in the actual performance of the song the line can both mean that the lyrical I is getting an erection and that he is going down to Velvet Green to meet the girl he is talking to. "Milk to cream" can refer either to the process of making cream, or to insemination. The lyrical I also considers the possible consequences of the sexual venture, noting that "August's rare delights may be April's fool", referring to potential pregnancy, playing on "April Fools' Day", while suggesting that the act itself will nonetheless be a delight.

Though the sexual puns and the intentions of the lyrical I are quite bawdy, the way the imagery works offsets the lewdness in the song. The sexual imagery is largely related to nature and the great outdoors (Caswell), placing the song in the tradition of erotic folk songs, where the relationship between fertility of all kinds was sacred (Lloyd 187-188). In these songs that arose in pre-Christian England, the sexual energy of young couples having intercourse in fields would help the crops be successful (Lloyd 100). *Velvet Green* then becomes not just a song about a man pursuing a woman to have sex, but also a recognition and a case in point of the role and the importance of sex in an agricultural society. Exploring this line of interpretation further, the sexual relationship becomes "( . . . ) a metaphor meaning that real, enjoyable and healthy life lies in a closer relationship with Nature, ( . . . ) and the awareness that we ourselves are part of Nature" (Sowa, "Velvet Green"). It is also interesting that placing the song within the tradition of erotic folk songs adds more context and

conviction to the earthiness of the lyrics, taking them from being earthy for the sake of being earthy to being earthy for the sake of “the earth”, as in helping the earth grow.

As mentioned previously, these three verses are exclusively guitar-driven and with a different musical theme compared to the rest of the song. This changes the character and nature of this section, emphasising the intentions of the lyrical I which were unclear in the first two verses. The use of electric guitar is interesting as it is not used on the other musical themes. It adds more punch to the otherwise mellow song, and it is the only electric instrument on the song, apart from the bass which is used on the acoustic themes. The electric/acoustic dichotomy, as mentioned previously, is an expression of the Jethro Tull idiolect (Moore 160) and creates a distinct contrast in the song. The expression of the idiolect is less emphatic here than in other Jethro Tull songs, though, as a result of the lack of a classic rock rhythm section. It is nonetheless very interesting that the instrumental interlude that follows the fifth verse changes both the theme and the instrumentation, reprising themes from the intro of the song. This instrumental interlude, as in *Hunting Girl* (see chapter 2.4), represents the actual sexual act, which is not described in the lyrics. In contrast to *Hunting Girl*, this instrumental interlude is acoustic (apart from the bass), which is very much in keeping with the theme of sex helping nature and crops grow, giving the whole passage a more “natural” and earthy sound than electric instruments would offer.

With the conclusion of the acoustic instrumental interlude, the sexual act itself also concludes and the song reverts to the same guitar-driven musical theme and instrumentation from the three previous verses. In the following two verses (six and seven), the lyrical I makes his true intentions beyond the act itself known, leaving the girl the following morning:

Now I may tell you that it's love and not just lust.  
And if we live the lie, let's lie in trust.  
On golden daffodils, to catch the silver stream  
That washes out the wild oat seed on velvet green.

We'll dream as lovers under the stars:  
Of civilizations raging afar.  
And the ragged dawn breaks on your battle scars  
As you walk home cold and alone upon velvet green. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62).

The natural imagery and the role of sex within nature expressed in this song are arguably most clear in the sixth verse. The lyrical I having implied, to the listener at least, that he has bent the truth in order to seduce the girl, who “live[s] the lie” he has told her, demonstrating that the love between the two characters is only perceived by the woman, the subsequent

night is spent “[o]n golden daffodils, to catch the silver stream / [t]hat washed out the wild oat seed on velvet green”. Here the listener is provided a glimpse into how wild oat expands and grows, the stream carrying the seed until it is caught by daffodils. It is also noteworthy that the daffodils are described as *golden* and the stream as *silver*, highlighting the positivity around nature present throughout the album. This is also one of the clearest acknowledgments of the environment, as exemplified by the spreading and growing of wild oats, as a process and not a constant on the album. Furthermore, it is interesting that the spreading of the wild oat seed happens after intercourse has taken place, supporting the interpretation of the intercourse helping fertility in a general sense. In the seventh verse, the second and last overt reference to modern society on the album is made as the lovers dream of “civilizations raging afar” (the first reference is made in *Jack-In-The-Green*, see chapter 2.2). The placement of this reference is most revealing. The reference to “civilizations” marks a crucial turn in the verse. The first line, “[w]e’ll dream as lovers under the stars”, is romantic and in keeping with the themes of the song. However, right after they have dreamt “[o]f civilizations raging afar” the verse takes a sadder turn, revealing the girl’s “battle scars” from the night as she walks home “cold and alone”. “Civilizations” introducing this sadness and dejection can be interpreted as a subtle criticism of the emotions that come with more modern and urban societies. It is also of interest that the night has been a playful and enjoyable time, but that the morning and the light bring with them the harsh reality of wounds and loneliness. Again, a more thorough discussion of the role darkness plays on the album is presented in chapter 2.9.

The girl having gone home, the lyrical I is seemingly unaffected by her apparent sadness as the song comes full circle, returning to the themes and instrumentation from the intro, lyrically reprising the first two verses. This reprise (albeit with a small variation in the instrumentation in terms of the percussion) symbolises that the lyrical I is satisfied with the previous night as he is “taking the air” in search of another love interest.

Collecting the threads, *Velvet Green* is a song in the erotic folk song tradition about a man (in the form of the lyrical I) convincing a love interest to have intercourse in the great outdoors. In addition to being physically stimulating to the pair, the intercourse helps nature and crops grow, and can be seen as a metaphor meaning that a real and enjoyable life lies in a closer relationship with nature. The earthiness of the lyrical themes is closely linked with the musical arrangement which is predominantly acoustic and in keeping with traditional folk song tradition. The song also engages with the theme of love which is central to side B of the album, even though it is emotionally only perceived by the woman in the song, the lyrical I having bent the truth in order to experience the physical expression of love.

## 2.7 Love, Pagan Imagery, and Tin Whistles – The Ambivalence of *The Whistler*

The seventh song on the album, *The Whistler*, is in a similar vein to the previous song, *Velvet Green*, inasmuch that it deals with the theme of seduction. Sexual references are far less abundant in this song though, making it more innocent and more romantic than the preceding track on the album. Similarly to *Songs from the Wood*, the lyrics rely on double meaning to create tension and ambiguity, which ultimately becomes playful when heard alongside the musical arrangement. The end result is a merry love song with a distinct touch of sadness.

The song starts with a short instrumental introduction played on acoustic guitar and bass, progressively adding glockenspiel, marimba, and lastly synthesizers. The first verse is wholly acoustic with only vocals and acoustic guitar. In it, the lyrical I addresses his love interest, promising her various gifts, but also letting it slip that he probably will not stay long:

I'll buy you six bay mares to put in your stable.  
Six golden apples bought with my pay.  
I am the first piper who calls the sweet tune,  
But I must be gone by the seventh day. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 63).

Benninghouse points out that "[t]he rural imagery continues" in this song. The significance of the rural imagery here is that it serves to add more positivity around the rural lifestyle. In this verse, animals, buildings, and food associated with the countryside (bay mares, stable, and apples) are used to entice the lyrical I's love interest, suggesting that these gifts are hard to turn down. The three first lines in this verse attempt to persuade the love interest to be with the lyrical I. The last line, however, suggests that the lyrical I does not intend to linger because he "must be gone by the seventh day".

Directly after the first verse comes presumably one of the main reasons why this song was chosen as the single from the album (bearing in mind that *Ring Out, Solstice Bells* was released before the album and originally not intended to be on it): a chorus. Here, the lyrical I refers to himself as "the whistler" and provides a glimpse into how he got his nickname:

So come on, I'm the whistler.  
I have a fife and a drum to play.  
Get ready for the whistler.  
I whistle along on the seventh day.  
Whistle along on the seventh day. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition" 63).

Sowa has pointed out that “the whistler” can have two meanings, namely “one that always whistles, as we usually do when we are happy and don't have anything to worry about[, b]ut [that] “the Whistler” may also simply mean “the one who plays the whistle,” and there is a good deal of tin-whistle in the music ( . . . )” (“The Whistler”). As Sowa goes on to point out, the interpretation of “the whistler” as “the one who plays the whistle” is corroborated by the flute in the second line, where the word “fife” is punctuated by a flute in the music, and the drums by actual drums (“The Whistler”). There is, however, a possible third meaning as well, which the subsequent musical interlude points to. “Whistle” can also mean to move so quickly that it creates a whistling sound, and in that case, “the whistler” means “the person who runs away quickly”.

The chorus is, appropriately therefore, followed by an up-tempo instrumental interlude dominated by the tin whistle with acoustic guitar and drums providing the rhythm. The tempo falls back down as the bass comes back and the melody returns to that of the verse. In the second verse the lyrical I reveals more of his past, while still trying to convince his love interest to join him:

All kinds of sadness I've left behind me.  
Many's the day when I have done wrong.  
But I'll be yours for ever and ever.  
Climb in the saddle and whistle along. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 63).

This verse has been taken to refer to the lyrical I having broken his lovers' hearts in the past (Aloi). The lyrical I appears to be addressing his love interest directly throughout this verse, and it is therefore difficult to say whether he truly means that he has done something wrong, or if he is just trying to persuade her to be with him in spite of his reputation. In a similar fashion to *Velvet Green* where the lyrical I “may tell [his love interest] that it's love and not just lust” (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 62), the lyrical I here tries to convince his love interest of his intentions with the line “( . . . ) I'll be *yours* for ever and ever” (emphasis added). This is quite possibly a lie, given what has been revealed about him thus far and that the chorus follows this verse, with the possible interpretation of the nickname “the whistler” referring to the lyrical I leaving quickly.

Before moving on to the analysis of the last verse and the end of the song, it is appropriate to address one further aspect of the song. Thus far the love interest of the lyrical I has been referred to as a woman in this analysis. However, a woman is never explicitly mentioned in the lyrics. This has also been observed by Sowa who interprets the lack of an

overt reference to a woman as the lyrical I being a character of hope speaking on behalf of nature (“The Whistler”), similar to the Jack in the Green-character in *Jack-In-The-Green*. There is, however, another way to interpret the suspicious absence of explicit references to the gender of the lyrical I’s love interest. Assuming that the lyrical I is male, as a result of the voice in the performance of the song being male, it is perfectly possible to interpret the lyrical I in *The Whistler* as being gay. The focus on whistles and flutes corroborates this interpretation due to phallic associations as a result of their shape. The name the lyrical I gives himself, “The Whistler”, also corroborates the gay interpretation bearing in mind that one of the possible meanings of the name is “one who whistles” which is something a person tends to do if he is merry, happy or *gay* (in the sense of glad). The fact that the lyrical I leaves after just one week and that he has left “all kinds of sadness” behind him also strengthens this reading because of the social stigma that would result from living out one’s homosexuality on the countryside in the 1970s. It is also possible *not* to interpret the lyrical I in this song as gay, but the absence of references to a woman is surprising and opens up for this analysis.

After the second verse, the song moves straight back into the chorus with a difference in instrumentation. The drums now play continuously and the electric guitar has come into the mix as well. After a slightly longer instrumental interlude which is very similar to the one following the first chorus, the song moves into the last verse. The last verse revisits the pagan theme from *Cup of Wonder* and *Ring Out, Solstice Bells* (see chapters 2.3 and 2.5), tying the overarching themes of love and paganism on the album together:

Deep red are the sunsets in mystical places.  
Black are the nights on Summer Day Sands.  
We’ll find the speck of truth in each riddle,  
Hold the first grain of love in our hands (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood 40th Anniversary the Country Set Edition” 63).

The imagery of this verse connects love and the mysteries of the remnants of pagan culture. “We” explore together “mystical places” and the “truth of each riddle”, while enjoying deep red sunsets and nights spent on Summer Day Sands. The sustained focus on the obscure pagan culture, in particular the more mystical side of it, throughout the album coupled with the attention devoted to the Jack in the Green figure and the magical aspect of the wood, is most intriguing. They represent a general suggestion on the album that the wood and nature is currently not fully understood, and that listening more to, and living more in harmony with, them is the way forward. The last line of the verse, “[h]old the first grain of love in our hands”, is also very interesting here. It combines the themes of love and agriculture, making

love something that can be sewn, and nature thus something that can be used to cultivate it. This is therefore arguably the line that celebrates nature most on the entire album, and also strengthens Sowa's reading of the lyrical I in this song as a kind of nature's spokesman.

The song closes with repeating the chorus twice (with the last line omitted in the first repetition of the chorus, the song seemingly stopping for a second before resuming with a second repetition of the chorus in its entirety which adds variation in a song that otherwise follows a fairly strict pattern) before reprising the tin whistle theme.

In summary, *The Whistler* is a song rich in ambiguity that deals with the topic of love with rural imagery and brief pagan references. In contrast to *Hunting Girl* and *Velvet Green*, the relationship between the lyrical I and the love interest in this song is not overtly sexual. Additionally the gender of the love interest is not revealed, and several aspects of the song make it possible to interpret this as a love song between two men. The music occasionally comments on the lyrics, instilling the song with a touch of humour.

## **2.8 Timidity, Love and Bagpipes – The Melodic Interplay of *Pibroch* (*Cap in Hand*)**

Sporting the name *Pibroch*, which is music played on a bagpipe by a single piper in a contemplative context (Anderson, "Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes" 57), it comes as no surprise that the eighth song on the album has a Scottish feel. The music is spacious and one of the themes imitates bagpipes, while the setting for the lyrics is in the wood. The song comfortably breaks the eight minute mark with lengthy and spectacularly arranged instrumental breaks. The lyrics are, unexpectedly, the shortest on the entire album, spanning only three verses with no chorus. This song, therefore, relies more on the interplay between the music and lyrics than any other song on the album to create a unique mood to convey a different side of the love theme.

The song starts with some indiscernible voices and static before the distinctive guitar sound mimicking bagpipes slowly fades in. The flute, drums, and bass then join in on the same theme. The drums and bass move on from the almost one and a half minute-long introduction into the first verse, which sets the scene for the song and is told, uncharacteristically for this album, in the third person:

There's a light in the house  
    in the wood  
    in the valley.  
There's a thought in the head of the man  
Who carries his dreams

like the coat slung  
on his shoulders  
Bringing you love  
in the cap  
in his hand. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered with Bonus Tracks”).

This verse performs four significant introductory actions. First and foremost it sets the scene “in the wood / in the valley”, generating an image of an isolated house. Alongside the intro with imitated bagpipes and the title of the track, this image becomes explicitly Scottish. Secondly, this verse introduces “the man”. The narrator describes him using zero focalisation, meaning that the narrator of this song knows what there is to know about him (Niederhoff 115) (the technique is more traditionally referred to as an *omniscient narrator*, however other tools from narratology are relevant here and the corresponding terminology will therefore be used). This is clear by that narrator’s knowledge that “[t]here’s a thought in the head of the man”. “The man” is indicated to be humble and careful by the lines “in the cap / in his hand”, referring to “cap in hand” meaning “humbly”. Thirdly and fourthly “you” and the theme of love are introduced, “you” being the intended recipient of “the man’s” love.

An instrumental break reprising an abridged iteration of the bagpipes theme follows, further underlining the Scottish feel of the song, before moving on to the second verse, again with the drums and bass introducing the musical theme of the verse. Here the listener is provided a more detailed glimpse into “the man”:

And each step he takes in one  
half of a life-time:  
No word he would say could you  
understand.  
So he bundles his regrets  
into a gesture of sorrow,  
Bringing you love  
cap in hand. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered with Bonus Tracks”).

The image of “the man” as humble continues in this verse, but it emerges that he is also a man who does not express his feelings well. To remedy this, and to express his feelings for “you”, he has come up with some form of a gesture instead of words. This gesture is commonly held to be a marriage proposal (Aloi, Benninghouse). The lines “[s]o he bundles his regrets / into a gesture of sorrow” make it clear that he is saddened by his inability to express his feelings to one he loves.

Following this verse is a lengthy instrumental break moving through four different

motifs. To describe and analyse them in sufficient detail would be too lengthy for this thesis, so a short description and analysis of the significance for each part is all there is room for. The first motif is in a classical style and is meticulously arranged. This symbolises “the man’s” sorrow and regret for not expressing his love. The second motif is a reprise of the bagpipe theme. This symbolises his contemplating of whether and how he should express his feelings. Again the title “*Pibroch*” points to this. The third motif is far merrier, with a more folk like flute melody that is spawned directly from the last three chords of the bagpipes theme. Here, “the man” has made up his mind that he will propose to, or at least profess his love to, the “you” of the text, and the music mirrors his excitement. The clapping along to the flute melody points to this as it brings with it connotations to festive folk dance. The fourth motif is a variation of the first in this lengthy instrumental interlude. It is arranged differently and played on different instruments, and has a slightly different significance as a result. The theme is still in a classical tradition, and still has a sad quality to it, but the theme being played on moog synthesisers also instils it with a kind of muted optimism. This section therefore symbolises the feelings of “the man” as he journeys to his loved one to carry out his “gesture of sorrow”, slightly fearful of the response he might get, but quietly optimistic.

As the fourth motif is about to reach its climax, it is cut off by the vocals and the last verse where “the man” has reached the house, ready to perform his gesture:

Catching breath, as he looks  
    through the dining-room window:  
Candle-lit table for two  
    has been laid.  
Strange slippers by the fire:  
Strange boots in the hall-way.  
Put my cap on my head –  
    I turn  
    and walk away. (Anderson, “Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered with Bonus Tracks)”).

In stark contrast to the excitement in the preceding musical motif, “the man” arrives at the house to find that he is seemingly too late as there is a “[c]andle-lit table for two” and “[s]trange slippers by the fire: / [s]trange boots in the hall-way”. Coinciding with the dramatic shift in the story is an equally dramatic shift in focalisation. The narrative in this lyric has been held in zero focalisation for the first two verses, but changes to internal focalisation for the last verse. This effectively means that the listener goes from experiencing the story from an elevated position to experiencing it from the position of a character (Aaslestad 85). Equally dramatic as the change in focalisation between the first two and the

third verse is the change in narrator in the last three lines. The narrator changes from an omniscient third person narrator to a first person narrator, into the familiar lyrical I present on the rest of the album. This shift in narrator could be discussed at length, but because this is not a narratological analysis, an explanation of the effect of the change is all there is room for. The third person being a more formal mode of address, it concurs with the humble and slightly insecure nature of “the man” in most of the song. However, as he learns that he has missed his opportunity for love, he cannot maintain his humble disposition and politeness. This is corroborated by his action of putting the cap, which has been held “in hand” thus far as a symbol of his humbleness, on his head, turning his back and walking away. Furthermore, the change in narrator means that the lyrics finish “inside the mind of the protagonist” which gives the following, and indeed closing, reprise of the instrumental bagpipe theme a somewhat different meaning. The first and second iteration of the theme served to set the scene and introduce a Scottish feel to the song, whereas the third symbolised “the man’s” contemplation of what to do next. The final reprise of the theme puts the listener inside the lyrical I’s mind as he contemplates the heartbreaking events that just transpired. In other words, the change in narrator in the lyrics changes the focalisation in the music.

To sum up, *Pibroch (Cap in Hand)* is a song that takes the theme of love, which is central to the second half of the album, in a new direction. It focuses on love in the emotional sense, but where the lyrical I achieves love in *The Whistler* and (in the physical sense) in *Velvet Green*, the protagonist in this song fails as he finds someone else has taken his place. The song features lengthy instrumental breaks which help tell the story the protagonist is unable to. This is also the only song on the album to feature an external narrator, and the lyrics rely heavily on the change in focalisation and ultimately the change of narrator.

## **2.9 Night-Time and Family Life – The Closing Contentment of *Fire at Midnight***

Closing the album is a short track called *Fire at Midnight*. The song takes “little pictures, which avoid being set in the past or the present” (Anderson, “Kitchen Prose And Gutter Rhymes” 57) and embraces the theme of love in a new context, conveying the fulfilment of family life. The song has been described as “a beautiful song that describes the joy of coming home from a hard working day and spending time with one's wife” (Benninghouse).

Fading in with a choir and a string synthesiser giving the song a Christmas and winter feel, the acoustic guitar and vocals delve into the first verse, quickly joined by keyboards and bass. A cosy and peaceful scene is set, the lyrical I enjoying himself at home in the night:

I believe in fires at midnight  
    when the dogs have all been fed  
A golden toddy on the mantle;  
    a broken gun beneath the bed.  
Silken mist outside the window –  
Frogs and newts slip in the dark,  
Too much hurry ruins a body:  
I'll sit easy; fan the spark (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered  
with Bonus Tracks)").

Clearly a song expressing the delight of a peaceful night in, the setting is very interesting. Firstly, it is rural. There are several more or less subtle implications that point to this, such as several dogs in the house, "[f]rogs and newts" outside, and "a broken gun beneath the bed". The countryside being the setting for this song has the effect of instilling the positive associations in the lyrics to nature. Nature having been put in a positive light throughout the album has a similar effect on the song itself, making the song positive as a result of its references to the rural setting. The geographical setting is not overtly stated, but the image of "a broken gun" suggests somewhere in Britain, as it refers to a shotgun "with the barrels folded down displaying its empty chambers" (Anderson, "Kitchen Prose and Gutter Rhymes" 57), and not a damaged pistol, as the phrase would mean elsewhere. Secondly, the time the song is set in is fascinating. As mentioned previously it is not set in a specific *period*, i.e. the 18<sup>th</sup> century or something similar, meaning that it works as a general positive emotional observation, and not a yearning back to simpler times. The song is, however, set to a specific time of day, namely in the dark at midnight. This is a setting that has been used in several songs on the album such as *Cup of Wonder*, *Velvet Green*, and *The Whistler*. In all of these songs, and indeed in *Fire at Midnight*, the darkness is used in a positive context. Sowa points this out as well, observing that night-time is given a generally positive value throughout the album, creating a dichotomy where the night becomes the time when dreams and desires come true (see particularly *Velvet Green* (chapter 2.6) and *The Whistler* (chapter 2.7)) and the day in several instances becomes the time when the harsh realities of urban life sets in ("Velvet Green"). Night-time and darkness generally having positive connotations throughout the album further underlines the positive attitude towards rural areas the album expresses. In urban areas the contrast between night and day is not as great as it is in rural areas, at least not in terms of access to light. Embracing the darkness only available in rural areas and instilling it with predominantly positive imagery and associations is a twist that turns common connotations with darkness as scary and unpredictable on its head, suggesting that rural areas, and by association nature, is a serene setting that does well for you.

After a bar's pause the song moves into the last verse where the lyrical I finds himself very content and relaxed about his present situation:

Kindled by the dying embers of  
another working day,  
Go upstairs: take off your make-up –  
Fold your clothes neatly away.  
Me, I'll sit and write this love song  
As I all too seldom do –  
Build a little fire this midnight:  
It's good to be back home with you. (Anderson, "Songs from the Wood (Digitally Remastered with Bonus Tracks)").

Amusingly, this verse comments on the song itself, a relatively common device on the album also employed on *Songs from the Wood* and *Ring Out, Solstice Bells*, with the lyrical I remarking that he will "( . . . ) sit and write this love song / [a]s [he] all too seldom do[es]". The effect of this, in addition to adding a touch of humour, is to highlight the fact that this is indeed a love song, even though there are no references to the physical side of love and no declaration of love to a specific individual. The love referred to in this song is rather that of the setting – the tranquillity of home in a rural place, building a fire and spending time with a loved one. It is also worth noting that the images in this verse, for example "make-up", "clothes", "writ[ing] [a] love song" and "fire" again do not denote a specific time period, thus sustaining the song's relative timelessness, ensuring it still works as a celebration of a mood rather than a yearning to another time.

The second verse is repeated after a cheerful instrumental passage, driven by electric guitar and flute, with some innovative drumming and bass work. The effect of the repetition is to unambiguously emphasise the contentment in the song in general and the lyrics in particular. At this stage the placement of the song as the last on the album also becomes significant. The setting of the song being "[k]indled by the dying embers / of another working day", the song lends itself to closing the album in much the same way it closes the day for the lyrical I. Furthermore, the very last sounds on the album are the vocals singing the line "it's good to be back home with you" accompanied by the drums, guitar, flute, bass, and keyboards. This encases the album in positivity, the vocals having started off bringing the listener "songs from the wood / to make [him] feel much better than [he] could know".

*Fire at Midnight* then, is a positive song that celebrates the love the lyrical I feels when he comes home to his family at his rural retreat. Like other songs on the album it gives night-time in the countryside a positive value, stressing the importance of relaxing in a quiet place. The song closes the album on an unambiguously positive and relaxed note.

### 3 Conclusion

In conclusion then, using Buell's criteria it is clear that *Songs from the Wood* constitutes an environmentally oriented work. Utilising an approach based on Bartosch and Garrard's view that ecocriticism's contribution is inherently and valuably gradual, the holistic approach centred around a combination of slow reading and "slow listening" demonstrates that the album deals with environmental and ecocritical themes in a number of different ways.

The title track is lyrically ambiguous, simultaneously supporting three different possible readings throughout. Regardless of whether one prefers to interpret the song as referring to the album itself, referring to music inspired by the forest, or as a song "drawn straight from the wood", it is highly celebratory in nature, retaining humoristic undertones. The environmental theme is given positive values through this celebration, suggesting that the wood is a pleasant place. *Jack-In-The-Green* engages more actively and directly with the environment and nature, arguably more so than any other song on the album. It uses the somewhat appropriated mythical figure of Jack in the Green to highlight that nature is struggling as a result of increased industrialised human interference, suggesting that mankind must stop to consider the environmental consequences of their actions. The song is ultimately optimistic, though, as nature appears to manage to gently fight back and overcome the challenges that stand before it. *Cup of Wonder* is a track where the lyrics are riddled with references to pagan culture. The song celebrates paganism and is in that respect an encouragement to lead a life more like that in pagan culture, i.e. more closely linked with nature. This is exemplified by the song's focus on how pagans adapted their surroundings to better understand nature, as opposed to adapting the surrounding strictly to fit industrial needs. *Hunting Girl* is a subtly socially critical song that deals with how the rural upper class treats the lower class. To illustrate this, the lyrics describe a sexual encounter where an upper class lady dominates and uses a lower class man at her will. The story being told from the point of view of the lower class man, the song suggests that the lower class actually holds the moral high ground in society through the lyrical I's command of very sophisticated language, while the upper class hunting girl simply indulges in her desires. Environmentally speaking, the song suggests that the hard-working outdoor farmer lifestyle of the lyrical I is positive, whereas the indulgent estate-owning lifestyle of the upper class is negative. Closing side A on the original LP release of the album is the "Christmas" single *Ring Out, Solstice Bells*. Another subtle social criticism, this song is also crammed with references to pagan culture and rituals associated with the winter solstice, demonstrating how old customs have been

adopted and adapted by Christianity. While not a direct criticism of Christianity, the song is another celebration and recognition of the positive sides of paganism, again suggesting that its close relationship with nature, as exemplified by the celebration of the winter solstice, is preferable to the current celebrations which are almost completely void of references to the natural processes central in the original celebrations.

Side B of the album introduces love as a central theme alongside environmental concerns. Starting with *Velvet Green*, often referred to as a pick-up song where the lyrical I persuades a girl to spend the night with him, love in the physical sense is closely linked with nature. This link is so strong that the physical love between the characters helps fertility in nature, much in the tradition of erotic folk songs. To further elucidate the environmental theme, the imagery concerning love in this song is largely natural. *The Whistler* is much in the same vein as *Velvet Green*, where the lyrical I tries to entice a love interest. The love in this song is more romantic and emotional, and is also connected to nature. The rural scenery and mysticism of the remnants of pagan culture serves make the love stronger, and the natural imagery of the song suggests that love can be cultivated and benefits from it reaped. Interestingly, the song does not explicitly mention a woman, making both a reading of the lyrical I as nature's spokesman and the lyrical I as gay possible. *Pibroch (Cap in Hand)* stands out on the album in three respects. Firstly, it is by far the longest song on the album with the shortest lyrics. Secondly it is the only song that is not celebratory. The lyrics rely heavily on change in focalisation and narrator to tell the story of unreciprocated love. The song also relies on the music to tell a large part of the story because of the narrators' difficulty in expressing feelings. The song also depends on the setting, the Scottish forest, to communicate the unique, melodic and natural mood. Thirdly, this is the song that least entreats environmental concerns, and also the one that breaks most with expectations set up on the rest of the album because it tells a sad and negative story. *Fire at Midnight*, closes the album with unambiguous positivity. Here, the theme of love is dealt with through the contentment as a result of a quiet night in with the family, crucially in a rural setting, thereby dealing with love strictly in the emotional sense. Rural Britain being the setting for this emotional love encases the album with positivity towards nature and the lifestyle associated with country living, underlining the importance of treating nature carefully.

All the songs on the album have in common that they in some way convey positivity towards nature, with the arguable exception of *Pibroch (Cap in Hand)*. In addition to the lyrics, the music helps underline this. If listened to carefully, the album makes the listener pause and think more critically about nature, the environment, and mankind's role in it.

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## 5 Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Abstract

This thesis provides a literary analysis of how Jethro Tull's 1977 album *Songs from the Wood* deals with environmental and ecocritical themes. It is clear that *Songs from the Wood* meets Lawrence Buell's criteria for establishing whether a work is environmentally oriented, and the analysis is subsequently based on Roman Bartosch and Greg Garrard's view that ecocriticism's contribution to literature studies is inherently and valuably gradual. Adopting a holistic approach based on a combination of slow reading and "slow listening", the analysis acknowledges the songs' unique hybrid nature of lyrics and music.

The analysis concludes that the album instils the listener with positivity towards nature, and makes the listener stop to consider the implications of human involvement in environmental changes. This is largely achieved by the album celebrating nature, instilling the listener with positive associations towards nature in general, and the wood in particular. This celebration is both direct in terms of celebrating nature itself, and indirect in celebrating pagan culture and rituals, associated with a lifestyle closer to nature. The album also features subtle critical undertones, both in regards to social hierarchy and unexpected consequence of human involvement in industrial change. Each song entreats environmental themes differently, the first half of the album focusing on nature quite explicitly alongside paganism, whereas the second half of the album couples the environmental themes with different variations of love, including both physical and emotional expressions of love.

## Appendix 2 – Relevance for Occupation as Teacher

Once this thesis has been approved I will be qualified to teach English and Norwegian at lower secondary school and upper secondary school. This thesis is relevant in many different direct and indirect ways for my occupation as a teacher.

An example of how this thesis is directly relevant is that the songs that have been analysed can be used as texts when working with specific competence aims as outlined in the subject curriculum for the specific subjects at specific levels (i.e. International English for year two at upper secondary school). It would, for example, be possible to use *Jack-In-The-Green* while working with the competence aims “analyse linguistic tools in different kinds of texts” (Udir, “International English”) and “elaborate on and discuss a selection of literature and factual prose from the period 1950 up to the present” (Udir, “International English”). In addition to working specifically with the songs as songs and lyrics, under the right circumstances the lyrics might also lead to “opportunistic language teaching”, i.e. utilising opportune instances of language use that arise for teaching linguistics (for example grammar) (Harmer 229). Given both the style and complexity of the language in the lyrics, they represent an abundant source for language teaching as well as literature.

In addition to the possibility of using the songs and lyrics as main texts and activities when working with literature and language, they can also be used as an introduction to, or rounding off of, different themes. *Cup of Wonder*, for instance, could be used as an introduction to working with English history and geography for the specific competence aim “explain features of history and geography in Great Britain and the USA” for English at lower secondary level (Udir, “Competence aims after Year 10”).

An indirect way this thesis is relevant for my teaching career is giving me practice in, and helping me realise the significance of, choosing only certain aspects of a text to comment on. When giving pupils formative feedback this is crucial. It is counterproductive to comment on *all* aspects of a pupil’s work, but giving appropriate formative feedback, commenting on only central aspects (both good and improvable), can be a substantial contributor to a pupil’s success and learning (Harmer 154). When analysing the songs, many interpretations, general comments, and observations have had to be put aside, while still communicating the point, similar to how formative feedback works.

As this very brief discussion suggests, this thesis is relevant for my work as a teacher both directly in the classroom where it is possible to use the texts for different purposes, and indirectly providing practice choosing relevant aspects to comment for formative feedback.

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