

Out of the rat race

Versions of pastoral in music, 1967-1968

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**Master's thesis in English
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May 2017**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with the late 1960s, a time of huge social and political upheaval in the Western world. My argument is founded on the premise that the many changes of the era led to a historical 'turn' in the late part of the decade, somewhere between the late summer of 1967 and early summer of 1968. Roughly speaking, society changed from an optimistic 1967 epitomized by the 'Summer of Love' into a violent 1968 epitomized by riots and assassinations. The social, cultural and psychological changes in society were reflected in the music and lyrics of some of the most important artists of the time. This happened through a complex, ongoing dialogue where the music was partly responsive and partly an agent of change.

The young people in the Europe and America had, at this point, the freedom to pursue a lifestyle based on individualism and freedom of choice. While people in the mainstream enjoyed the benefits gained by progress, influential artists started longing for something else. They began dreaming of the past, campaigning for communal values and a return to simpler, more innocent times, while making music that abandoned the psychedelic and urban in favour of the primitive and rural – in other words, the pastoral.

In the first part of the thesis, I will describe the term *pastoral* and point to its long literary tradition. I will then go on to describe the society the artists of the sixties wanted to get away from. With emphasis on the joyful youth culture of 1967, I will show some of the signs pointing forward to turbulent 1968. In the second part I will analyse four significant records from 1968 in detail – four different versions of pastoral in music. All these albums were conceived, written and recorded with the social and political events of the time as a backdrop, and my aim is to show that the records are not only inspired by the same undercurrents, but also internally connected in subject matter, musical style and general philosophy.

Part one

"There must be some way out of here," said the joker to the thief

"There's too much confusion, I can't get no relief"

(Bob Dylan, 1967)

PREFACE

The Drifter's Escape

On July 29, 1966, Bob Dylan crashed on his motorcycle near his home in Woodstock. The accident is surrounded by myth and to this day it is still a mystery how serious his injuries were. In his autobiography *Chronicles*, Dylan hardly mentions the episode. No matter what really happened on this summer's day in upstate New York, the crash was an inevitable culmination of events in Dylan's life during the past one and a half years. Besides changing his life and subsequent career completely, the accident set in motion irreversible changes within the art form that Dylan himself had revolutionized.

By 1966, Dylan's latest records had made him the leading intellectual light of the youth culture and he was the main participator in a chain reaction of musical and cultural exchange going back and forth across the Atlantic, described by Roger McGuinn of The Byrds as "an international code going back and forth through records" (MacLean, 2007). Dylan kept out of the public eye through 1967 and 1968, but his near-invisibility augmented his cultural aura (Santoro, 2004, p. 205), and in the late sixties he was "still the hippest person on the planet" (Gray, 2000, p. xvii). In 1967, wherever the minds of the young people were, Dylan had been there before (Marqusee, 2007, p. 284).

Dylan had found himself, from the start of his career, at the front of what happened in countercultural circles. The 2016 winner of the Nobel Prize in literature was, in the early- and mid-sixties, so far ahead of his peers in awareness that he might have precipitated developments in society. Dylan scholar Michael Gray says that "Dylan goes beyond other people – with every new album there's a progression and this has happened so fast that in one sense Dylan has always been an outsider in pop – has always been ahead of his time" (Gray, 2000, p. 116). Literary scholar Christopher Ricks claims that an artist such as Dylan is "someone more than usually blessed with a cooperative unconscious or subconscious, more than usually able to effect things with the help of instincts and intuitions of which he or she is not necessarily conscious" (Ricks, 2011, p. 7).

In this preface, I will show Dylan's importance to my argument by pointing to signs of his awareness and unconscious intentions. What he achieved artistically and culturally in this period was an avant-garde version of what his contemporaries would later copy. Dylan's songs from this period would also be recorded by two of the groups

discussed in part two. As such, he serves not only as an important inspiration for the musicians but also as a crucial link between them. Music writer and Dylan scholar Greil Marcus has this description of the singer's position at the time of his motorcycle crash:

More than thirty years ago, when a world now most often spoken of as an error of history was taking shape and form (...) Bob Dylan seemed less to occupy a turning point in cultural space and time than to be that turning point. As if culture would turn according to his wishes or even his whim; the fact was, for a long moment it did.

(Marcus, 1997, p. xv)

Dylan, born Robert Allen Zimmerman in 1941, picked up on blues, country and gospel music on the radio in his childhood bedroom in Hibbing, Minnesota. His first musical idol was country legend Hank Williams, but Dylan was soon captivated by the sounds of the first rock 'n' rollers; Chuck Berry, Little Richard and Elvis Presley. After enrolling at university in Minneapolis, Dylan discovered the music of folk singer Woody Guthrie, and he changed from a rocker into a singer of traditional – often so-called 'topical' - material. Dylan dropped out of university, moved to New York, and started to play in the clubs of Greenwich Village, linking up with many of the politically orientated figures of the folk movement.

With his second LP, *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, containing such classic songs as *Blowin' In The Wind*, *Masters of War* and *A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall*, Dylan became a star. With the 'queen' of folk music, Joan Baez, he played at the Newport Folk Festival in the summer of 1963 and at The March on Washington in August the same year; the event where Martin Luther King held his famous *I Have a Dream*-speech. After his next album, *The Times They Are a-Changin'*, Dylan had been firmly established as the 'voice of a generation'. He was *the* hero of the folk music milieu, the civil rights movement, the students and the radical and 'new left'. It is this image of Dylan many people associate with him even up to this day; the serious, young man who sang 'protest' songs with deep conviction and prophetic quality. His songs took a clear stand on contemporary issues and his lyrics resonated throughout the Western world in the days of the nuclear threat. Dylan had become the talisman of the politically engaged counterculture at the start of what was to become the most political decade of the modern age. He was their Jesus, a

wise young man who seemed to connect with the zeitgeist and sense changes coming. On *A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall* he sang ambiguously:

*I heard the sound of a thunder, it roared out a warnin'
Heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world*

As he has shown throughout his career, however, Dylan is an artist who will constantly reinvent himself. He put messages pointing towards his next phase in the last tracks of his early LPs. The best-known examples of the prophet saying a bittersweet goodbye to his audience are *It Ain't Me, Babe* and *It's All Over Now, Baby Blue*. The first appeared on *Restless Farewell* in 1963. Dylan may not know exactly where he is going, but he knows he has to keep moving:

*And since my feet are now fast
And point away from the past
I'll bid farewell and be down the line*

In 1964 Dylan still toured alone, performing his 'protest' material, but he had already changed course mentally, breaking with the image of the working-class folk singer. On *My Back Pages* he sings "I was so much older then, I'm younger than that now", a self-critical comment on his old firm convictions. Influenced by Beat writers Kerouac, Burroughs and Ginsberg, Dylan started to write surrealistic, stream-of-consciousness lyrics like *Mr. Tambourine Man*. He grew his curly hair and began wearing sunglasses and 'hipster' suits instead of simple denim shirts. An ability to juggle with roles seems to have been inherent inside Dylan from an early age. When he came to New York he would invent biographical stories about himself as a gypsy-like drifter and he would try to brag and impress his experienced folk music colleagues. In interviews he played mind games with journalists. This may be viewed as creating a necessary barrier between the public figure Bob Dylan and the private person Robert Zimmerman. A good example of his humour and inventiveness is the between-song speech from his concert in New York on Halloween night in 1964, where Dylan laughingly boasts: "I have my Bob Dylan mask on. I'm masquerading!"

Dylan's work during the early sixties had a profound influence on other leading musicians. While The Byrds made *Mr. Tambourine Man* a hit, re-arranging the acoustic original into an electric rock version, The Beatles were deeply affected by his lyrics, his harmonica playing and his appearance. At a meeting between Dylan and the group in 1964, Dylan introduced them to marijuana, thus changing their mindset and indirectly altering the working methods and musical expression of the world's most popular band.

Between early 1965 and May 1966, Dylan released a trio of revolutionary albums (*Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde*). He embarked on a world tour with a raucous group (later to become known as *The Band*). Together, these musicians made a sound unlike anything heard before. The audience was divided, partly shocked and partly mesmerized. Dylan was now playing electric guitar, and the words he sang were unintelligible to many of his self-righteous fans. Moreover, the heavy sound was incompatible with the folk movement's purist view of how authentic music should sound. Consequently, they lost faith in their prophet and wrote him off as a traitor. It is fascinating, with the hindsight of 50 years, to view the reactions of the audience in the footage from the British leg of the tour, captured immediately after Dylan had closed the show with a powerful version of his biggest hit, *Like A Rolling Stone*. Big parts of Dylan's audience could not grasp why he changed the success formula from his 'protest' period and the reactions are veering from utmost praise to deep frustration and anger. The strongest response came at a concert in Manchester, where a member of the audience famously shouted "Judas!" to Dylan before the closing number. The prophet on the stage answers the call from the dark with "I don't believe you. You're a liar!" before he instructs his band to "play fucking loud!" This, as has been pointed out by several Dylan scholars, is an equivocal response. One interpretation is that Dylan is wounded by the comment and turns angry. After all the phenomenal music he has given his fans, this is what he gets in return, he may have been thinking bitterly. Another way of looking at the situation is to view Dylan in the role of a court jester who wants to make mischief. He could be stirring up the audience to make them think, thereby provoking exactly such a reaction.

Dylan's erratic lifestyle in 1965 and 1966 was not particularly healthy in the long run. Late nights, alcohol and drugs took a clear toll on him, as did the pressure of the concert schedule. He has described himself in this period as "going at a tremendous speed". Dylan started looking for an escape route and the crash came almost as sent

from heaven. "I had been in a motorcycle accident and I'd been hurt, but I recovered. Truth was that I wanted to get out of the rat race", he admitted in *Chronicles* (Dylan, 2004, p. 114).

What happened in Dylan's life in the period after the crash was, at the time, not known. It was communicated that Dylan had had an accident, but the injuries were not specified. At the same time that The Beatles stopped touring and disappeared from the public eye for (what was then) an extremely long time (approximately six months), Bob Dylan was not heard from for one and a half years. This was while the hippie movement was blossoming in San Francisco and London was 'swinging' as never before. In recent years it has become well documented what Dylan did during this period. While recuperating from his accident he spent time with his children, he worked on writing a book while also editing footage from the world tour. But first and foremost, Dylan wrote and played music. For a long time it was assumed that 1967 had been one of Dylan's 'lost' years, as he did not release any new material between May 1966 and December 1967, but it was to be his most prolific year as a songwriter ever. Dylan met up regularly with the musicians who had accompanied him around the world in the basement of the pink-coloured house rented by the group. The musical products were nothing like what was going on in San Francisco or London at the time. The music made in the basement of "Big Pink" was mostly based on traditional forms and had a rural, timeless expression.

Organ player Garth Hudson recorded the *Basement Tapes*, as they were to be called, in a simple way. These were not recordings meant for release. The purpose, as well as making demos of new material for other artists to record, was enjoyment and experimentation. Besides folk, blues, gospel and country songs, a huge amount of new Dylan originals were recorded. His new songs were unlike anything created in 1965 and 1966, both lyrically and musically miles away from epic works like *Desolation Row* or *Visions of Johanna*. After the hard blues rock of *Highway 61 Revisited*, the 'wild mercury sound' of *Blonde on Blonde* and the rough live sound of the world tour, the group now played mostly acoustic and with great discipline. The focus was on listening to each other while playing, seeking nuances in the music that had disappeared in the haze of the preceding years. The new Dylan lyrics were simplistic and songs such as *Too Much of Nothing*, *I Shall Be Released* and *Tears of Rage* would touch on themes like escapism and refuge. As an example of Dylan's style from right before his crash, we can look at the ode to his wife, *Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands*:

*With your mercury mouth in the missionary times
And your eyes like smoke and your prayers like rhymes
And your silver cross, and your voice like chimes
Oh, who among them do they think could bury you?*

In the basement, this kind of brilliant poetry was replaced with humour and a down-to-earth sensibility. Even though Dylan kept some surrealism in his lyrics, many of the new songs were performed in a joking, whimsical mood. The contrast to his pre-crash material is striking, for example in the lively *Please, Mrs. Henry*:

*Well, I've already had two beers I'm ready for the broom
Please, Missus Henry, won't you take me to my room?
I'm a good ol' boy but I've been sniffin' too many eggs
Talkin' to too many people drinkin' too many kegs*

Up to this point, the image of Dylan had been that of an urban character; a hipster connected to city life. Even though he had grown up in rural Minnesota, Dylan had fled his hometown for New York, and the folk movement he became part of was centred in the intellectual, radical student milieu of the big cities. In a 1969 interview, Dylan described the song *Desolation Row* and the period in which it was written as a “New York type period” when all the songs were “city songs”. However, as many of his later career changes have showed, Dylan’s personality includes many ‘rural’ inclinations, and it can be argued that he is a traditionalist at heart. He was raised in a fairly conservative Jewish family, and although he enjoyed the urban sounds of early rock ‘n’ roll, he has always identified strongly with country music and the vagabond type of songwriter. After his crash, Dylan took the ‘rural’ aspect of his personality to the extreme. In the process he re-connected with his musical roots, initiating a process that was to lead most of the pop and rock establishment on to the same path in the following years. Having played some of the roughest rock music heard up till then, Dylan and his band used 1967 to go in the exact opposite direction and make the first pastoral pop music. Photos from the period have shown Dylan and his friends living the bucolic life to its fullest. Dylan had a new, short haircut, plain clothes and a simple pair of round glasses. His wife and small children were nearby, and the mood was one of relaxation.

The Basement Tapes were not released at the time (even though some of the new Dylan originals became hits for other artists). They were widely 'bootlegged' in the years following their creation, and although some of the songs were officially released as a double LP in 1975, a complete collection of recordings did not arrive until 2014. In hindsight it is easy to see the material from the basement as pointing the way forward for Dylan. The songs "evinced the same highly serious, precarious quest for a personal and universal salvation" that would be heard on his next album (Gray, 2000, p. 9).

In-between the basement sessions, Dylan recorded his first new LP in over 18 months, *John Wesley Harding*. It was released in late December 1967, but was heard and experienced as "the first, doomed sound of 1968" (Marcus, 1997, p. 269). Gray argues that *John Wesley Harding* was "a rejection of the new music, the love generation, drugs, revolution and almost every other focus of solidarity set up and encouraged by his earlier work" (Gray, 2000, p. 120). The album contained mysterious words set to a simple acoustic sound. Dylan was "seeking salvation in old wisdom as a panacea to the political hectoring at the time" (Rogan, 2015, p. 369). The new album was not a reply to The Beatles' colourful *Sgt Pepper*, nor did it address the hippie crowd in any explicit way. It was "entirely lacking in anything that resembled an overt comment on America's national traumas" (Doggett, 2007, p. 177). With its sparse sound and its monochrome sleeve, the album appeared as a warning. Dylan had already shown that he had an instinct and awareness far above his peers. In the early sixties, he had seemed to sense changes in the common consciousness before all others. Was he now precipitating a new world order? With Dylan, we never get clear answers. The songs on *John Wesley Harding* mostly leave their meaning unexplained. But there are some hidden clues.

Dylan scholar Clinton Heylin points to the album's apocalyptic content: "It was (...) an album full of religious imagery, its language reminiscent of the King James Bible, its characters seemingly lifted from the Old Testament but adrift in a land akin to some postlapsarian American frontier, on a border between past and present" (Heylin, 1991, p. 185). In *I Am a Lonesome Hobo* we hear about a man who tried his hand at "bribery, blackmail and deceit", who was prosperous and had "fourteen-karat gold" in his mouth, but did not trust his brother, and this led him to his "fatal doom". The enigmatic *As I Went Out One Morning* has the singer spying "the fairest damsel" in what seems at first like idyllic surroundings - a pastoral motif that accompanies the archaic language well. But the story is not the romantic poem it first appears to be. The song is turned on its

head when the singer understands that the girl “in chains” means to do him harm, and he begs her to “depart”. On *The Wicked Messenger*, Dylan may be reliving the hostile 1966 world tour and mixing it with biblical imagery:

*Oh, the leaves began to fallin’
And the seas began to part
And the people that confronted him were many*

Drifter’s Escape has lyrics that seem to refer to Dylan’s unpleasant experiences on tour, with the bolt of lightning symbolizing the crash that allowed him to get away:

*“Oh, stop that cursed jury”
Cried the attendant and the nurse
“The trial was bad enough
But this is ten times worse”
Just then a bolt of lightning
Struck the courthouse out of shape
And while ev’rybody knelt to pray
The drifter did escape*

All Along the Watchtower is the album’s clearest example of a premonition. The mood of the track is gloomy and the feeling is of fear and concern. Dylan adds to the unsettling mood by reversing the order of the verses. The verse that is sung first is really the last in the narrative. In it, the joker complains that he “can’t get no relief” because of “too much confusion” and pleads to the thief for a way out. The second verse goes:

*“No reason to get excited,” the thief, he kindly spoke
“There are many here among us who feel that life is but a joke
But you and I, we’ve been through that, and this is not our fate
So let us not talk falsely now, the hour is getting late”*

Heylin claims that the song is based on the section of Isaiah which deals with the fall of Babylon. “When the thief cries that ‘the hour is getting late’ it seems apparent that

this is the thief in the night foretold in Revelation, that is, Jesus Christ come again” (Heylin, 1991, p. 185). Is Dylan putting himself in the role of Jesus? Or is he the joker, trying to appease the situation, offering words of wisdom and experience in hard times?

Dylan did not capitalize on *John Wesley Harding's* success. He made only one public appearance in 1968. In this most turbulent year the ‘voice of a generation’ was silent. The civil rights supporter who stood beside Martin Luther King five years earlier, did not comment on his murder. The protest singer who had deplored the weapons industry in *Masters of War* in 1963 had nothing to say on Vietnam. The amphetamine wreck who had howled “Everybody must get stoned” in 1966 stayed with his family and friends in rural Woodstock living the pastoral life.

INTRODUCTION

Methodology

This thesis is divided into two main parts and is split into six sub-chapters. The first part consists of the preface and this introductory chapter. In the present part, I will describe my approach to structure and method before outlining the theoretical material on the pastoral. In order to give an understanding of the changes that occurred during 1968, I will then write about the main elements shaping the youth culture of 1967. The many momentous events from the period will not be described in detail, but I will mention the most important ones supporting my argument and use them as a backdrop.

In the second part of the thesis, I will examine four records. Analysing these LPs, I will structure the chapters using the terms 'retreat' and 'return', because these records serve as the return from the musicians' pastoral retreat. In this part, I will be using a synthesis of a biographical and a musicologist approach. It is of importance to my argument to chronicle some of the biographical details of the artists' lives and careers. If we know a bit of their background, it is easier to understand the changes they would later go through. In analysing the music, I will not be using a traditional musicologist method of describing chords, harmonies or musical movements in detail, as this is outside the scope of my argument. My aim is to show that the overall *soundscape* of the music was altered because of changes within the artists, as a consequence of recent events. I will be using close readings of the lyrics throughout, focusing on lyrics directly expressing events of the times and of changes going on inside the writers. Together, these analyses are aimed at showing how the historical turn mirrored itself in the music of the time, sonically and lyrically. The subtitle of the thesis is derived from William Empson, and I will use some of his renowned concepts on the pastoral as a framework for my analysis.

An enormous number of books and articles have been written on the sixties. The decade and its main actors have, in later years, not only served as the subjects of biographies by renowned writers like Philip Norman or Clinton Heylin, but also deep, scholarly work by people like Christopher Ricks, Michael Gray or Ian MacDonald, all deeply influential on my choice of topic for this thesis. My main inspiration for the choice of topic has been MacDonald's book on the Beatles and the sixties, *Revolution in the Head*, where he analyses the group's music in the context of its time. MacDonald

argues that the countercultural movement's real achievement of the sixties was the 'revolution' which took place in the head of ordinary people, and how the repercussions of this can still be felt on our modern way of living, even in the 21st century. Without fully adopting MacDonald's grim view of the development (he states that something in the soul of Western society died during the sixties), I am, like him, focused on expressing and stressing the importance of this music in shaping the society that we live in today. Bob Dylan's recent Nobel Prize serves as a confirmation that the best popular music of the sixties deserves all the serious treatment. Considering all this work, the challenge in finding something original to write about from the period is obvious. I have, however, not yet seen anyone drawing the same direct line between events, music and subsequent change in culture and society in the way that I will be doing.

The pastoral is the common thread tying my ideas together into what will hopefully show itself to be a coherent and forceful argument. Being critical, I realize that my hypothesis is formulated in such a way that it might seem as if *every* song and *every* lyric by the most important artists in the period discussed are focused on pastoral values. This is, of course, not the case. Many acclaimed musicians from the period did not move creatively into the pastoral domain at all, and a lot of great music was made during 1967 and 1968 without any of the characteristics that I will be presenting. Even the artists discussed thoroughly later in this thesis were not pastoral all the time during these years. This is an important aspect to have in mind and something I will touch upon in part two. For this reason, there is a possibility that my argument will not hold up, and I will return to and comment on the results of my analyses in the conclusion.

Definitions of pastoral

Pastoral can be understood in different ways. According to the Norton Anthology of English Literature, the term derives from the Latin word "pastor", which means shepherd. Pastoral was originally a genre of literature depicting the lives of shepherds herding livestock around open areas of land according to seasons and the changing availability of water and pasture. In the context of this thesis, it is fascinating to observe that literary pastoral developed from singing competitions in local peasant communities, according to Raymond Williams (Williams, 1973, p. 14). Typically created for urban audiences, the contrast between the urban and the rural is essential for the pastoral, and in the arts it "usually, but not exclusively" idealizes country life and favours

rurality, to which special virtue is attributed, William Barillas writes (Barillas, 2006, p. 12). Pastoral can also be called *bucolic*, from the Greek word for “herdsman”.

Terry Gifford states that the term *pastoral* is used in three broadly different ways (Gifford, 1999, p. 1). The first is the literary convention, the historical form described above which can be traced all the way back to ancient Greek and Roman poems about life in the country and the life of the shepherd in particular. According to the Longman Anthology of Poetry, the pastoral form originated in the poetry of the Greek Theocritus and was later developed into drama and novels. Stephen Heyworth states that the Roman poet Virgil (or Vergil) was the inventor of pastoral as a genre (Heyworth, in Harrison, 2005, p. 148). It is established that Theocritus and Virgil created many of the conventions still associated with pastoral (Barillas, 2006, p. 12). These conventions involve the “fundamental pastoral movement” of retreat and return, which implies that the pastoral retreat can return insights relevant to the urban audience. Leo Marx writes: “The ruling motive of the good shepherd, leading figure of the classic, Virgilian mode, was to withdraw from the great world and begin a new life in a fresh, green landscape” (Marx, 1972, p. 3).

The second use of *pastoral* is broader, referring to “any literature that describes the country with an implicit or explicit contrast to the urban”. Gifford says that this could be anything from novels with a countryside setting to poems about trees in the city (Gifford, 1999, p. 2). In the present context I will expand on this definition, and include music, film and drama along with literary works. This use of the term has a celebratory nature and assumes a “delight in the natural”.

The third kind of *pastoral* is a critical use of the term, a view in which the pastoral is simplified and life in the country idealised to such a degree that the definitions above would be dismissed as unrealistic and naïve, especially in our modern age. In this definition, *pastoral* becomes a pejorative term. Gifford states that in this context “what is ‘returned’ by retreat is judged to be too comfortably complacent to qualify as ‘insight’ in the view of the user of the term ‘pastoral’ as a pejorative” (Gifford, 1999, p. 2).

Retreat and return

Lawrence Buell has stated that “pastoralism is a species of cultural equipment that Western thought has for more than two millennia been unable to do without” (Buell, 1995, p. 32). Buell employs the term ‘pastoralism’ in the second, general sense and

defines it as writing “that celebrates the ethos of nature / rurality over against the ethos of the town or city” (Gifford, 1999, p. 4). His viewpoint is a natural starting point for this discussion, with the term referring to works of art celebrating the countryside and – with the city being the artists’ ordinary habitat - emphasizing the contrast between the urban and the rural. Intrinsic to the pastoral, as it is written for an urban audience, is the ‘movement’ of retreat and return. “Whatever the locations and modes of pastoral retreat may be, there must in some sense be a return from that location to a context in which the results of the journey are to be understood” (Gifford, 1999, p. 81). I will use the pattern of retreat and return to structure the analysis in part two of the thesis.

Because the pastoral has a celebration of nature at its core, it is at the same time a reaction and a turn *against* the opposite world, i.e. the world in which it must be understood - the city life and the urban. This means that the term involves a certain degree of escapism, defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary as “the habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine”. The escapist dimension was central in the musicians’ pastoral adventures of the sixties, when the need to seek distraction and relief became huge, whether it was because of disturbing events in society or because of self-inflicted substance abuse. Leo Marx says that it is the “yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence ‘closer to nature,’ that is the psychic root of all pastoralism – genuine and spurious” (Marx, 1972, p. 6).

It is important to note that a pastoral retreat has a long tradition in an historical context. The artists of Romanticism (late 18th and early 19th century) had been strong advocates for a break with urban life and a return to rural values. Ralph Waldo Emerson, a linchpin figure of the American Romantic movement (Garvey, 2001, p. xxi), wrote in *Nature* from 1836: “In the wilderness, I find something more dear and connate than in streets or villages. In the tranquil landscape, and especially in the distant line of the horizon, man beholds somewhat as beautiful as his own nature” (Emerson, in Baym, 2013, p. 511). The Romantics were critical of much of the scientific progress in their age, and looked with horror upon “the new form of life” which developed in London during the 19th century (Thüsen, 2005, p. 2). “In Romantic art, nature—with its uncontrollable power, unpredictability, and potential for cataclysmic extremes—offered an alternative to the ordered world of Enlightenment thought” (Galitz, 2004).

The shift

Establishing a definite turn in history is a risky business, but it is certainly possible to sense a change in the Western cultural sphere somewhere between the summers of 1967 and 1968. Writer Hunter S. Thompson, who lived in San Francisco during the days of the ‘Summer of Love’, compares the shift with riding on the crest of a high and beautiful wave before it finally breaks and rolls back (Thompson, 2005, p. 68):

History is hard to know, because of all the hired bullshit, but even without being sure of “history” it seems entirely reasonable to think that every now and then the energy of a whole generation comes to a head in a long fine flash, for reasons that nobody really understands at the time – and which never explain, in retrospect, what actually happened.

(Thompson, 2005, p. 67)

Writer Philip Norman also describes the shift from 1967 to 1968 as a wave that broke (Norman, 2001, p. 295), and scientific support for the ‘turn’ can be found in Francis Fukuyama’s theory on *The Great Disruption*. The political scientist writes about the chaotic schism between two contending ways of life that started in the sixties and which initiated almost every sociocultural development that we now see around us (Fukuyama, 1999). Joe Boyd, who ran the important UFO club and produced music in the London underground scene at this time, argues that the sixties culminated in the summer of 1967, around the time of the release of the *Sgt Pepper*-album by The Beatles. Boyd speaks of a joyful atmosphere in the London underground movement during late 1966 and through early 1967. But as the culture was commercialized and invaded by the mainstream, the downfall started and the second half of 1967 became a huge contrast to the first part (Boyd, 2017). A feeling of being trapped in a perpetual circle of recording and touring began to spread among the musicians, and wealth and fame was no longer enough to keep them satisfied. Norman says that the situation for many resembled a stay in prison: “A convict’s bread and water seemed hardly more monotonous than their own unending surfeit, the ritual extravagance and ritualistic wastefulness that reduced a superstar millionaire’s habitat to the squalor of a cell with neither light nor air” (Norman, 2001, p. 299). Like Dylan, many were looking for a way out of this exhausting

rat race. In the shadow of the turbulent times many of the artists longed for repose and a retreat to more natural ways, the results of which would be heard during 1968.

The hippies

Children growing up in the sixties were far removed from their parents' memories of the war and the austere fifties, enjoying freedom and a relative wealth their older relatives never had. Young people now had the choice to live their life almost how they wanted. They could, of course, follow the mainstream and focus on education, family and career. Another opportunity was to participate in one of the many forms of countercultural protest against the world order, the most well-known being the hippie movement, which, although it originated and prospered in cities, had a strong rural facet. The hippies were, generally speaking, young people with long hair and colourful clothes "rejecting war, racism, and indeed, the entire American way of life" (Anderson, 2007, p. 94). Significantly, they mostly came from white middle-class backgrounds, according to cultural historian Klaus Fischer (Fischer, 2006, p. 299). Historian Terry H. Anderson states that they revolted from the norms, values, and morals of the established society. He calls them "a minority counter to the majority culture" (Anderson, 2007, p. 127). Hunter S. Thompson described the hippies like this in 1967:

A hippy is somebody who 'knows' what's really happening, and who adjusts or grooves with it. Hippies despise phoniness; they want to be open, honest, loving, free. They reject the plastic pretence of twentieth-century America, preferring to go back to the 'natural life', like Adam and Eve.

(Thompson, in Kureishi and Savage, 1996, p. 290)

The epicentre of hippie culture was the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, California. Thousands of young people flocked to the city during the summer of 1967. This migration gave name to the 'Summer of Love', a designation forever connected to this city in this specific year. Thompson (who had an extremely liberal view on drugs and a damning view of authorities and politicians) has called San Francisco in the mid-sixties a very special time and place to be a part of, describing it as "the kind of peak that never comes again". Not everyone subscribes to the positive viewpoint of the time and place. Joel Selvin has a cynical view of the Summer of Love in his book on San Francisco

and its music community. He states that what originated in a small neighbourhood in the city was never fully understood even by the people involved. Events overtook the participants and the public romanticized what they thought was going on:

The Summer of Love never really happened. Invented by the fevered imaginations of writers for weekly news magazines, the phrase entered the public vocabulary with the impact of a sledgehammer, glibly encompassing a social movement sweeping the youth of the world, hitting the target with the pinpoint accuracy of a shotgun blast.

(Selvin, 2004, introduction)

The hippie culture was eventually commercialized and exploited, but regardless of one's point of view, there is no denying that something special was happening in San Francisco during 1967 which soon spread to the rest of the Western world. And the two most important factors in tying the different factions of the hippie community together were drugs and music. The young hippies were looking for a way out of the constraints of mainstream life, and (free and extensive) drug use was not only common, but seen as necessary. One drug stood above all others in rank. LSD (or acid) was "the mysterious agent that connected the musicians, the artists, the writers, the dancers" (Selvin, 1994, introduction). LSD is one of the hallucinogens, and one of the most powerful of the so-called 'psychedelic' drugs, defined by The National Institute on Drug Abuse as "a diverse group of drugs that alter perception, thoughts and feelings". Music trying to replicate or enhance the psychedelic experience was called psychedelic music. San Francisco groups like The Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother & The Holding Company (featuring Janis Joplin) articulated the language, dress and style of the "bizarre" new culture and spread the infection. "And, in doing so, they changed the way music was played and heard around the world" (Selvin, 2004, introduction). There is a big escapist dimension involved in taking drugs in order to alter your normal worldview; an urge to escape from the constraints of the mainstream to a (hopefully) more peaceful place.

Supposing that it is possible to define a common hippie 'philosophy', the communal aspect was a big part of it: "The hippie way of life, as it crystallized in the late 1960s, revolved basically around dope, rock 'n' roll music, liberated sexuality, and some form of communal living" (Fischer, 2006, p. 299). Leaders of the movement arranged

and promoted a series of 'happenings' during 1967. The first of these was the *Human Be-In* (called *Gathering of the Tribes*) in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park in January, where, according to Fischer, over twenty thousand people came together to celebrate "a renaissance of compassion, awareness, and love". The most famous of the early hippie gatherings was the Monterey Pop Festival in June. The Who, The Byrds, Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin attracted over fifty thousand people to Monterey, just south of the San Francisco Bay Area. The gatherings were the starting point of the big music festivals of the sixties (Woodstock in 1969 being the most famous), and as hippie values gradually became acceptable and popular in normal society, the hippies were joined at these outdoor festivals by youths from the mainstream. Seen through the pattern of retreat and return, and in connection with the intake of psychedelic drugs, the gatherings may be viewed as escapist phenomena. Gifford writes of what he calls the "paradox of the pastoral", which is that "a retreat to a place apparently without the anxieties of the town, or the court, or the present, actually delivers insights into the culture from which it originates" (Gifford, 1999, p. 82). Both the original hippies and youths of the bourgeoisie would retreat to the country, temporarily free from the stress of the urban cities, hoping to gain new 'insights' through drugs such as LSD and the music of their favourite stars.

Back to the land

The hippie philosophy also included a more earnest pastoral dimension, in line with Buell's definition of celebrating the ethos of rurality against the ethos of the city. Leo Marx argues that pastoralism appears in America with a "peculiar intensity" and ascribes this to the USA's experience as a nation. "The soft veil of nostalgia that hangs over our urbanized landscape is largely a vestige of the once dominant image of an undefiled, green republic, a quiet land of forests, villages, and farms dedicated to the pursuit of happiness" (Marx, 1972, p. 6). Some of the more seriously minded hippies found out that 'dropping out' through drugs and music was not enough, and they sought deeper values; to be found in a pastoral retreat. Thompson says that the 'cult of tribalism' so central to the philosophy, and which we recognize from the gatherings, was regarded as the key to survival by many older hippies, and a 'back to the land' movement could be the solution to the food and lodging problems in the cities to which the young hippies flocked. Consequently, many young people fled from urban society altogether and moved to the countryside, where they with various degrees of

competence tried to live according to simple, pastoral principles for shorter or longer periods of time. Many of these were led just by “momentary impulses” and had little preparation or the discipline needed to suit the demands of a more rural existence, as they had grown up in modern, mostly middle-class homes (Fischer, 2006, p. 312).

Roger Sales argues that “pastoral is essentially escapist in seeking refuge in the country and often also in the past” (Sales, in Gifford, 1999, pp. 7-8). Viewed in this context, the hippies took their place in a long historical tradition. Barillas says that “pastoral, which can be either conservative or progressive, has changed over time in response to new social and ecological imperatives” (Barillas, 2006, p. 3). Fukuyama hints at some contentious parts of this ideology: “The deliberate rejection of technology and a rationalized society has been suggested by any number of groups in modern times, from the Romantics of the early nineteenth century, to the hippie movement of the 1960s” (Fukuyama, 1992, p. 83). Fukuyama’s views are firmly rooted in the political discourse, thus highlighting problematic sides with the hippies’ (apparently) apolitical attitudes. Generally, politics did not interest the hippies much. They were mostly uninterested in reforming institutions, and rejected political solutions to cultural problems as a waste of time in favour of the ‘Politics of Love’ (Fischer, 2006, p. 308). In the escapist part of their philosophy they implicitly took a political stand anyway.

A refuge in a more primitive past involves the need to accept conservative values that in a modern, progressive society (such as the sixties) will raise questions at odds with the views of the mainstream. Issues such as the welfare state, economic growth and women’s status will cause controversial debates in a more rural existence, where living conditions are harsher and more dependent on natural variations. Fukuyama mentions Islamic fundamentalists as an example of people sharing parts of the same mindset, by this suggesting that a big part of hippie philosophy was extremely old-fashioned and reactionary. Fischer confirms this by stating that the hippie counterculture was essentially an expression of romantic anarchism; a heresy of self-love, and as such a reactionary phenomenon (Fischer, 2006, p. 315). On the other hand, the escapism and conservatism found in hippie culture could function as a caution against the disorder more and more evident in the tempestuous society. Because it could also act as a protection against the conflicting and turbulent feelings inside the musicians’ own minds, this part of the hippie philosophy was taken up and elaborated on by the artists as the spirit of 1967 disintegrated and gave way to turbulent 1968.

Swinging London

Historian Tony Judt claims in his book on post-war Europe that the “hippy revolution” never quite crossed the Atlantic. “At most it washed up on the shores of Great Britain and Holland” (Judt, 2005, p. 398). Europe and Britain were undoubtedly slower to react to events in the USA, but this was also because of quite natural causes. Peter Doggett says that in an era when transatlantic travel was mainly the privilege of a financial and artistic elite, it could take several months before “the casual anarchy” of Haight Ashbury’s hippies entered the British mainstream (Doggett, 2007, p. 99). Even if the hippie movement was slow to take off in Britain and did not have the same power as in America, there were youthful ‘movements’ to be found also on this side of the Atlantic. London became Europe’s ‘countercultural capital’, albeit in a high-end form. For the many young middle-class people who moved into the city during the mid-sixties, the ‘boutiques’ of Carnaby Street in Soho became the place to be seen. Most of these people (famously dubbed the *Carnabetian Army* and mocked by The Kinks’ Ray Davies) were oriented towards the mainstream and shared few values with the hippies of California.

In early 1966, *Time* magazine had printed an article about what they dubbed ‘Swinging London’. The innovative new music led the way for fashion and other cultural life to blossom, and the euphoria was not dampened when England won the football world cup on home soil the same summer. Britain, and London in particular, had become “the centre of pop – music, fashion, clubs, a whole way of life. It was a seemingly self-contained teenage world” (Kureishi and Savage, 1996, p. 177). The Beatles and The Rolling Stones were at the top of the pop aristocracy in the London clubs during what Ian MacDonald called the ‘peak years in pop’ of 1965-67 (MacDonald 2003, p. 200), with groups like The Who and The Kinks right behind. Joe Boyd has spoken of a special feeling of creativity, playfulness and community in the countercultural milieu in England during 1966 and the first half of 1967. Boyd says that there was a definite ‘hippie’ crowd in the city at this time, but that it was still very much an underground phenomenon. Inspired by similar activity in America, the artists took the style and fashion focus of the ‘Carnabetian Army’ and combined it with ventures into the London underground, through psychedelic gatherings in clubs such as Boyd’s UFO. “What London witnessed in the spring of ’67 was more than an endorsement of a new musical style, it was a mass immersion in the sub-culture that gave rise to it” (Boyd, 2006, p. 158). The American Boyd also points to the fact that while Vietnam hung as a threatening shadow over US

society, the youth in Britain did not have to worry about being drafted. This led to more playfulness in the British creative scene. “The British put on more of a show, whereas the Americans were very serious”, he argues (Boyd, 2017).

Even though The Beatles were on top of the hierarchy, they did not write any songs dealing explicitly with the Swinging London scene. The Rolling Stones did, especially during 1966 and early 1967. MacDonald dubbed the Stones “chroniclers of Swinging London (...) creating a subversive sort of pop paralleled only by The Kinks” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 54). For some examples of this form of Swinging London pop, The Kinks’ 1966 hit *Dedicated Follower of Fashion* satirized the superficial values of London’s fashion hipsters in lines such as “he thinks he is a flower to be looked at” and “his clothes are loud but never square”. The Rolling Stones would, as a precursor to their later subject matter, and to live up to their ‘bad boy’ image, tell us about the darker parts of Swinging London in more disturbing manners. In *Play with Fire* they sing about a spoilt, rich girl who “gets her kicks in Stepney, not in Knightsbridge anymore”, and in *19th Nervous Breakdown*, they turn quite nasty addressing the mental problems the lifestyle could result in: “You better stop, look around, here it comes (...) here comes your nineteenth nervous breakdown”.

The legislators of populist revolt

George Harrison of The Beatles visited Haight-Ashbury in August 1967 and did not return with happy memories of the place or its people: “I went there expecting it to be a brilliant place (...) But it was full of horrible spotty drop-out kids on drugs” (Beatles, 2000, p. 259). Harrison admits to having stopped taking LSD after this visit. When he saw the negative effects the drug could have on vulnerable youths it acted as one of the first clear examples of the musicians’ change from celebration to warning. If anyone had been celebrating hippie values during the latest year, it was The Beatles. They had admitted to using LSD (Paul McCartney in a recent interview) and recorded songs inspired by the drug (e.g. *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and *Tomorrow Never Knows*).

Of all the artists in the sixties (with a possible exception of Bob Dylan), The Beatles were the most important because of their enormous popularity. Political scientist Samuel H. Beer has called them “unacknowledged legislators of populist revolt” (MacDonald, 2008, p. 7) and the group can be said to be the instigators of putting countercultural ideas into ordinary people’s minds. When they released *Sgt Pepper’s*

Lonely Hearts Club Band on June 1st 1967, it was the musical zenith of the Summer of Love, not only in Britain, but worldwide. With its psychedelic escapist lyrics, its highly sophisticated musical arrangements and overall promotion of countercultural values, the LP has come to be the lasting symbol of the summer of 1967. Fischer says that the album was “a technological illusion of sounds and voices that perfectly captured the chaotic mood of the turbulent 1960s. That mood reflected the (...) longings of young people with remarkable accuracy” (Fischer, 2006, p. 326).

The Beatles made their final statement connected with the Summer of Love when they participated in a global television broadcast on June 25. Their contribution was the John Lennon song *All You Need is Love*, and the joyous message, which summed up the spirit of the summer, was shown on screens around the world with pictures of stars like Rolling Stones vocalist Mick Jagger dancing and singing along to the song’s chorus. During the late summer and early autumn, however, it was almost as if misfortune appeared simultaneously for these top groups. As described more thoroughly in part two, The Rolling Stones were already in dire straits. They had lost their manager and had stagnated creatively. In addition, Jagger, Keith Richards and Brian Jones had drug charges hanging over them. It was as if the psychedelic dreaming and wishful thinking had come to an abrupt end. Keith Richards has commented on this period:

When we got busted (...) it suddenly made us realise that this was a whole different ball game and that was when the fun stopped. Up until then it had been as though London existed in a beautiful space where you could do anything you wanted. And then the hammer came down and it was back to reality. We grew up instantly.

(Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 106)

The Beatles would also experience trouble after *Sgt Pepper*. The group’s manager Brian Epstein died, and during the autumn of 1967, with group unity starting to disintegrate, they embarked on their own pastoral adventure. The Beatles got together with Mahareshi Mahesh Yogi, an Indian guru (rejection of old Christian values and a near-obsession with Eastern philosophies was de rigueur in the countercultural milieu and the hippie crowd during the sixties). In spring 1968 they went to the Maharishi’s camp in India to meditate, along with other celebrities. John Lennon, Paul McCartney

and George Harrison (Ringo Starr went home early) were fascinated by the quiet life and simple rules that went with living in this rural place, where the hippie spirit could still blossom to full effect without the destabilizing effects of drink or drugs. The Beatles changed profoundly after their Indian, pastoral experience. They wrote lots of songs there, many of these distinctly different from the material the group had recorded in 1967. One common denominator for their new LP (the double *White Album*) released in November 1968, was a more primitive sound. The movement of retreat and return had had a profound effect on the world's leading rock group.

The end of the hippie dream

Although celebrated at the time, and famously manifested in Scott McKenzie's 1967 hit *San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Flowers In Your Hair)*, the positive, communal spirit from the first part of 1967 soon deteriorated. Paradoxically, The Beatles' support of the underground culture was one of the key factors leading towards the degradation George Harrison would observe during his visit to California. Through The Beatles, the mainstream had become aware of what was going on under the official radar. This meant that the police could arrest famous musicians for seemingly light drug offences or close down clubs such as the UFO. Joe Boyd has said that: "The Beatles might as well have held up a poster which said 'We've taken acid too!'" (Boyd, 2017).

As its values became fashionable in the mainstream, it became obvious that the hippie philosophy included considerable downsides. What had started with hope and positive anticipation, would, in many cities, turn into chaos and mayhem, and because of this, the hippie dream had to end. At the end of the summer of 1967, there was even a parade in Haight-Ashbury declaring "the death of the hippie". Selvin states that "the so-called Summer of Love left San Francisco a mess, the Haight overrun" (Selvin, 1994, p. 121). Anderson writes that "back in the Haight, the vibes were turning negative by the end of the Summer of Love. The area was flooded, overwhelmed with youth (...) New drugs were introduced, some dangerous, and with drug dealers competing for profits, violence mounted" (Anderson, 2007, p. 97). To a certain degree, the same development could also be seen in Britain. As more and more middle-class kids tried psychedelic drugs, society was transformed, Boyd writes. "By the summer, kaftans and beads were everywhere and UFO was swamped by tourists and weekend hippies" (Boyd, 2006, p. 159). These were people who did not share the original, somewhat naïve motives of the

hippie movement. Really part of the mainstream, they wanted to take part in the latest trend, flooding into what had until this been underground phenomena, changing them into the unrecognizable. "Without realizing it, we had started on a downhill slope that was mirrored in New York and San Francisco" (Boyd, 2006, p. 6), Boyd says, and as was pointed out with regards to San Francisco, he confirms that the drug culture changed to the worse. From having used mostly pure LSD, the extent of the demand of acid affected its quality and made many users experience "bad trips". This would lead to more of the so-called drug casualties. Hunter S. Thompson, who initially had a positive view of the values of the hippies, lamented the fall of the culture while deriding the youths who came to San Francisco without any other purpose than obtaining drugs: "All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three bucks a hit. But their loss and failure is ours, too" (Thompson, 2005, p. 178).

The year of the barricades

The downfall of the hippie movement was a precursor of things to come, and a year after the Summer of Love, as hippie-influenced fashion and music had gained a solid foothold in the mainstream, the world had been shaken by student riots in Paris, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia and the assassinations of social and political icons Martin Luther King and Robert F. Kennedy. The divisive Vietnam War and the rise of more violent civil rights groups combined to make a lot of young people practically run wild, and 1968 will forever stand as the utter contrast to 1967. Philip Norman offers this vivid description of the change from one year to another:

It was a change as sudden, as chemically mysterious, as sunlight turning rancid. At one moment, it seemed, all the young of America and Europe were holding out flowers and making signs of peace. At the next, they had taken to the streets and were smashing windows and wrenching up paving stones. Instead of beads and kaftans, all at once, there were badges, slogans and military fatigues; instead of gurus, angry-faced student activists; instead of 'happenings' and 'love-ins', ferocious street battles (...) It was a wave seemingly from nowhere that broke, almost completely, on the year 1968.

(Norman, 2001, p. 295)

The artists of the day were paying attention. Keith Richards says that “it was getting political in 1968, no way to avoid that. It was getting nasty too. Heads were getting beaten. The Vietnam War had a lot to do with turning it around” (Richards, 2010, p. 250). Johnny Rogan says that “with the attendant escalation of the conflict in Vietnam, peaceful demonstrations had given way to street rioting and hippies were usurped in the media by yippies and political pranksters, whose watchword was organized chaos” (Rogan, 2014, p. 481). Norman says that it was a revolution whose motives no one fully understood, “least of all its participants; whose leaders enjoyed only the briefest heyday; whose armies had no sooner mustered than they dispersed to fresh amusements” (Norman, 2001, p. 295). Joe Boyd was not surprised. He says that beneath the surface, the progressive sixties hid all manner of unpleasantness: sexism, reaction, racism and factionalism. “The idea that drugs, sex and music could transform the world was always a pretty naïve dream. As the counter-culture’s effect on the mainstream grew, its own values and aesthetics decayed” (Boyd, 2006, p. 164). Bob Dylan, who was a non-participator in every way during 1968, wrote in his autobiography *Chronicles*:

The events of the day, all the cultural mumbo jumbo were imprisoning my soul – nauseating me – civil rights and political leaders being gunned down, the mounting of the barricades, the government crackdowns, the student radicals and demonstrators versus the cops and the unions – the streets exploding, fire of anger boiling – the contra communes – the lying, noisy voices – the free love, the anti-money system movement – the whole shebang.
(Dylan 2004, p. 109)

Hence, many musicians made retreats, metaphorically or literally, from the city to the countryside at different times during 1968. Leo Marx says that the attractive pastoral impulse gives “rise to a symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity, or (...) away from the city toward the country” (Marx, 1972, pp. 9-10). Here, he draws on William Empson’s definition of the pastoral as the “process of putting the complex into the simple” (Empson, 1968, p. 22), which was exactly what these musicians did. In contrast to the preceding years, when the music had grown more and more sophisticated and musically complex, many changed their approach, and the psychedelic sounds and

progressive musical ideas would be discarded in favour of simpler forms. Like many young people who went 'back to the land', the artists would show their new direction with simpler hairstyles and clothing. Dressing simpler, as homesteaders or working men, the artists were using what Empson calls "the essential trick of the old pastoral" (Empson, 1968, p. 11), which I will return to below. The world was suddenly different and the art had to correspond to the situation. The best way of expressing complicated feelings in a complex new setting was by using the pastoral construct.

Part two

Art originates in the mind of the artist rather than in the outside world; he arranges elements from that world to correspond to an idea which he has first conceived, and which expresses through conventions latent or unarticulated attitudes of his audience.

(Pike, 1981, preface)

THE KINKS ARE THE VILLAGE GREEN PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Recorded November 1966 - October 1968. Released November 22, 1968.

The songwriter, vocalist and leader of The Kinks, Ray Davies, has always been known as a complex personality. His dualistic mind would be exposed in many of the 'concept' albums The Kinks made during the late sixties and early seventies, revealing his conflicting relationship with modern, urban life. What we may call the 'rural' side of Davies' personality has always contained a strong nostalgic flavour; he is longing for the calmness and order of the old-fashioned English village, where lives are, as he himself sings, 'simple'. In a pastoral context, an unchanged English countryside can provide protection from the starkness of reality (Gifford, 1999, p. 84), and this is what Davies sought. No other record shows his pastoral fascination as clearly as *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* (from here on referred to as TKATVGPS).

Davies has always been extremely susceptible to his own vulnerability and contradictory personality and has at times struggled to deal with the demands of the world of rock music fame. In a recent issue of the music magazine Mojo, Davies is described as "a man under constant revision" who is "constantly observing the world around him and re-evaluating his role in it" (Mojo, March 2017). Nick Hasted has written that "Ray's songs were fragile barricades round his mind, trying to keep out everything that was disturbing it" (Hasted, 2013, p. 125). Famous pianist Nicky Hopkins, who played most of the keyboards on TKATVGPS, but was not credited on the original LP sleeve, has said: "Ray Davies is such a mixed-up person. He's unbelievable!" (Hasted, 2013, p. 132). Ray's brother Dave, The Kinks' guitarist, has said that "Ray's terribly sentimental. He can't let go of anything" (Hasted, 2013, p. 134). Greil Marcus has described Davies in this way: "He really didn't like it here, wherever that happened to be (...) his search for a phantom paradise took him as deeply into the throes of nostalgia as a pop artist can travel" (Marcus, 1997, p. 254).

Retreat

Like most of his contemporaries, Davies was fascinated by rock 'n' roll in his youth, and The Kinks' breakthrough single *You Really Got Me* from 1964 was heavily influenced by the sound of American blues. It was a song characterized by a raw, distorted guitar riff and containing primitive lyrics with sexual overtones. After a few more hits in the same

style, Davies' writing gradually changed to the more introspective. The Kinks' music changed with him, becoming more sophisticated, both sonically and lyrically. Davies was exploring areas other songwriters did not venture into, no longer content with writing simple songs about girls, booze or drugs, although The Kinks had a few successful psychedelic numbers in the mid-sixties. From 1965 through 1967, as most other British groups took part in the 'international code going back and forth through records', Davies left most of his American rhythm and blues influences behind.

While the Swinging Sixties mentality ruled London and hippie culture was everywhere, Davies turned inwards and became obsessed with English culture and history, churning out bittersweet and sarcastic comments on the era and on the British way of life in general, often based musically on British 'music hall'. This genre is, according to oxforddictionaries.com, a form of variety entertainment consisting of singing, dancing, comedy, acrobatics, and novelty acts popular in Britain from around 1850 and into the early twentieth century. Songs like *A Well Respected Man*, *Dedicated Follower of Fashion* and *Sunny Afternoon* showed Davies stepping into the role of an old-fashioned variety artist who satirizes English society and comments on the quirks and idiosyncrasies of its people. The slightly traditional musical accompaniment of these songs underlines the satirical message of the lyrics while also hinting at Davies' own double-sidedness; this is the traditional (British Music hall) mixed with the modern (American rock music).

There is no doubt that Davies had pastoral leanings at this stage. Gifford writes about "pastoral's power to satirise social climbers" (Gifford, 1999, p. 90), a motif Davies used extensively in his songs from this period. His longing for a calmer, more ordered past may also have something to do with the fact that he had a nervous breakdown in 1966, due to the combined pressures of touring, songwriting and recording. His brother Dave says: "without the breakdown he had in 1966 and the other pressures he was under, he might not have thought of anything like Village Green" (Hasted, 2013, p. 124). The best example of The Kinks' mid-sixties style came with the single *Waterloo Sunset*, released in May 1967. On this emotive track Davies juxtaposes childhood memories of London with his fascination for nostalgia and romanticism. The result was similar to what The Beatles had done with Liverpool in *Penny Lane* and *Strawberry Fields Forever* earlier the same year. Barry J. Faulk argues that *Waterloo Sunset* is the 'answer' to these Beatles songs; "songs that elevate the English quotidian and celebrate the spirit of a

specific place. The Kinks' record views the urban spectacle from a certain remove, the better to express a melancholic distance from the crowd" (Faulk, 2010, p. 51). *Waterloo Sunset* is a clear precursor to the path The Kinks would be taking from here on.

After *Waterloo Sunset*, The Kinks were starting to be somewhat left behind in the hip world of Swinging London. Their new singles would struggle to achieve big sales, and they were "still regarded by critics and audiences as a singles outfit whose natural habitat was the local dance hall" (Rogan, 2015, p. 329). One of the main reasons for The Kinks' change of direction in the mid-sixties was that they were banned from touring in America for four years, starting in mid-1965, due to a combination of unprofessional behaviour (i.e. internal fighting and quarrelling), bad management and a dispute with the American musicians' union. The band, and chief songwriter Davies in particular, would also become frustrated by legal wrangles over publishing rights, which kept them from royalties for their early hits (Faulk, 2010, p. 108). As their frustration increased and popularity waned, Ray Davies' 'Englishness' grew even more intense than before. The songwriter felt that he had already achieved everything he set out to do when he started the band. Now he wanted to create a more organic and individually satisfying mode of writing and recording (Faulk, 2010, p. 108). "I didn't think I'd ever come back to America again. In many ways, my career was over (...) I thought, 'Well, why not write something about things you really care about'" (Rogan, 2015, p. 352). Davies used his fascination for his own country's rural culture and imperial past and in 1966 started to compile his grand opus on the pastoral. Davies has admitted that the American ban had a profound effect on him, driving him to write something particularly English. The Kinks had little in common with the emerging British counterculture and did not play at their free festivals, frequent venues like the UFO or take to the streets. Davies has stated that "the world was in turmoil, and that was my way of reacting. I felt that I needed to look inward, and to return to the way that England had been when I was growing up" (Rogan, 2015, pp. 352-353). Davies wrote all the songs for *TKATVGPS* in the living room of his Georgian house in Fortis Green, near where he and his brother had grown up. He did not need to look far for inspiration for his village green. Andy Miller points out that houses nearby have names that are synonymous with a historical Englishness – Albion Lodge, Trafalgar Cottage, a timber beamed health club called The Manor (Miller, 2003, p. 17). "Our neighbourhood was like a village", the Kinks' storyteller has said:

The real village green is a combination of North London places: the little green near my childhood home in Fortis Green, Cherry Tree Woods, Highgate Woods. That little green is where we played football, and where we stayed till it was dark. There was mystery there; it was where we heard stories.

(Hasted, 2007, p. 75)

Davies kept close to his home and family during this period, much in the same manner as Dylan and The Band had done during their pastoral retreat in Woodstock. The Kinks were always known as a combative group, but the fraternal aspect in making things work creatively is an important part of understanding the internal dynamics of the band. The Davies brothers became, as they achieved success, an interdependent unit. They “each perceived the Kinks as an extension of their family, even at its most dysfunctional” (Rogan, 2015, p. 335). The senior brother has often been described as employing dictatorial methods in his leadership, but he tells of a friendly, almost communal atmosphere within the group during much of the recording process: “It was a real bonding period when the band really drew together (...) as a family” (Miller, 2004).

Davies worked on the album for two years, and was not sure what to do with the songs that kept piling up. The project went through several stages on the way. It was planned as a potential stage presentation, then a possible Ray Davies solo record, then a new Kinks record – first as a double album, ultimately reduced to a single album. After it was finished, in the summer of 1968, and the first few pressings of the album had been distributed, Davies changed his mind about some of the songs. The Kinks recorded a couple of new songs, cut some of the earlier ones and re-shuffled the track listing. This meant that the album was delayed, and when it finally was released in November, it was mostly ignored by the record-buying public.

The finished *TKATVGPS* seemed to be as far away from the hippie drug culture and violent street unrest as could be imagined. “While everybody in the world was gravitating towards love, peace and San Francisco, the Kinks were in a London suburb making this strange little record about an imaginary village green” Davies writes in his autobiography *X-Ray* (Davies, 1995, p. 361). Faulk says that the album is enmeshed with the group’s conscious negation of the hippie rock hegemony (Faulk, 2010, p. 110). The combination of words and music showed a bittersweet longing for a disappearing way of living. This was a rural world filled with village greens, pubs and church bells. Dave

Davies puts the album in the same sphere as other groups who made similar turns at the time (e.g. The Band or The Byrds) and says that the album is about hope, “looking at things from the past that were actually useful in the present, rather than discarding everything for the sake of change” (Miller, 2004). Rogan points in the same direction when questioning the perceived unfashionableness of the album.

As with all revolutions, the notion of counterrevolution is never far away. In tandem with the images of street-fighting men espousing Marxist philosophy, 1968 was also associated with an outbreak of nostalgia and escapism (...) Ray Davies’ quaint songs about a wicked witch or phenomenal ballooning cat were hardly out of place here. His denunciation of city life and championing of the countryside also tallied with the new ecology movement.

(Rogan, 2015, p. 367)

The subject matter varies, and some tracks lie closer to a village green theme than others. “It’s not a storyline, it’s an emotional thread”, Davies has said (Hasted, 2013, p. 128). The shared sensibility of these new compositions, however, was their author’s preoccupation with the past and his pastoral “yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence closer to nature” (Marx, 1972, p. 6).

Return

Viewed through the filter of the times, all the records discussed here are pastoral works. I would argue, however, that while TKATVGPS exposes perhaps the most intense ‘pastoralism’, it is the one record of the four that has least to do with the era in which it was made. This is because Ray Davies has not only retreated from the world of violence and riots, he has retreated from the real world altogether. His work is far away from The Rolling Stones’ clear comment on current events, *Street Fighting Man*. In *The Country and the City*, Raymond Williams includes analyses which seem appropriate when discussing the kind of pastoralism shown by Ray Davies. By looking backwards to the only-just-vanished location of many English pastorals, Williams discovered that this was indeed a recurring motif. “When we moved back in time, consistently directed to an earlier and happier rural England, we could find no place, no period, in which we could seriously rest” (Williams, 1973, p. 35). He saw that each only-just-vanished period had

its pastoral values located in its own idyllic recent past and therefore argues that an ordered and happier past is “set against the disturbance and disorder of the present. An idealisation, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time” (Williams, 1973, p. 45). Davies uses this idealisation to escape not only from the political world, but also his own sensitive mind. He has conflicting feelings about what is going on in his private life, in his band and in the world at large. His answer is to create his own innocent universe, far away from the turbulent times around him: “It was as if I was making up this story about (...) a parallel universe to this world where, although there are demons and evil things, things could be dealt with in a slightly different, less confrontational way”, Davies has said (Miller, 2004). In creating a childlike universe, Davies is actually employing what Empson calls “the essential trick of the old pastoral” in which simple people would express strong feelings (felt as the most universal subject, something fundamentally true about everybody) in learned and fashionable language (so that you wrote about the best subject in the best way) (Empson, 1968, p. 11). In his book on the pastoral (originally published in 1935), Empson puts *Alice in Wonderland* in the pastoral category because of its use of apparently simple and unsophisticated characters of low social status exploring the writer’s complex ideas about society. Hence, I would categorize TKATVGPS alongside *Alice in Wonderland*. Davies uses his different characters - Walter, Johnny Thunder, the Phenomenal Cat – as vehicles for expressing his feelings. This is similar to Lewis Carroll’s use of fantasy creatures posing puzzling existential questions; e.g. the hookah-smoking Caterpillar playing a rhetorical game with Alice or the Duchess preaching an absurd type of moral.

The album’s title gives its name to two of the songs, and it starts off with *The Village Green Preservation Society*, a catchy tune described as “the world’s gentlest and most oblique protest song” (Miller, 2003, p. 51). The idea of a ‘title’ song introducing a ‘concept’ album is clearly inspired by The Beatles, who had done the same on both *Sgt Pepper* and its follow-up *Magical Mystery Tour* (both inspired by psychedelia and British music hall). Davies lists a number of things he would like to see preserved in a song that is fighting against inhuman progress and devastating commercial forces. Faulk points to the fact that Davies seems to anticipate the “preference for local culture over the increasingly bland monoculture of globalization” (Faulk, 2010, p. 110), something that seems especially relevant in today’s political climate. With the escapist dimension of the

back-to-the-land mentality in mind, these are themes that may leave themselves open to uncomfortable questions, and the song may be open to misinterpretation. “A lot of people accuse me in the song of being kind of fascist (...) Traditional, you know? But it’s not. It’s a warm feeling, like a fantasy world that I can retreat to”, Davies has said (Miller, 2003, p. 48). Gifford touches on this point: “When the pastoral is merely escapist (...) there is an implicit attempt on the part of the writer to resist return, to stay out there in the safely comforting location of retreat, in their case in the countryside of a mythic Old England where stability and traditional values were located” (Gifford, 1999, p. 81). Davies does not want to put his work into this sphere: “I conjured up this idyllic, imaginary world. It’s not an escapist world, the reality is there – good and bad exist but they’re dealt with in a less harsh way than the real world” (Miller, 2004). There is evidence of this to be found in the opening track: “Preserving the old ways from being abused, protecting the new ways for me and you”, Davies sings. By not discarding the modern and the urban altogether, he avoids being put into the conservative escapist category. His conflicting mind will long for peace and pastoral bliss for a while, but will ultimately want to return from its retreat and go back into the real world.

Davies claims that the title song is a juxtaposition, in the way that it contradicts some of the other material of the album: “It’s to be sung as a chorus. It’s a bunch of people singing it in a pub. And probably they’re in a Conservative stronghold” (Hasted, 2013, p. 129). This aspect places the song firmly in its own time. Vietnam War protests in central London was not the only troublesome issue for the British establishment in the late sixties. The economic climate was deteriorating and the Labour government launched an initiative called “I’m Backing Britain” to spur consumers to buy British-made goods and support British industry. Along with Enoch Powell’s “river of blood”-speech, it caused fear of the future and led to nostalgia for a safer past, for preservation societies, affinities and affiliates, not all of them wholesome. Two years before, the Conservation Society had been founded in England with a policy promising to fight “against the menace of decreasing standards”. Davies was undoubtedly aware of this, Miller notes, and the song discovers such ‘menace’ in the most absurd and unlikely places. One might even argue that the song mocks the many demonstrators of the times by presenting a list of ridiculous and idiosyncratic demands like preservation of Donald Duck or strawberry jam (already a preservation in itself). As in much of The Kinks’ music, there is a duality at work, and in the end the song turns into self-parody. Music

critic Robert Christgau has noted: “Does Davies really want to preserve virginity? Presumably not. But the fictional form allows him to remain ambivalent” (Miller, 2003, p. 48). Really, Davies is being an unreliable narrator (a typical feature of his) and he satirizes the very notion of preservation in a manner worthy of great British comedy. He had recently bought himself a Tudor manor house in Hertfordshire which he “was busily refurbishing with small luxuries including (...) a bar billiards table” (Rogan, 2015, p. 356). In the song Davies suggests that God should save Tudor houses, antique tables and billiards, a wry comment on his own climb up the social ladder. Davies later admitted that he “felt out of place living in Hertfordshire, in the Village Green I felt I belonged” (Rogan, 2015, p. 357).

The album was recorded over a long period of time and the other song based on its title, *Village Green*, was the project’s starting point. It was recorded already in late 1966, but was held over from the LP *Something Else by the Kinks* and serves as evidence that Davies had some kind of pastoral project in mind already during the height of the Swinging Sixties. This baroque pop tune was, according to Hasted, inspired by two relatively different sources; Dylan Thomas’s evocation of a day in a rustic Welsh idyll, *Under Milk Wood*, and Ray’s disgruntlement on noting the modern metal casks his ale was being pumped from in a Devon pub (Hasted, 2013, p. 125). It is easy to see the similarities with *Under Milk Wood*. Davies resembles that story’s detached observer, Captain Cat, who sits in his room observing and commenting on the daily lives of the small town’s inhabitants.

Village Green displays a yearning for old-fashioned values and for simpler times with a simpler way of life. Davies romanticizes a society with order, less social mobility and stricter moral conventions. He grew up in a time when these values still meant something, but in the sixties this way of life was disappearing. While his own life changed dramatically because of his success, *Village Green* is implying that something worth keeping is lost forever. The song is comparable to Gram Parsons’ and The Byrds’ pastoral high point, *Hickory Wind*, where we also find well-known motifs of oak trees and a yearning for an innocent, rural childhood gone forever. In both these songs the loss is very much due to the artists seeking the fame and fortune found in the big city. The pastoral and the personal become entwined, and as Parsons had done, Davies is really singing about himself. He is the naïve rural boy who goes to town to be famous, but the destructive urban centre crushes his dreams. Additionally, by seeking fame, he

contributes to the despoiling of his own village; his old love Daisy has married the local grocer's boy, Tom. It is fascinating to note that Daisy and Tom are also the names of the destructive couple in *The Great Gatsby*, a novel that, according to Miller, relocates the pastoral tradition to the USA (Miller, 2003, pp. 82-83), and which serves as a warning against the American Dream of wealth and success. Davies is probably referencing these names consciously. It would be typical of him, in the manner of it both being a tribute to Fitzgerald's novel but at the same time a derision of the values these two characters represent (shallowness, capitalism and decadence). Seen together with the noisy American tourists ridiculed in the song, the reference may also be an ironic nod to a country which banned the Kinks for years. Davies has often said that his fascination for everything English came from the US ban, but Miller claims it has a deeper, older root:

If 'Village Green' is (...) quintessentially English, it is not because of its literal use of images of oak trees, church steeples and so on, but because it employs these images to suggest innocence has been lost. This is the very kernel of the English pastoral theme, a retrospective, self-renewing pessimism. Things will never be as good as they used to be.

(Miller, 2003, pp. 81-82)

Miller argues that the album's literary sensibility finds its fullest expression in this track. The song's portrait of a vanishing rural idyll shares many similarities with works in the English pastoral tradition, such as William Blake's *The Ecchoing Green* from *Songs of Innocence*, where an old man "sitting under the oak" remembers playing with his friends during childhood: "Such, such were the joys / When we all, girls & boys / In our youth-time were seen / On the Ecchoing Green". Davies' song also seems inspired by Oliver Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, a poem lamenting the decline of a once idyllic English village. In its first part, Goldsmith remembers innocent days gone by:

*Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please,
How often have I loltered o'er thy green,
Where humble happiness endeared each scene !*

In the next part, the village is abandoned and desolate: “Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn” and “Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all”. The fate of a once innocent village girl is described. She is “Now lost to all ; her friends, her virtue fled”, and just like Daisy in *Village Green*, she ends up with a man beneath her dignity: “Near her betrayer’s door she lays her head”. We can also find similar pastoral themes in two novels by George Orwell that Davies in all likelihood was familiar with. In *Coming Up For Air*, an insurance salesman experiences a midlife crisis and goes back to the village where he grew up only to experience sadness and disillusionment. His childhood sweetheart has married the tobacconist and has become fat and ugly, and even worse, the small pond where he used to fish as a boy has been turned into a garbage dump. The same motif is also used in Winston Smith’s dreams of a Golden Country in *1984*:

In the ragged hedge on the opposite side of the field the boughs of the elm trees were swaying very faintly in the breeze, their leaves just stirring in dense masses like women’s hair. Somewhere near at hand, though out of sight, there was a clear, slow-moving stream where dace were swimming in the pools under the willow trees.

(Orwell, 2013, p. 36)

Just like Orwell’s character in *Coming Up For Air*, Davies realizes that his nostalgia is a delusion and he is aware - just like Raymond Williams has pointed out - that each time has its own idyllic past close by. Svetlana Boym describes nostalgia as “a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (Boym, 2001, p. xiii). As demonstrated in much of his work, Ray Davies clearly loves this romance with his own fantasy. Boym writes that progress did not cure nostalgia but exacerbated it. In the sixties, globalization (as we know it in the 21st century) was just in its infancy, but Davies sensed the undercurrents and used it in his art.

Moving from the two songs directly derived from the album’s title, there are three tracks that may be classified as ‘songs about the town and people who live there’. Of these, *Do You Remember Walter* is most important. It is a song about friendship and time which (like *Waterloo Sunset*) takes an everyday image or commonplace event and finds the universe within it (Miller, 2003, pp. 52-53). Davies has spoken of the song’s real-life

inspiration. He once met an old friend and found out they had nothing to talk about. This was a friend from a past which was not chaotic or stressful, before the fame and the hit records and the pressure in coming up with new hits. As such it tackles the question of preservation of memory. Like Daisy in *Village Green*, the grown-up Walter exists only in the narrator's mind. He never gets to meet him as an adult, but merely imagines what he *might* be like. Musically, the track is a mixture of whimsical Kinks-style music hall and modern rock. *Johnny Thunder* is a rock song about a rebel motorcyclist who rides alone, subsisting on nothing but the elements, underlined by lyrical motifs of thunder and lightning. As such it fits well within the pastoral construct. Johnny does what he wants to when he wants to and he has avoided becoming bourgeois and grey like the normal citizens of the town. This last motif (the people in grey) is common in many Davies songs, and is really about preservation of the happy life of adolescence or childhood. The nostalgic (bourgeois) Davies, with his wife and kids, longs for the freedom that such characters have. The calypso *Monica* is the last of the album's character sketches. It is quite daring for its time, as it tackles the local prostitute, although Davies never states this explicitly. All these songs are good examples of putting the complex into the simple. To express his thoughts, Davies puts them into ordinary events and everyday people. "I go out of my way to like ordinary things. I cling on to the simple values ... I think 'ordinary' people are quite complex enough without looking for greater sophistication" (Miller, 2003, p. 59). It is tempting to suggest that Davies is familiar with Empson's assumption that "you can say everything about complex people by a complete consideration of simple people" (Empson, 1968, p. 137).

Picture Book is the third song on the album and tackles the theme of preservation of memories in pictures, central to both this track and its twin composition *People Take Pictures of Each Other*, the final song on the LP. The theme could have been taken straight out of the 2017 world, as both these songs deal with the absurdity of using photos to illustrate a presumably happy, fulfilling life and as a means of capturing some sort of emotional reality. Ray Davies never liked being on TV or having his picture taken, and the picture theme goes deep into the heart of his neuroses about family, loss, passing time and what, if anything, remains. Davies feels that pictures are an impossible way of preserving memories. "I'd rather have the actual thing here, not just pictures of things we used to have", he has said (Rogan, 2015, p. 358). "You can't picture love that you took from me", a melancholy Davies sings. The music of both these songs is pretty

much straight pop-rock. It is jaunty and serves as a contrast to the pictures of the family, the happiness of childhood and a time that has gone forever. "Days when you were happy, a long time ago". Davies sings in the chorus of *Picture Book*. Concluding the album with *People Take Pictures of Each Other*, there is something desperate in the music. It leans towards music hall, but the tempo is too quick and it is hard for the singer to fit in all the words. In the lyrics we get the reappearance of the pastoral motif of the idyllic oak tree, but the slight bit of pastoralism hastily passes us by like the rest of the lyrics.

Sitting by the Riverside is also music hall-inspired, but this track is both musically and lyrically a pastiche. Davies paints a picture of riparian bliss, the song sounds cheery, but there is anxiety in the air. The chaotic musical movements moving towards noisy crescendos signalizes that peace is disturbed and the pastoral idyll is false. *Starstruck* is a warning on the perils of fame and urban artifice with the groupie in the song "a victim of bright city lights". *All of My Friends Were There* is based on a real experience on stage for Davies. After being humiliated before all of his friends, the singer returns to his past in the last verse; a time where he could be himself. "I went to that old café, where I had been in much happier days", he sings. *Animal Farm* is musically light and joyful. The singer seeks sanctuary in the past, on an idealized farm where he was happy, life was simple and people could be trusted. Davies uses the now well-known motif of a refuge for people and wildlife to live simple lives against a half-mad world. The vocal sounds partly ironic (as Davies often does), sung sometimes with a slight American accent, and we get a sense that the narrator is again unreliable and that his pastoral dream is not all it is worked out to be. He has presumably grown up in "a dirty old shack where the hound dogs bark" and want to be back there "among the cats and dogs". How idyllic is that? And how idyllic did the life on Orwell's *Animal Farm* (from which the title is derived) become after the pigs took over?

There are still some elements of psychedelia left in The Kinks' music at this stage. This has much to do with Davies creating a childlike universe, which enables him to employ the psychedelic style. The affection for childhood nostalgia found in psychedelia is well known. During 1967 Pink Floyd's Syd Barrett wrote songs about fairy tales (*Matilda Mother*), his Siamese cat (*Lucifer Sam*), or a gnome named Grimble Grumble (*The Gnome*), and the San Francisco group Jefferson Airplane had a hit with the song *White Rabbit*, based on characters found in *Alice in Wonderland* and its sequel *Through the Looking-Glass*. John Lennon was a big admirer of Lewis Carroll, and Carroll's literary

universe was an inspiration behind several Beatles songs from this period, such as *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and *I Am the Walrus*. Ray Davies shared the British psychedelic scene's pastoral idealization of lost youth, but did not believe in the hippies' childlike view of the universe or the amount of drugs one had to take.

The two psychedelic compositions on TKATVGPS are stylistically different. *Phenomenal Cat*, referred to by Davies as a nursery rhyme, is strongly reminiscent of Carroll and the images of his Cheshire Cat, while *Wicked Annabella* leans more towards a harsher Brothers Grimm universe. Such fairy tale worlds hint at innocence and romantic dreams of childhood. *Phenomenal Cat* is particularly interesting. It is revealed that the cat has travelled extensively and discovered the secret of life itself. Rogan argues that this revelation "inspires a serenity of sorts, manifested in a determined retreat from the world into wilful indolence and comfort eating" (Rogan, 2015, p. 361). We are never told what great secret the cat unearthed, however, and the song could thus be interpreted as an oblique (and sarcastic) comment on the search for spiritual enlightenment among Davies' contemporaries. It may also be noted that 'Cat' is a slang expression for people who play music (especially jazz). Andy Miller argues that the psychedelia of *Phenomenal Cat* is all surface. He claims that the words are a rumination on the dangerous charm of the past with the cat perching in a tree eating himself forever. Discussing *Alice in Wonderland*, Empson states that the famous Cheshire Cat is a direct symbol of the idea of intellectual detachment: "All cats are detached, and since this one grins it is the amused observer. It can disappear because it can abstract itself from its surroundings into a more interesting inner world" (Empson, 1968, p. 273). As such, the cat could indeed be the ambiguous Davies himself, the observer of a world gone wrong, just like Captain Cat in *Under Milk Wood*. Davies' cat has found his rest, but at a price. In the end it fades away, just like the Cheshire Cat with only its grin left. Musically, *Phenomenal Cat* is simple, childlike and mellotron-based. *Wicked Annabella* is hard rock with a heavy guitar riff. It is a cautionary tale: a warning to children about the perils of entering the woods. There, demons enslaved by the witch Annabella lurk under stones. The message is clear: even pastoral idylls like the forest can be dangerous.

The two songs which were recorded late in 1968, after the album's original release date, are the two songs which stand most strongly out from the rest. Davies wanted the album postponed to add *Big Sky* and *Last of the Steam-Powered Trains*. He must obviously have felt that these two numbers would contribute something essential

to the message he wanted to put out. In *Big Sky*, the singer reflects on the world and how human beings cope in a world where God is seemingly unconcerned at their plight. This is the post-sixties universe, an individual-oriented and materialistic world where old-fashioned religion and moral codes have evaporated. Everyone has his individual freedom and thus his own spiritual beliefs, but not necessarily his own happiness. People will always seek some sort of spiritual guidance and here they look up to the Big Sky for help. But the bigger power is not necessarily on the people's side anymore (has he ever been, Davies might have been prone to ask). The Big Sky gives associations to Native American myths, names and landscapes, and as such points towards a natural existence and a pastoral idyll. The chaos described is like people in a crowded city, with "everybody pushing one another around". They have fake problems that people did not have in a calmer, more innocent world; "they get depressed and they hold their heads in their hands and cry", Davies sings.

Last of the Steam-Powered Trains, the last track recorded, is uncharacteristic of the album as a whole. It is blues-based and much longer than the other songs. Musically it is directly derivative of *Smokestack Lightning* by Howlin' Wolf. This points back to the band's rhythm and blues-roots and gives us a juxtaposition of distinctly English and American archetypes. The train is a common motif in American blues music, and steam trains are an image of childhood, connected with British culture. Like *Do You Remember Walter*, the song deals with nostalgia and tradition, and about not having anything in common with people. "Everybody wanted to know about steam trains a couple of years ago, but they don't any more. It's about me being the last of the renegades" (Miller, 2003, p. 66), Davies has said. He casts himself as the last bastion of authenticity in contrast to his grey, middle-class friends (...) as if he is the curator of Britain's vanishing cultural heritage (Rogan, 2015, p. 362). Many will, however, argue that it is ridiculous and unauthentic to play black R&B as white middle-class English kids, and it is absurd to continue playing with steam trains as an adult. You have to grow up in the end. This means breaking out of the childhood idyll and go out into the big world. Davies at one point sings: "All this peaceful living is driving me insane". He strives for the noise and chaos of the big city by this point, and underlines it by playing heavy Chicago blues. There is an interesting vocal arrangement in the chorus, in the line "I'm the last of the good old fashioned steam-powered trains". The word steam is repeated two times by the harmony vocal while the music stops, very much like the chorus of The Band's *The*

Weight, in a gospel-style. If, as Miller claims, this was the last song recorded for the album, it is tempting to suggest that Ray Davies, like many others, had listened to and was inspired by *Music From Big Pink*.

Nick Hasted argues that the LP in some ways fitted in very well with the rock music of 1968. After psychedelia had had its apogee with *Sgt Pepper* in 1967 “the mood was of retrenchment and rolling back” (Hasted, 2013, p. 129). But the album failed to chart anywhere. This may be explained partly by Davies’ last-minute changes, which undermined any momentum it may have had had it been released according to its original plan. The reviews that the album got, however, were very good. According to Rogan, *Melody Maker* called it easily The Kinks’ best LP while another music paper commented that Davies and The Kinks had managed to by-pass ‘everything psychedelic and electronic’, concluding: “The Kinks may not be on the crest of the pop wave these days, but Ray Davies will remain one of our finest composers for many years” (Miller, 2003, p. 42). Almost fifty years after its release, *TKATVGPS* is hailed as a masterpiece. It is a cohesive work of intelligence, warmth and humanity where the songs connect and talk to each other. The album touches on themes that are as relevant today as they were in 1968, showing how far-sighted Ray Davies was at his best.

SWEETHEART OF THE RODEO by THE BYRDS

Recorded March 9-15 and April 4-May 27, 1968. Released August 30, 1968.

Compared with other groups, who were of a pastoral nature almost by default (e.g. The Band) or turned towards more pastoral values by necessity (e.g. The Rolling Stones), The Byrds stand out. Their album *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* was made by design – the result of conscious decisions and a clear plan. The only band from America that The Beatles considered peers and looked to as direct competition (Slate, 2016), The Byrds were in a state of disarray in early 1968 and leader Roger McGuinn had to find a way to move forward creatively. He did this by recruiting a new singer and songwriter, abandoning his original plan for their new LP and pushing on in a direction which led the jangly folk-rockers into becoming the first established rock band to record in Nashville and play the legendary Grand Ole Opry music show.

Retreat

During the making of their early 1968 LP *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, The Byrds had stretched their abilities to the utmost. In the process they lost two of their original members, and only McGuinn and Chris Hillman were left to continue proceedings.

The original mid-'60s lineup of The Byrds was (...) a fragile collective, from the very beginning. The glistening, seamless vocal and instrumental blend of Roger McGuinn, Gene Clark, David Crosby, Chris Hillman and Michael Clarke belied a delicate balance of communal inspiration and argumentative spirit. Theirs was a union based not on long, deep friendship but on mutual respect, interlocking talent and the adrenaline of combined ambition.

(Fricke, 1997, p. 3)

Despite all the internal upheaval, *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, recorded during the summer and fall of 1967, was the creative, if not commercial, pinnacle of The Byrds' career so far. The band mixed different genres and experimented with effects and instrumentation in the free psychedelic spirit of the times. It also pointed the way forward to harder times. In the liner notes for the reissue of the album David Fricke states that it was “made at the End of the Innocence – not just that of The Byrds but of

their entire audacious generation” (Fricke, 1997, p. 5). The hippies had had their day and 1968 would prove to be a very different year from 1967.

As David Crosby and Michael Clarke left the group, the two remaining members of The Byrds had to find new musicians. First they recruited Hillman’s cousin Kevin Kelley to play drums. Then they hired, originally as a piano player, the extraordinarily talented Gram Parsons. Parsons, a young singer and songwriter from Georgia, would soon reveal his real musical qualities. He came from a tragic background. Even though his family was wealthy, both his parents had been alcoholics. His father, who was a pilot in World War II, shot himself when Parsons was 12 years old, and his mother, who had suffered from depression, died of cirrhosis in 1965. Parsons, who had a deep knowledge of traditional American music, was at this early stage a driven personality on his own musical mission. He had already tried to combine country & western with rock in his former group, *The International Submarine Band*, but disliked the term ‘country rock’ and wanted to create a new musical genre labelled ‘Cosmic American Music’. Gram Parsons would become the catalyst for The Byrds’ venture into the world of traditional country music.

It was not McGuinn’s intention to go for a full-out country album at this stage. His original plan had been to search his roots and explore the evolution of American musical forms, starting with Appalachian songs and going all the way up to electronic, futuristic music. McGuinn had his reasons to doubt Parsons, wondering whether the new, confident member would undermine his own control over the band. But he fell for the southerner’s energy and enthusiasm and willingly modified his original scheme. “He was a great lover of country music and inspired us to get into it. Without him, I don’t think we would have done a whole album of it”, McGuinn has said (Hughes & Williamson, 2003, p. 83). Hillman has admitted that both he and McGuinn were a ‘little jaded’ at the time, and viewed in hindsight, it was really quite logical that The Byrds should go in a more ‘rootsy’ direction. McGuinn was passionate about the project from the start and showed a strong desire to retreat into the calmer world of traditional country music after all the upheaval in the group. The former folk singer had “a musicologist’s appetite for assimilating songs” and was like an academic investigating the South. He appreciated country within the context of the American folk tradition. “I loved it (...) I’d already been exposed to it through folk music. In fact country music is very closely related with folk music – the same sort of Anglo Saxon melodies that came out of the Appalachians (...)

Bluegrass music was considered part of folk”, he has said (Rogan, 2014, p. 423). Hillman, who had played in bluegrass bands before joining The Byrds, was also eager to play the music he earlier had tried to introduce to the other group members. He says: “I knew this music (...) But Gram understood the music too, and he knew how to sing it (...) Gram was ambitious, full of vinegar and ready to go” (Rogan, 2014, p. 422).

The Byrds had been a big part of the American counterculture in the sixties. They broke through with their electric version of Dylan’s *Mr. Tambourine Man* in 1965, and were associated with Dylan’s songs from the start, covering several of his songs in their characteristic jangly fashion; McGuinn’s 12-string Rickenbacker electric guitar and three-part vocal harmonies from McGuinn, Crosby and Gene Clark dominating the sound picture. After Clark’s departure, The Byrds expanded their scope, venturing into full-blown psychedelia with songs such as *Eight Miles High* and the albums *Fifth Dimension* and *Younger Than Yesterday*. On *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*, they commented explicitly on the “Technicolor social uproar” (Fricke, 1997, p. 3) of late 1967. This was shown in songs like *Tribal Gathering* (about the Human Be-In in San Francisco), *Draft Morning* (about the Vietnam War) and *Artificial Energy* (an explicit tribute to their favourite drugs). Significant to their next creative move, psychedelic songs like *Dolphin’s Smile*, with a longing for nature and the freedom of animals, as well as the synthesizer-heavy *Space Odyssey*, based on McGuinn’s fascination with space travel, touched on escapist themes. The Byrds, like many of the other leading bands of the time, were searching for solitude and new answers to old questions. Where their next phase – the country music – would be about using the pastoral pattern of putting the complex into the simple, the psychedelic music had been the opposite. The Byrds had made their music more and more complex and sophisticated through their whole career so far. Their psychedelic phase was characterized by oblique lyrics, modern sound effects and extraordinary guitar playing, inspired by jazz legend John Coltrane and Indian sitar master – and countercultural symbol - Ravi Shankar.

While being the embodiment of the LA-based, hip, urban rock group, The Byrds had always had one foot in the traditional music camp. McGuinn was originally a banjo-picking folk musician who became an electric guitarist after hearing The Beatles, bass player Chris Hillman had grown up with bluegrass and played the mandolin, and their main songwriter early on, Gene Clark, came from rural Missouri and had from a young age been exposed to country & western. Even David Crosby, the one group member

most heavily associated with the hippie lifestyle, started out playing folk songs with McGuinn and Clark in the LA clubs before they got a record deal. While focusing mainly on Dylan's and their own material, The Byrds also managed to put some country onto their records, mostly at Hillman's request. On their second album *Turn! Turn! Turn!* in late 1965, they covered both the country classic *A Satisfied Mind* and (with apparent irony) the old minstrel song *Oh Susannah*. "I was always trying to get the band to play country songs, but David Crosby always objected", Hillman has said (Meyer, 2009, p. 222). Their departure into full-scale, traditional country in 1968 was, however, completely different from joking around and playing old standards with electric guitars. Country music was not a genre that the sixties counterculture embraced in any way. The genre was seen as redneck, reactionary and establishment-oriented. "In 1968, there was rock music. And there was country music. In between was no man's land" (Fricke, 1997, p. 2). The Byrds travelled into a difficult field. They risked alienating much of their old fan base with their change in direction, while not necessarily gaining respect from the hard line country and western fans.

For a rock band, especially one as successful, respected and progressive as The Byrds, making an album of nothing but country music (...) was a counter-revolutionary act. Not to mention career suicide (...) The Byrds did it anyway, and changed the course of both musics.

(Fricke, 1997, p. 2)

The Byrds were determined to play country music as authentically as possible. To make it even harder for themselves, the group went to the 'country capital' of Nashville to record the album, being the first rock group to do so (Dylan, always ahead of the rest, had recorded *Blonde on Blonde* and *John Wesley Harding* there). Part of the reason why The Byrds chose to record in "Music City", was exactly the fact that Dylan had done the same. McGuinn and Hillman were especially seeking the sound picture of Dylan's latest LP, the enigmatic, rootsy *John Wesley Harding*. They even picked two of Dylan's songs from the basement sessions in Woodstock. *You Ain't Going Nowhere* and *Nothing Was Delivered* would bookend the final album.

During the days in Nashville, The Byrds became the first rock band to perform in the famous Ryman Auditorium on the legendary Grand Ole Opry radio show. Here they

found the atmosphere hostile. McGuinn has said: “We were interlopers and they were leery of us (...) they didn’t know what we were about. They didn’t know if we were sincere or making fun of their music. They knew we were hippies, and there was a good deal of polarity” (Meyer, 2009, p. 231). Hillman, who was thrilled to be playing a show he had grown up worshipping, felt the resentment: “there is a sort of Nashville establishment who are very critical of infiltrators coming along to nibble at their end of the music business, and they were staunch in the opposition to us” (Rogan, 2014, p. 431). In an obvious attempt to conform, McGuinn, Hillman and Parsons said a symbolic goodbye to their psychedelic past by cutting their hair and dressing more traditionally (i.e. conservatively). These efforts to fit in with the conservative Nashville values can be viewed as a clear move towards the pastoral. According to McGuinn, The Byrds got into “the whole country thing: playing poker every day, drinking whiskey, wearing cowboy hats and boots” (Meyer, 2009, p. 223). An image of such rural simplicity (appearing like shepherds trying to herd the music crowd in a big city like Nashville), along with the solidarity with the country music scene, serves as a message that The Byrds were ‘getting back to business’. The contrast to the flamboyant hippie fashion and the self-absorption of the psychedelic LA crowd was enormous. Such moves signal an implicit realism; an urge to create something real and pure (Alpers, 1982, p. 460). The Byrds made a conscious move away from the rock music mainstream, which was still based on hippie values. McGuinn considered country music to be a healthy reaction against the string of psychedelic bands that had burst forth, especially after the Monterey festival. “The Byrds had pioneered jazz rock, raga rock and the birth of psychedelia, so it would be fitting that they should be the first to react to the overkill” (Rogan, 2014, p. 447).

Return

Sweetheart of the Rodeo consists of eleven songs, all arranged and played in a mostly traditional fashion. This means that in the context of the times, every track might be said to contain a strong pastoral element. I will go through the best examples of this on the LP. One song in particular stands out. *Hickory Wind*, written by Parsons and his old band colleague Bob Buchanan, is the focal point of *Sweetheart of the Rodeo*. The song is masterfully putting the complex into the simple. The city and the country are contrasted in favour of rurality, and mature reflections on life are concealed behind romantic images of the wind, the trees and childhood memories. Parsons sings with honesty:

*In South Carolina there are many tall pines
I remember the oak tree that we use to climb
But now that I'm lonesome I always pretend
That I'm getting the feel of Hickory Wind*

Leo Marx has written that pastoralism appears in the US with a special intensity, and *Hickory Wind* is a clear example of this. Songwriters like Ray Davies might have been “yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence closer to nature” (Marx, 1972, p. 6), but his (and The Rolling Stones’) pastoral work is still affected by the English use of humour and artifice behind serious subject matter. As Joe Boyd have pointed out, compared to the more serious Americans, the British put on more of a show (Boyd, 2017). *Hickory Wind* is serious, simple and sincere, inspired by Parsons’ own life story; his upbringing in an affluent, but also tragic family, his personal drive and quest for musical stardom and fame which has driven him away from his roots.

The alluring hickory wind serves as a powerful image for Parsons' bittersweet nostalgia, as he imagines an Edenic childhood of simple pleasures like climbing an oak tree (...) he reflects on the pursuit of fame, the curse of wealth without spiritual satisfaction, and the perils of city life.

(Rogan, 2014, p. 476)

Chris Hillman acknowledges the song’s literary qualities: “If Gram had never written another song, "Hickory Wind" would have put him on the map. The song says it all - it's very descriptive, with vivid imagery. It's actually quite literary, but Gram, as we know, was a very bright kid. kid” (Rogan, 2014, p. 477). *Hickory Wind* actually points back to a long pastoral literary tradition, just like The Kinks’ *Village Green*, with the image of the oak tree, as in Blake’s *The Ecchoing Green*. Pastoral often involves a regret over the loss of an idyllic condition and while this nostalgic tendency can lend itself to sentimentality and a false idealization of life in nature, the best pastoral writing (such as *Hickory Wind*) acknowledges social complexities and conflicts inherent in the individual’s striving for a meaningful life (Barillas, 2006, p. 12). These internal conflicts are shown in Parsons’ use of another traditional pastoral motif; the unsophisticated country boy who realizes that the big city has corrupted him irredeemably. As well as

sharing similarities with the biblical story of the prodigal son, this motif is also seen in William Wordsworth's *Michael*, where the son, Luke, began:

*To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas*

Even Parsons, who has not been involved in show business for very long, sees through its false promises and superficiality. He had “started out younger at most everything” but now ponders whether “all the riches and pleasures” are really worth it:

*It's a hard way to find out that trouble is real
In a far away city with a far away feel*

It is easy to imagine the parentless Parsons looking back to a time when things were simpler and more innocent, before the corruption of fame and stardom, but in reality, he is yearning for a place that most likely never existed. He is also aware of this. Proof that his pastoral paradise lives only in his imagination lies in the lyrics. When he is lonesome, he always *pretends* that he is getting the feel of the hickory wind. Parsons knows, like Ray Davies, that his nostalgia is delusion, but using the pastoral construct he is able, with sincerity, to call out for simpler times where real values matter.

At first glance, nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time – the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. In a broader sense, nostalgia is rebellion against the modern idea of time, the time of history and progress. The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology.

(Boym, 2001, p. xv)

The other song on the record written by Parsons is *One Hundred Years from Now*, the album's clearest combination of country and ordinary rock, featuring typical Byrds

harmonies. The lyrics are, like *Hickory Wind*, surprisingly mature; a speculation on human vanities. The rich, somewhat spoilt Parsons is perhaps considering the state of the Western world at the time: “Nobody knows what kind of trouble we’re in, nobody seems to think it all might happen again”. Parsons’ other main contributions to the album are the straight country songs *You’re Still on My Mind* and *Life in Prison*, where he sings in his typical Southern drawl. His sincere vocal makes these songs appear genuine.

Rogan speculates whether *Blue Canadian Rockies* was included on the album as a response to *Hickory Wind*. “Both songs are imbued with a strong sense of place and a panoramic landscape in which strong visual details dominate” (Rogan, 2014, p. 478). The pastoral connection is again clear; both these songs use motifs based on natural idyllic settings. Parsons focuses on the pine trees and oak of South Carolina in *Hickory Wind*, whereas *Blue Canadian Rockies* (sung by Hillman) describes blooming flowers in rural Alberta: “In the blue Canadian Rockies spring is silent through the trees, and the golden poppies are blooming ‘round the banks of Lake Louise”. A secondary scene of this song combines the memory of an idyllic setting with the longing for a far-away love; “the girl I left behind” who is compared to the beauty of the mountains.

The Byrds start their country record with a Bob Dylan song, *You Ain’t Going Nowhere*, just as they had done on their debut album (*Mr Tambourine Man*). Thus, they maintain a link to their own heritage. They also end the LP with a Dylan composition, *Nothing Was Delivered*. By picking these songs, they not only connect with their own roots, but they establish a link to Dylan’s new, pastoral music, created in the basement in Woodstock. “It was interesting to hear him simultaneously going in the same musical direction we were” McGuinn has said of Dylan’s influence on the album (Rogan, 2014, pp. 426-427). Both *You Ain’t Going Nowhere* and *Nothing Was Delivered* are arranged almost as simple as the songs on Dylan’s *John Wesley Harding*, with drums, bass and acoustic guitar in addition to the essential cowboy instrument, the pedal steel guitar. On *Nothing Was Delivered*, the arrangement leans towards ordinary rock.

On both these songs, Dylan’s lyrics are absurd and humorous, as was the case with many of the songs from the basement. Sid Griffin argues that they “fail any linear sense test” but “if they are still absurd, they sound wonderful” (Griffin, 2007, p. 203). We can however, get some sense of pastoral values shining through in the combination of music and words. The phrase “strap yourself to the tree with roots” may point forward to the rest of the album. Clinton Heylin argues that this line could have come straight

from the Book of Proverbs (Heylin, 2009, p. 346), and with the biblical factor intact it connects with the rest of Dylan's material of the time (and thus with The Band's *Music From Big Pink*, featuring three Dylan originals from the same period). On *Nothing Was Delivered*, Sid Griffin notes that the chorus "Nothing is better, nothing is best, take care of yourself and get plenty of rest" may well be the ultimate rural American advice to a neighbour (Griffin, 2007, p. 213). Heylin again points to the biblical influences when arguing that it is "a proverb disguised as a chorus" (Heylin, 2009, p. 355). Meyer argues that the closing chorus finishes the album on an unsettling, contradictory note. "Take care of yourself and get plenty of rest" could be a parody of the typical conservative, we-love-you-God-bless-finish to every country concert (Meyer, 2009, p. 226). To put some confusion into this argument, McGuinn, with a twist worthy of Dylan, changes the lyrics of the chorus from "take care of yourself" to "take care of your health". Greil Marcus has an interesting interpretation of some basement songs, among them *You Ain't Going Nowhere*, which emphasizes the biblical feeling of doom and forthcoming apocalypse some people felt during these turbulent times.

In pieces, this uncertain feeling (...) is present throughout the music:
the sense that the past is rushing forward, about to sweep all the conceits
of the present away for good, to take away its knowledge, deprive its deeds
of value, as if the past hold chits on the present and is ready to call them in.

(Marcus, 1997, pp. 83-84)

After the surrealism of Dylan's casual lyrics, we are sent back in time, straight into evangelical America, with the bluegrass hymn *I Am a Pilgrim*, anchored to its roots by the distinct fiddle sound. The Byrds again connect with their origins. Chris Hillman used to play this number in his bluegrass days, and he sings it with authenticity. The traditional Christian lyrics of the song serve as a warning to the counterculture (including The Byrds themselves). We may look at the group as "Pilgrims and strangers travelling through the wearsome land" in order to reach a common goal defined as "that yonder city". The fact that the Byrds have an important message to convey is also underlined by the fact that Hillman (who in later years has become a devout Christian) subtly updates the archaic diction of some of the original lyrics to the benefit of younger listeners. The biblical power of "If I could touch but the hem of his garment" is replaced

with the modern translation “If I could *just* touch ...”, a typical example of the folk process in motion (Rogan, 2014, p. 473).

The religious dimension is continued on *The Christian Life*, a song by The Louvin Brothers which, according to Meyer, gave Gram Parsons an excuse to express “his dark humour and willingness to mess with people’s heads” (Meyer, 2009, p. 257). Parsons was not raised in a traditionally Christian household, but coming from the Deep South, he was often exposed to and had a deep fascination for non-secular music. McGuinn would later replace Parsons’ vocal on this song with his own, and he is trying to closely imitate Parsons’ southern accent. The result sounds tongue-in-cheek and the authentic message of *I Am a Pilgrim* is contrasted by the apparent irony of this track. It is hard to believe these countercultural icons celebrating the virtues of Christianity. They also play with the same kind of ambiguity in *You Don’t Miss Your Water*, originally a soul number made famous by Otis Redding, which is performed almost as a religious ballad.

On Woody Guthrie’s *Pretty Boy Floyd*, a modern folk song about a Robin Hood-character – a bank robber, convict and alleged killer - from the Depression era, McGuinn returns to his folk days and obviously relishes his role as storyteller. He shows, like Dylan had done in his early career, a deep understanding of the genre and the folk tradition, a “part-fictional panorama” populated by “idealized constructs” where the truth is “ultimately irrelevant” (Rogan, 2014, p. 476). The arrangement with fiddle, banjo, mandolin and stand-up bass could not be further away from Byrds classics such as *Mr Tambourine Man* or *Eight Miles High*.

Sweetheart of the Rodeo was released at the end of August 1968, and The Byrds had in about six months completed their transformation from urban hipsters into hillbillies singing old-fashioned Appalachian mountain songs. The band had a hard time winning over their fans, though. The album appeared extremely conservative and was the poorest selling Byrds album to date. In 1968, country typified all that was wrong with society and much of the band’s following were taken aback. McGuinn explains:

Our fans were heartbroken that we’d sold out to the enemy because country music was the enemy. Politically, country music represented the right-wing - redneck people who liked guns. The country people didn’t like the hippies and vice-versa. We sort of fell through the cracks.

(Hughes & Williamson, 2003, pp. 83-84)

The album's main instigator had already left The Byrds by the time the album was released. Gram Parsons met The Rolling Stones while on tour in Britain, and showed more interest in hanging out with Keith Richards than anything else. Controversy concerning Parsons' involvement followed after recording had finished. Because of a contractual dispute with his former record label, many of Parsons' vocals had to be removed, and only *You're Still On My Mind*, *Hickory Wind* and *Life in Prison* features his lead vocals on the final album. Parsons claimed that McGuinn used the contractual dispute as an excuse to get more of his vocals on the album, thus maintaining control of The Byrds. Producer Gary Usher has stated that it was a conscious choice that eventually resulted in a more appropriate and democratic album: "McGuinn was a little bit edgy that Parsons was getting a little bit too much out of this whole thing (...) He didn't want the album to turn into a Gram Parsons album" (Rogan, 2014, p. 449). Rogan argues that this was sound reasoning from Usher, but "regrettable, inasmuch as the original performances from Parsons were generally superior to McGuinn's studied imitations" (Rogan, 2014, p. 449). While McGuinn clearly rates Parsons' vocals and overall contribution to the album, he has bittersweet memories of the short time the southerner spent with The Byrds:

I liked him a lot, until the point where he wanted to fire me and get a steel guitar player for The Byrds (...) That wasn't exactly my idea of what I wanted to do. But then we went to Europe and he started hanging out with Keith Richards and he left The Byrds, and that was the end of that. We would've left his vocals on *Sweetheart*, in fact, but he had another record deal so we had to take them off (...) They're much better than my replacement vocals, because I think that Gram was the guy to sing those songs. He sounded more authentic.

(Slate, 2016)

Hughes and Williamson says that "*Sweetheart of the Rodeo* signalled the end of psychedelia and the start of the American journey down home", in the manner of The Band's *Music From Big Pink*, released earlier in the summer. Meyer argues that the album changed perceptions of what country music could be, of how the walls between American musical forms could be torn down, and of the likely future of rock now that psychedelia had run its course (Meyer, 2009, p. 255). Rogan says that *Sweetheart of the*

Rodeo provided a sense of place and a love of tradition in a time of shifting moral values and self-questioning. He puts the album firmly in a historical context by noting that it "stood alone as a work almost completely divorced from the prevailing rock culture. Its themes, mood and instrumentation looked back to another era at a time when the rest of America was still recovering from the recent assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy" (Rogan, 2014, pp. 480-481).

BEGGARS BANQUET by THE ROLLING STONES

Recorded between March and July 1968. Released December 6, 1968.

By early 1968, The Rolling Stones were at a low ebb. Their latest album, *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, released at the end of 1967, had been met with harsh critical reactions. "Satanic Majesties is a bad idea gone wrong. The idea of making a truly druggy answer to the cherubic joyousness of the Beatles' Sgt Pepper was silly enough. Doing so by fuzzing up some pretty good songs with tape loops and early synthesizer experiments is thoroughly unforgivable", The Rolling Stone Record guide wrote (Wyman, 2002, p. 297). Philip Norman calls it the group's artistic nadir (Norman, 2001, p. 287), and the album even drew mixed emotions from the group members themselves. Keith Richards has called the album "a load of crap" (Bockris, 2006, p. 113), while drummer Charlie Watts is a bit more tactful: "I don't think the songs are as good as a lot of music we did before or after, not by a long way, but that happens. It wasn't one of our great records, although it was a very interesting time" (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 108). Mick Jagger has this view on where the blame lies: "I think we were just taking too much acid. We were just getting carried away, just thinking anything you did was fun and everyone should listen to it" (Wenner, 1995). *Satanic Majesties* had been an attempt at making a record in the style of *Sgt Pepper* and The Stones had even created a colourful sleeve which seemed to copy The Beatles. According to Richards, the group's mentality was "let's get even more ridiculous" (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 108). The result was that The Rolling Stones ended up showing that they were not a very good psychedelic group. Bass player Bill Wyman has said: "It was a sign of the times, a sign that times were anything but good for us (...) We knew in our hearts that we had failed to deliver and we would need to do a lot better next time" (Wyman, 2002, p. 299).

Retreat

1967 had been filled with problems for The Rolling Stones, and they were shaken by what had befallen them. They lost their manager, and Jagger, Richards and Brian Jones, the group's most prominent members, had drug charges hanging over them for most of the year. Even though none of the three were imprisoned, this impaired the band significantly. The Stones had always been the bad boys of rock 'n' roll, bringing about riots wherever they went and causing scandals with what Ian MacDonald describes as "a

seditionary glamour based on lip-curling surliness and brashchutzpah” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 52). Sociomusicologist Simon Frith argues that The Stones’ problem was that their reckless living had exhausted their resources. “They needed to go home again and going home, in this context, meant a grappling with a notion of collectivity” (Frith, in Marcus 2007, p. 34). The Stones were searching for a route back to relevance, and as a consequence made maybe their most important career move ever. They went back to their musical roots, even further back than the rhythm & blues which had originally inspired them. Professor of music Rob Bowman describes The Stones’ new approach like this:

When the group headed back to the studio in early 1968 they had in Jimmy Miller a new producer in tow and a batch of songs that signalled a return to roots American music. This time, though, the roots weren’t the post-war blues of Chicago and Chuck Berry rock’n’roll. They were pre-war blues, classic country and, to a lesser extent, gospel.

(Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 102)

Although the album would be delayed and eventually released in December, all the material for *Beggars Banquet* was recorded early in the spring and early summer. It was thus created amid some of the most stirring events of 1968, and songwriters Jagger and Richards were in a prime position to employ their observational qualities from their place at the top of the pop hierarchy in Britain. Richards has said: “without a doubt it was a strange generation. The weird thing is that I grew up with it, but suddenly I’m an observer instead of a participant” (Richards, 2010, p. 251). The Stones would, from 1968 on, adopt the image of world-weary superstars who had seen and experienced it all. Attached to this new image was, astonishingly, a warning to the young people who had until then applauded their every move. *Beggars Banquet* would feature lyrics that expressed both amazement and dismay at current events. In this sense they were toying with the playfulness and artifice present in the British creative scene, as opposed to more serious American artists (as pointed out by Joe Boyd). They were also taking their place in an old English pastoral tradition: “There is a sense in which the English pastoral has always been able to make criticisms of the establishment, whilst at the same time warning against a radical disturbance of the social order” (Gifford, 1999, p. 52).

Musically, The Stones' new style would be based on traditional forms, and the main contemporary inspirations for their new sound would, significantly, be the *Basement Tapes* and *Music From Big Pink*. John Harris claims that Mick Jagger and his girlfriend Marianne Faithfull brought copies of the *Basement Tapes* on holiday in late 1967 (Harris, 2003, p. 94). The original cover of *Beggars Banquet* would also feature the acknowledgement "Music From Big Brown" as a backhanded nod to The Band. If *Music From Big Pink* was the world's first pastoral rock album, *Beggars Banquet* is its aggressive companion. It is a "back-to-the-roots exercise" stripped off any psychedelic sounds or shades of Eastern philosophies (Harris, 2003, p. 94). Rough around the edges, but mainly founded on acoustic guitars, it has been called "sepia-toned, down-home, pickin'n'grinnin'" (Waller 2003, p. 49).

The point has rarely been made, but it is not hard to draw lines between Dylan and The Band circa '67 and the Stones a year later: *Dear Doctor* shares its air of burlesque ribaldry with the likes of *Odds and Ends* and *Please Mrs Henry*; *Jigsaw Puzzle* sounds of a piece with the doomy magic oozed by *This Wheel's On Fire*; *Salt Of The Earth*, in terms of its back-to-the-land pastoralism, is archetypal post-*Basement Tapes* stuff.

(Harris, 2003, p. 94)

The first sign that The Rolling Stones had entered a new phase was the single *Jumpin' Jack Flash*, released in May 1968. Although not part of *Beggars Banquet*, the song was recorded during the same sessions, and the style of the track is similar to the final album sound. (In those days it was common for British artists to release singles that were not part of the accompanying album. The US had a different policy). A simple, riff-based rocker, *Jumpin' Jack Flash* showed a return to basics and became a big hit, re-establishing The Stones as a relevant band in the chaotic new world. "If Jagger and Richards ever received divine guidance, it was here in their abandonment of woolly psychedelics to return to unashamed, two-fisted rock", Norman writes (2001, p. 296). The band members themselves have admitted to a need for an escape and retreat at this point. Mick Jagger has said that *Jumpin' Jack Flash* arose "out of all the acid of Satanic Majesties. It's about having a hard time and getting out. Just a metaphor for getting out of all the acid things" (Wenner, 1995), while Keith Richards has this version: "I was

fucking pissed with being busted. So it was, 'Right we'll go and strip this thing down'. There's a lot of anger in the music from that period" (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 109). Richards, who in later years has proved to be one of the most reliable living sources on the period, elaborates on his view:

There is a change between the material on *Satanic Majesties* and *Beggars Banquet*. I'd grown sick to death of the whole Maharishi guru shit and the beads and bells. Who knows where these things come from, but I guess it was a reaction to what we'd done in our time off and also that severe dose of reality.

(Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 109)

There is an intellectual duality at play in much of the best work of The Rolling Stones. The group was (in)famous in the mainstream for the explicit and vulgar lyrics in some of their biggest hits (e.g. *I Can't Get No) Satisfaction*). But hidden between simplistic choruses, there had often been sophisticated lyrical ideas spread throughout their earlier records. Mick Jagger could comment sarcastically and acerbically on the decadence of the sixties, but his vocal was frequently buried low in the mix behind loud guitars, bass and drums (e.g. *19th Nervous Breakdown* and *Paint It, Black*). The Stones' ambivalence is never more obvious than on *Beggars Banquet*. Reality had made them grow up, and never before had they had so strong an urge to comment on what was happening and to make a moral stand. Frith claims that the Stones, despite all their external hardness and debauchery really are "intellectuals feigning simplicity" (Frith, in Marcus, 2007, p. 31). Barry J. Faulk says that "the Stones' audience, especially their British audience, overlooked the band's intellectualism, and their consistently maintained art pose" (Faulk, 2010, p. 82).

Following this line of argument, one might say that the Stones, dressing their lyrics in a stripped-down musical soundscape, were cleverly employing Empson's definition of pastoral as "the process of putting the complex into the simple" (Empson, 1968, p. 22). I will also argue that the group is using "the essential trick of the old pastoral", described by Empson as making simple people express strong feelings in learned and fashionable language, felt to imply a beautiful relation between rich and poor. "From seeing the two sorts of people combined like this you thought better of both; the best parts of both were used" (Empson, 1968, pp. 11-12). The Stones are

playing with this trick in the title of the album and the large photo inside the gatefold sleeve. The group is conducting a banquet for the “beggars”; the poor people, supposedly expressing sympathy with common people. In the photo we see Jagger, Richards, Jones, Wyman and Watts as tramps having broken into the noble people’s banquet inside an old castle or mansion, feasting on the riches left behind. We can only speculate as to what has happened with the original guests. The image seems lifted from *Robin Hood* (or *Pretty Boy Floyd* as performed by The Byrds around the same time). In such idealized constructs, the truth is “ultimately irrelevant” (Rogan, 2014, p. 476). The Stones appear as either the moral heroes of the day or as decadent villains, depending on whose side you stand. The pastoral trick is further emphasized as the listener will hear that the simple people creating this down-to-earth music are communicating strong feelings and complex (and often, surprisingly enough, mature) thoughts on what is happening in the world. Even though Keith Richards has called Jagger’s lyrics “working-class” (Murray, 2004, p. 88), it can be no doubt that the group utilizes a put-on appearance of low social status and simplicity to convey their sympathy with ordinary people. They might also be looking for sympathy for themselves after their recent rough period.

Return

Not all the songs on *Beggars Banquet* fall naturally within a pastoral construct. Some of them are plain rock songs in the Rolling Stones tradition; dealing with fame, pop culture and events in the group members’ (especially Jagger’s) lives. Here, I will discuss the songs most supportive of my argument.

The album opens with one of The Stones’ most famous songs; a track with an ambiguous and potentially unsettling message. *Sympathy for the Devil*, with the original title “The Devil Is My Name” has a samba rhythm and a quasi-occult ‘woo-woo’ choir. It has been described as “a soundtrack from a coven of sarcastic witches” (Norman, 2001, p. 314). Jagger offers this explanation on the song’s lasting power:

It has a very hypnotic groove, a samba, which has a tremendous hypnotic power, rather like good dance music. It doesn't speed up or slow down. It keeps this constant groove. Plus, the actual samba rhythm is a great one to sing on, but it's also got some other suggestions in it, an undercurrent of being primitive – because it is a primitive African, South American, Afro-whatever-

you-call-that rhythm. So to white people, it has a very sinister thing about it.

(Wenner, 1995)

The sinisterness to which Jagger refers is also due to another of the song's inspirations. According to Philip Norman, Marianne Faithfull had given Jagger a copy of Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*, in which Satan pays a visit to Moscow in the 1930s to survey the effects of the Revolution (Norman, 2001, p. 313). Jagger has claimed that the song's main idea came from French writers, possibly Baudelaire (Wenner, 1995). The flamboyant vocalist enthusiastically takes the role of 'Lucifer', outlining some of the Devil's work throughout history. "I was 'round when Jesus Christ had his moment of doubt and pain, made damn sure that Pilate washed his hands and sealed his fate", he sings. The final result comes out as a warning and a commentary to the troubled times of 1968. The track was recorded over several days in early June, and dramatic events led to creative decisions being made impromptu. "We were cutting 'Sympathy For The Devil' the night before Robert Kennedy was shot (5 June) and we had to change some of the lyrics because of it", producer Jimmy Miller said (Wyman, 2002, p. 314). The line "I shouted out 'Who killed Kennedy'" was thus changed to "I shouted out 'Who killed the Kennedys?'" Although the song is, in Jagger's words, primitive and pre-modern in its rhythm, *Sympathy for the Devil* is perhaps the album's most urban song, conceived and inspired by recent (urban) events, and one of the few songs on the LP which features an electric guitar solo. In this way, the primitiveness of the rhythm along with the quite sophisticated lyric is an example of the 'essential trick of the old pastoral', combining the best parts of the primitive and the modern; the simple and the complex.

After *Sympathy for the Devil*, there is another combination of the primitive and modern in the acoustic blues ballad *No Expectations*. To describe a dwindling love affair, Jagger uses images that would have been appropriate in old country blues from the Mississippi delta. "Station" and "train" are well-known motifs from blues and gospel music (e.g. the train to glory), as well as the seemingly biblical contrasting images of "once I was a rich man, now I am so poor" (these are motifs which are returned to later on the record, in *Prodigal Son*). The lack of drums, the slow tempo and slide guitar adds a taste of pastoral peace throughout. In the last verse, "station" and "train" are substituted with "airport" and "plane", and we are back in the present day.

The rootsy feel continues with the light-hearted *Dear Doctor*. Although they had always been inspired by country music, The Rolling Stones had never released any straight country songs before. “We used to play country songs, but we’d never record them – or we recorded them but never released them”, Jagger says (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 112). Richards writes: “There was a lot of country and blues on *Beggars Banquet* (...) I don’t know what it was in this period that worked so well. Maybe timing. We had barely explored the stuff where we’d come from or that had turned us on” (Richards, 2010, p. 238). A big influence regarding country music was Gram Parsons. He came to London with The Byrds in the summer of 1968, and The Stones – especially Richards – took an immediate liking to the young singer, who subsequently quit The Byrds to stay with Richards at his house. There they delved into the rural music of the Deep South. “He taught me the mechanics of country music”, Richards has said (Bockris, 2006, p. 120). The other country number on the album is the innocent love song *Factory Girl*. Musically similar to *Pretty Boy Floyd* as recorded by The Byrds, Richards argues that it resembles an Irish jig like *Molly Malone*; “one of those ancient Celtic things that emerge from time to time, or an Appalachian song” (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 113). Jagger explains that these songs are a way of approaching the genre, adhering to the playful English tongue-in-cheek tradition: “The country songs (...) on *Beggars Banquet* were really pastiche. There’s a sense of humour in country music anyway, a way of looking at life in a humorous kind of way” (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 113).

The album’s only cover song is *Prodigal Son*, an old country blues written by Robert Wilkins. It is the clearest example on the LP of the Stones paying homage to musical sources. “There was a kind of country and blues roots feel to tracks like ‘Prodigal Son’. You just let certain parts of you out when you wanted to”, Jagger has said (Loewenstein & Dodd, 2004, p. 112). The song tells the story from the Bible of the prodigal son who leaves home to enjoy the world, then spends all his money and later returns home, starving and repentant. Frith writes that “The Stones, of course, identify easily and naturally with the prodigal” (Frith, in Marcus, 2007, p. 33). Placing the song in a literary pastoral tradition, it shares many similarities (just like The Byrds’ *Hickory Wind* and The Kinks’ *Village Green*) with Wordsworth’s *Michael* and its motif of a simple country boy who becomes lead astray by urban vice. The old shepherd Michael loses half his land because of financial misfortune, and when he sends his only son, Luke, into the world to earn money in order to regain the land, the son becomes corrupted in the city

and Michael loses both his son and his land forever. *Prodigal Son* could also be the story of the Stones themselves, who have been out in the big, wide world, but are now longing for a peaceful home where there is less excitement but more stability. Frith argues that 1968 was a good year to consider the story of the prodigal son, as it was a “very moral year” where counter-culture and counter-politics came together with an intensity of self-righteousness that even The Rolling Stones had to respect.

With *Street Fighting Man*, released as a single in America in late August, the group addressed the political turmoil of the times and showed that they were not afraid of taking a stand. The song is the cornerstone of *Beggars Banquet*, and is - along with The Beatles' *Revolution*, also released in late August - the track from 1968 that most explicitly deals with current events. The reactions from the US came immediately, as the single was timed to coincide with the upcoming Democratic National Convention.

Street Fighting Man had (...) been launched on an American summer already rent by assassination and race riots – only days, indeed, after Mayor Daley's Chicago police had systematically beaten up innocent delegates at the Democratic Party Convention. Street Fighting Man was denounced as plain incitement to further violence and banned by every radio station in the area, together with dozens more across the country.

(Norman, 2001, p. 315)

Keith Richards has said that you wouldn't have had *Street Fighting Man* without the Vietnam War (Richards, 2010, p. 250), but the song's subject matter was the big student demonstrations in Paris, as viewed from the group's position in London. “Yeah, it was a direct inspiration, because by contrast, London was very quiet”, Jagger has said (Wenner, 1995). Although he had been present at the big Vietnam War demonstration in London in March, the songwriter did not side with the revolutionaries. While John Lennon of The Beatles had pondered for months before he had decided on “you can count me OUT” in *Revolution*, Jagger “curdled into even colder feet than Lennon's” (Norman, 2001, p. 312) and ended up singing “but what can a poor boy do, 'cept to sing in a rock 'n' roll band”. *Street Fighting Man* is, as well as being “an ironic commentary on the Stones' own position in 1968” (Frith, in Marcus 2007, p. 34) also a description of the group's detachment and, to a certain degree, their escape from reality. Doggett (2007, p.

170) describes the title as a “masterful stroke of media manipulation, which effectively masked the message of the song”. Frith argues that the ‘military’ beat of the *Street Fighting Man* reverses the point of the lyrics:

The argument is not that rock is a source of revolutionary energy and solidarity (...) but that revolution in its 1968 youth expression had no more solid basis than the community of rock and roll consumers. Politics, the Stones concluded, is just a matter of style. If marching in the streets was collective behavior, it was still no more meaningful than any other form of rock and roll behavior.

(Frith, in Marcus, 2007, p. 35)

In an interview at the time, Jagger was asked about the song: “They told me that ‘Street Fighting Man’ was subversive. ‘Course it’s subversive,’ we said. It’s stupid to think that you can start a revolution with a record. I wish you could!” (Altham, 1968). The attitude signalled by both Jagger and Lennon disappointed and shocked many on the political left, and was viewed as passive, conservative - even reactionary. In actual fact (even though Lennon would later become involved in almost every existing subversive movement in America), these cultural icons showed themselves (as Bob Dylan had done earlier) to be of a much more traditionalist nature than people had ever realized. After a few frantic years in the ‘eye of the hurricane’ as the most popular front men in popular music, they had grown up and were longing for peace and stability.

Musically, *Street Fighting Man* is as urban as its lyrics suggest. It is definitely not pointing towards any peaceful pastoral idyll. But while it sounds electric, it is based totally on acoustic instrumentation. Mick Jagger wrote most of the lyrics, but Keith Richards was the architect behind the Stones’ new sound. He had recently discovered a way to record acoustic guitars on simple cassette players and describes the process:

With “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” and “Street Fighting Man” I’d discovered a new sound I could get out of an acoustic guitar. That grinding, dirty sound came out of these crummy little motels where the only thing you had to record with was this new invention called the cassette recorder (...) Playing an acoustic, you’d overload the Philips cassette player to the point of distortion

so that when it played back it was effectively an electric guitar. You were using the cassette player as a pickup and an amplifier at the same time.

(Richards, 2010, p. 239)

In the studio, Richards plugged the cassette into an extension speaker and put a microphone in front of it. The Stones put that on tape, and they suddenly had the basic track of a new song. “There are no electric instruments on “Street Fighting Man” at all, apart from the bass, which I overdubbed later. All acoustic guitars. “Jumpin’ Jack Flash” the same. I wish I could still do that, but they don’t build machines like that anymore” (Richards, 2010, p. 239). Another important factor contributing to the Stones’ new sound was the fact that the drug cases of 1967 had made it impossible for the band to tour. As a consequence, they got more time off, after many years trapped in a frenetic schedule of recording and touring. Keith Richards finally had the time to sit down and *listen* to his big record collection, in the process rediscovering a lot of blues from the twenties and thirties. The last component important in shaping Richards’ style during the late sixties was his discovery of so-called ‘open tuning’ on his guitar, based on ancient banjo tunings – a sound straight out of rural, old-time America. Although not used extensively in Stones’ work before 1969, it was employed with great effect on *Jumpin’ Jack Flash*. Most importantly it invigorated Richards and helped him focus and drive the band along.

Of the other songs on the album, *Parachute Woman* is straight Muddy Waters-inspired blues and *Stray Cat Blues* a heavy rock track about a fifteen year-old groupie. *Jig-Saw Puzzle*, with surreal and Dylan-influenced lyrics written by Jagger in prison the previous summer, is a comment on recent events in society, but mainly on the Stones themselves. There is “a regiment of soldiers standing looking on” and “the queen (...) bravely shouting, ‘what the hell is going on?’”. Jagger tells us a revealing story about a singer who is “angry”, a bass player who is “nervous”, a drummer who is “shattered” and guitar players who are “damaged”. He states that these musicians have been “outcasts all their lives”. The clear impression is that recent events both inside and outside the group have left The Rolling Stones tired, and they are now pleading for rest.

This wish comes to the surface in the closing track, *Salt of the Earth*, which is a gospel-like anthem for “the hard-working people”. This is the song that makes the album come full circle and that most clearly complements its title and the photo inside the

sleeve. At the end of the road, we are left with an idea of community and shared working-class values; a return to a more innocent, unspoiled world where solidarity reigns. *Salt of the Earth* is, as mentioned earlier, an example of 'back-to-the-land pastoralism', and also the track on the album which uses "the essential trick of the old pastoral" to full effect. The rich and famous rock stars imply a beautiful relation between the rich and the poor through the lyrics, here represented by the common man in the street. They criticize the political leaders when singing "let's think of the wavering millions who need leaders but get gamblers instead", and in good, pastoral tradition celebrate the people who "burn the fires and who still till the earth". Simon Frith (who praises the album as a whole, and would pick it as his 'desert island' record) is critical of *Salt of the Earth*. He argues that it comes straight from the pub, with hollowness and irony seeping through. "This emotion is false, these are the emptily patronizing phrases the ruling class has mouthed through the ages", he writes. In Frith's view, the Stones are "petit bourgeois jesters" who are prone to incite revolt and chaos, but all the time retaining "a touchy egotism" and in the end avoiding taking a stand, just as in *Street Fighting Man*. Jagger and Richards do not want to march in the streets or toast with the "common foot soldiers" they apparently honour in *Salt of the Earth*. As a consequence of their lifestyle in the sixties, the band wanted and needed a temporary pastoral retreat, but not if this retreat also means doing the 'dirty work'. Frith argues that The Stones eventually will return to the childishness, sexism and surly individualism which makes the relentless life of the road inevitable (Frith, in Marcus, 2007, p. 37).

Songs such as *Sympathy for the Devil* and *Street Fighting Man* are comments on a world in turmoil and reminders that there might be values worth holding on to while many people wanted to tear down the barricades that older generations had built. This is a view that shows The Rolling Stones as radically different from the image they had wanted to convey up until 1968 - that of social outlaws with nothing but contempt towards mainstream society (Fischer, 2006, p. 327). There exist, however, differing views on what these songs really mean, on their quality and their impact. Jagger and Richards' original vision may have been one of getting back to their musical roots as well as issuing a caution to their fans. But with the group's scandalous career as a backdrop, did they manage to put the 'right' message across? It is definitely possible to find other interpretations of the songs. Fischer says that some of The Stones' songs from this

period are “dark rhapsodies of lost innocence, loneliness, despair, and death” and takes a negative view of what the group achieved through their ambiguous lyrics:

The Rolling Stones and other bands reflected the feelings of millions of young people who felt like tearing the whole fabric of polite, refined, or “civilized” society to shreds and replacing it with a culture of democratic primitivism.

(Fischer, 2006, pp. 327-328)

Simon Frith, who was critical of the apparent hollow pastoralism of *Salt of the Earth*, disapproves even more of *Sympathy for the Devil*: “Lyrically, the song is idle in the extreme. The images are strung together with little rhyme or reason (...) Any interesting point the song might make about popular obsessions with evil and violence is lost in the swirl of ‘ooh oohs’” (Frith, in Marcus, 2007, p. 32).

As a consequence of a dispute about the original cover picture, the release of the album was delayed by several months. In the end, *Beggars Banquet* was released in a plain, light cover with simple lettering, imitating an invitation card (and resembling The Beatles’ *White Album*, released a few weeks before). The delay meant that the album’s subject matter would not be as in sync with its times as originally planned. The record, however, was met with almost universal critical acclaim. *Beggars Banquet* is a powerful statement from a group tired of the position they had put themselves in. It also broadened The Stones’ audience. The Left seized upon it as a manifesto; hard-core blues fans who had dismissed their earlier work as derivative were won over (Bockris, 2006, p. 126). Their sharp shift in musical direction from 1967 to 1968 shows The Rolling Stones’ making a conscious move away from much of the chaos seen in society. As the downside of hippie culture became visible to the world, they retreated to the safe environment of their musical roots; blues, country and gospel, while maintaining the crucial primitive, aggressive element which has shaped all of their best work. Stephen Davis sums it up well with his claim that the album was “a sharp reflection of the convulsive psychic currents coursing through the Western world. Nothing else captured the youthful spirit of Europe in 1968 like *Beggar’s Banquet*” (Davis, 2001, p. 275).

MUSIC FROM BIG PINK by THE BAND

Recorded during the early months of 1968. Released July 1, 1968.

Before they got involved with Bob Dylan in the mid-sixties, the musicians who later became collectively known as *The Band* had enjoyed a rough career. Drummer Levon Helm, guitarist Robbie Robertson, bass player Rick Danko, pianist Richard Manuel and organ virtuoso Garth Hudson were recruited one by one to be rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins' backing band. After outgrowing Hawkins musically, the group tried their own luck without any success before being hired as Dylan's touring band in 1965. After the sessions with Dylan in the basement of "Big Pink" in Woodstock, it was time for this group of seasoned musicians to stand on their own feet. In the spirit of Dylan, The Band discarded the prevailing hippie values and musical conventions of the psychedelic era and created the first pastoral rock album. "Going against every then-prevailing trend, *Music From Big Pink* became the most influential record of its time – probably the most influential in rock history", Ian MacDonald has said (MacDonald, 2003, p. 82).

Retreat

The seeds for *Music from Big Pink* lay in the sessions with Bob Dylan that mostly took place in the big pink-coloured house rented by Manuel, Danko and Hudson during 1967. In contrast to the raucous sound the group made during the world tour the year before, they now played music which was spiritual and timeless. The as yet unnamed group accompanied Dylan on a huge number of traditional American folk songs, gospel music, country and western hits and a lot of new Dylan originals. Where the electric tours had been about alienation, the basement sessions were about community (Hoskyns, 2003, p. 139). That these informal sessions took place in the bucolic retreat of Woodstock played a part in shaping the music. Robbie Robertson has described Woodstock at the time, a few years before the infamous festival, as "a lovely, low-key little art colony (...) Once we were up there there was a real feeling of artistic freedom in the air" (Thomson, 2013, pp. 39-40). There was of course a big escapist dimension to the retreat, but chiefly on Dylan's part. He had a strong need to get away from the rat race he had been through in the past few years. The Band helped him, being closely connected to what Leo Marx calls the psychic root of all pastoralism, the "yearning for a simpler, more harmonious style of life, an existence 'closer to nature'" (Marx, 1972, p. 6).

Although unreleased at the time, bootleg recordings of the basement sessions spread throughout the pop and rock establishment, causing waves that would alter the general musical development. *The Basement Tapes* would herald an historical turning of the tide. They reflected the sentiment of a decaying urban hippie culture which was about to morph into chaos, quarrelling, abuse and violence. Joel Selvin has described how Haight-Ashbury changed from friendly and loving in 1967, to brutal and primitive as 1968 approached: “the Haight itself was growing hard. There had been a rape on the street. Speed freaks and other human flotsam and jetsam littered the sidewalks” (Selvin, 1994, p. 157). Joe Boyd points to the same development in London after the peak of the summer of 1967: “The *agape* spirit of ’67 evaporated in the heat of ugly drugs, violence, commercialism and police pressure” (Boyd, 2006, p. 6). All over the Western world, the communal spirit was waning, and the overall creativity and quality of the music went sharply downhill as more and more run-of-the-mill artists tried to capitalize on the hippie era. “We had gone too far, really, without getting anywhere”, Greil Marcus has stated (Marcus, 1997, p. 45). Dylan and The Band shut themselves off from the world during the ‘Summer of Love’, barely listening to the music of their contemporaries. The Band’s debut album was a strong reaction to the degeneration and exploitation of a once creative movement. *Music From Big Pink* was completely different from everything else. The Band did not even sound remotely like they had done backing Dylan on tour two years before. Led on by the spirit of the basement sessions, they looked back to tradition and made an album with songs about roots, family and American folklore. The group took a clear stand, promoting the positive values of the hippie culture (the communal, collective elements) while discarding what did not work in real life. Levon Helm says that The Band wanted *Music From Big Pink* to sound like nothing anyone else was doing. “The record was meant to describe our take on the crazy times we were living in”, he writes (Helm, 1993, p. 169). The drummer described their relationship with the current hit music like this: “Oh, we didn’t want to have anything to do with that psychedelic stuff. We thought it was all *bullshit*” (Harris, 2003, p. 100).

By looking at the sleeve of *Music From Big Pink* the message shines through. As cover artwork they used a simplistic painting by Dylan, and the inside cover featured a large photo of The Band standing among family members on a farm with the caption text “Next of Kin”. Helm says that this was a deliberate effort to establish The Band and its music as different from the psychedelic culture of the time. “This was more rebellion

against the so-called revolution, when it became fashionable to hate your families and repudiate their values. Hell, we loved our families!" (Helm, 1993, p. 173). Instead of the vague hippie concept of love for "one another", The Band's message was one of love for the community and the things close to us; friends, the family, the home, the farm and the soil from which everything grows.

These musicians did not only care for their families, they were also tight as friends. The Band had not suddenly exploded onto the scene. They had been together for many years, playing squalid nightclubs to unreceptive audiences before gaining vital professional experience as Dylan's anonymous backing band. They were living close together near Woodstock, and developed a collectiveness connected to pastoral ideals and the 'back-to-the-land'-mentality. There were groups who had already experimented with creating music in an isolated, rural atmosphere (e.g. the British group Traffic) but The Band did this with a special authenticity and fervour. They were not "weekend hippies". The rural values were part of who they were as people, not a put-on façade in order to capitalize on the latest trend. "There was a whole movement toward country values in America in those days, as young people searched for different ways of surviving during the Vietnam era. That's in there too", Helm says (Helm, 1993, p. 166).

The rural and communal philosophy is further emphasized in the monochrome photo of the group inside the gatefold sleeve. With the Catskill Mountains as backdrop, the five members are dressed as simple farmers straight out of the 19th century. "To anyone who didn't know, they could as easily have been five desperadoes on the loose during the Gold Rush" (Hoskyns, 2003, p. 167). Barney Hoskyns says that with the five men captured in a time warp like this, they embody a model of early American pioneer settlements, a kind of microcosmic community (Hoskyns, 2003, pp. 167-168). Danko, Helm, Manuel, Hudson and Robertson are posing as homesteaders, or, indeed, shepherds tilling the land. In the light of recent events in the world, they wanted to appear down-to-earth, calm and responsible. This signalled a will of 'getting back to business'. Paul Alpers argues that to the extent that "shepherds are representative of men", what the pastoral delivers at its best is ultimately an implicit realism (Alpers, 1982, p. 460). With this realism came the urge to create something 'real' and 'pure' in the midst of the artificialness of the day. Leo Marx writes this about what he calls the "sentimental kind of pastoralism" (the simplistic, escapist form):

What is attractive in pastoralism is the felicity represented by an image of a natural landscape, a terrain either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural. Movement toward such a symbolic landscape also may be understood as a movement away from an “artificial” world, a world identified with “art”.

(Marx, 1972, p. 9)

As well as going against psychedelia and hippie values, The Band’s image and music was a strong reaction to the commercialism and marketability of mainstream pop. Robbie Robertson remembers a conversation he had with manager Albert Grossman regarding the record company’s view of their music: “It looks different, sounds different, and doesn’t fit into any of their ready-made categories. They think it’s underground, which maybe it is”, Robertson said. To which Grossman responded: “A lot of really good things start in the underground” (Robertson, 2016, pp. 316-317). This was not music to be discarded and replaced with new hits after a few listens. Like the men playing it, it came from a natural place and was meant to outgrow every short-lived trend. The Band, five anonymous men with beards, strange hats and old-fashioned clothes, stood for continuity and tradition in an America in the midst of chaos and war. Perhaps most importantly in the light of the youth culture of the time, they signaled what Greil Marcus calls “a sense of place” (Marcus, 1997, p. 45). The Band *belonged* somewhere in an age where it was fashionable to discard your rulers, your country and your origins.

Return

The Band’s collectiveness is the key factor shaping their sound, heard from the first note on the album. “The two-bar introduction opens the door to an array of sounds and textures that could just as easily have come off the pages of *Alice In Wonderland* or from some pastoral, nameless, mythical, musical place in the Deep South” (Bowman, 2005, p. 31). Even though they moved out of the basement in Woodstock to record the album - to professional studios in New York and Los Angeles - *Music From Big Pink* manages to recreate the feel that The Band had developed during the basement sessions. Robertson has said that when their producer John Simon asked how they wanted their debut LP to sound, they replied, “Just like it did in the basement” (Hoskyns, 1993, p. 150). Where most groups of the time turned the volume up, saturating the sound picture, The Band used the principle of ‘less is more’. It was a communal approach with no place for

egotism. Garth Hudson explains how their sound was shaped: “In the basement, we were all close together, it was an acoustic approach, and I think when you listen to *Big Pink* you hear that. Nobody tries to jump in and take over” (Thomson, 2013, p. 40). As a consequence, there are no heavy guitars on *Music From Big Pink*, just understated lines played with great discipline by Robertson, who was “especially concerned to downplay the guitar heroics, rejecting the fuzzboxes and wah-wah gadgets that were becoming ubiquitous in rock” (Hoskyns, 2003, p. 151). The dominant instrument on the record is Hudson’s Lowrey organ, an instrument almost no other rock bands were using at the time. Another distinctive aspect of their sound is the three-part harmony singing of Manuel, Danko and Helm. John Simon says that the vocals had their parallels in a lot of old Appalachian and Delta music, jazz and gospel and reflected the musical tastes of The Band. “It sure ain’t city stuff”, he says (Thomson, 2013, p. 42). This disciplined sound was totally different from the music dominating the charts in early 1968. Not just the voices and the sound of the instruments made an impact. The tempo of the music was also used to highlight a significant shift. The Band opened the album with *Tears of Rage*, an extremely slow number. Helm describes this as “another way of rebelling against the rebellion. We were deliberately going against the grain” (Helm, 1993, p. 166).

The most obviously unusual thing about *Music From Big Pink* was its predominantly slow and measured pace, opening and closing with two very slow numbers and never accelerating much above 100bpm. In the turbulent context of the time, this weightily deliberate approach seemed astonishingly fresh and original.

(MacDonald, 2003, pp. 83-84)

Richard Manuel wrote the music to *Tears of Rage*, but the words are Dylan’s, and they are typical of his songs from this period; enigmatic and biblically inspired. Vocalist Manuel laments a world on the verge of chaos and anarchy. MacDonald argues that the words to *Tears of Rage* are a statement of kinship solidarity in rejection of the generation-gap youth politics of the time (MacDonald, 2003, p. 85). This is an obvious interpretation, connecting the song with The Band’s focus on community, family and traditions. The parents have cared for their daughter since her baptism (significantly

held on Independence Day), but like much of the young people of the sixties, she has scorned her parents and gone her own, individual way.

*We carried you in our arms
On Independence Day
And now you'd throw us all aside
And put us on our way
Oh what dear daughter 'neath the sun
Would treat a father so
To wait upon him hand and foot
And always tell him, "No?"*

Marcus emphasizes the contrast to the turbulent times in many basement songs, among them *Tears of Rage*. He writes that they are “resting in an aura of somehow having always been present, not made up one summer when the country was burning and five people in a Catskills basement were looking for good way to pass the time” (Marcus, 1997, p. 194). The message is clear: “forget the kids-are-all-right attitude; Mom and Dad are the ones who are all right, the family is all right – and so much so that no broken heart hurts more than the broken heart of a distraught parent” (Griffin, 2007, p. 209). Interestingly, Robbie Robertson downplays any heavy connotations in his recent autobiography: “In the Tin Pan Alley tradition, we were all just showing up every day at songwriting headquarters, doing our job, seeing if we could come up with anything of merit, and then going home” (Robertson, 2016, p. 279).

The lyrics on the album are obscure and hard to figure out. This was a conscious decision by the group, inspired by traditional music, “a ragged looseness in the singing, voices clashing and overlapping” (MacDonald, 2003, p. 85), and is especially the case on *To Kingdom Come*, an atypical track for The Band. It is one of the rare occasions when main songwriter Robertson took a lead vocal on record. The song is filled with biblical comments on guilt, burden and consequences. We hear of a man who (probably) is “thistled and thorned” and of “a golden calf pointing back at me”. When Robertson started to write songs in a serious manner he was inspired by Dylan, and during 1967 and 1968, when Dylan was immersed in religious imagery, this crossed over to The Band’s songs. Just like in *Tears of Rage*, a conservative father figure is teaching morals to

a character resembling the prodigal son that The Rolling Stones would sing about on *Beggars Banquet*. “Just be careful what you do, it all comes back on you” and “time will tell you well if the truth truly fell” sounds like lessons from the Old Testament that could be comments directed towards the hippie community.

Thematically, The Band’s music draws strongly on the American vernacular, not only musically, but also in lyrics often inspired by traditions or events from the history of the United States, e.g. the Civil War. For all their ‘American-ness’, a significant fact about The Band is that four of its five members were Canadians. Their frontman Ronnie Hawkins was from Arkansas, and he took his fellow southerner Helm with him to Canada. Up north there was work to be found playing clubs in southern Ontario, and Hawkins eventually recruited Robertson, Danko, Manuel and Hudson to his group, all four local Ontarians. When they started out on their own, Robertson became the lead songwriter of the group. His lyrics were often inspired by Helm’s stories from the Deep South, mingled with myths and historical facts, while also drawing on Robertson’s own Native American background. The focus on history and tradition is a well-known pastoral motif. It is perfectly normal, when times are felt to be turbulent, to long for, and romanticize, a more ordered past. Williams says that in literary pastoral, an ordered and happier past is “set against the disturbance and disorder of the present. An idealisation, based on a temporary situation and on a deep desire for stability, served to cover and to evade the actual and bitter contradictions of the time” (Williams, 1973, p. 45).

Robertson’s style of writing, with his deep ‘sense of place’, places him in a pastoral tradition. Marcus has written on Robertson’s role as an American *storyteller*: “perhaps because he comes from outside, the storyteller can see the country whole, just as those who have always lived there can see it only in pieces” (Hoskyns, 2003, p. 156). Although Robertson would use this technique more extensively on The Band’s next albums, we can see his firm grip on storytelling in a track like *The Weight*, his first major song, and the key number on *Music From Big Pink*. Each verse is almost a short story in itself, and the characters puts us right in the middle of some mythical American hinterland. This is obviously a place where ordinary rules do not apply, a place outside of normal society and all the dramatic events of the era in which it was written. At the start of their career together, Robertson had accompanied Helm on a trip to his family in Arkansas. Helm, a few years older, introduced Robertson to southern culture, music and

folklore. The young guitarist was overwhelmed, but at the same time felt perfectly at home in these exotic surroundings:

It just sounded so good, all of it. To my ears, this was poetry coming to life. The names of the towns and rivers, the names of all these characters, everything had its own rhythm down here. Images and sounds started getting stuck in my head. I was sixteen years old and very impressionable.

(Robertson, 2016, p. 20)

In *The Weight*, Robertson puts together a whole picture from the fragments and anecdotes presented to him by Helm. According to the drummer, Robertson and the rest of The Band needed the pastoral retreat of Woodstock to be able to create real songs out of their various encounters. “The characters that appear in the lyrics – Luke, Anna Lee, Crazy Chester – were all people we knew. The music was the sum of all the experiences we’d shared for the past ten years, distilled through the quieter vibe of our lives in the country” (Helm, 1993, p. 166). Musically, the song is both country and gospel-inspired. Lyrically, Robertson continues his use of biblical motives. This time, however, he mixes the religiousness with surrealism, obviously inspired by Dylan, but also by famous Spanish filmmaker Luis Buñuel: “One of the themes that really stuck with me from Buñuel’s films (...) was the impossibility of sainthood – no good deed goes unpunished” (Robertson, 2016, p. 283). Robertson takes the listener on a journey, starting in Nazareth, Pennsylvania (the home city of the guitar manufacturer Martin). The different characters he meets in this small town (along with the ones already mentioned; Miss Fanny, Carmen, the Devil, Miss Moses, the dog Jack) play different roles and feeds the contemplations on morality expressed in the song’s enigmatic chorus: “Take a load off Fanny, take a load for free, take a load off Fanny, and you put the load right on me”.

The storytelling would also appear in a song like *Caledonia Mission*. Robertson grew up in Toronto, but his mother was a Native American. In his autobiography, Robertson writes about memories from childhood, especially from his visits to the Six Nations Indian reservations, where his mother was born and raised. Native Americans have a strong connection to nature, and there is undoubtedly a deep escapist dimension to Robertson’s experiences from this side of his family. He describes his upbringing in multicultural Toronto like this: “I grew up surrounded by busy, vibrant neighborhoods

alive with immigrant sounds and smells” (Robertson, 2016, p. 28). The contrast to his Native American background could almost not be bigger, as shown in the stories his mother told him about her own grandfather: “He hunted and worked the land, and they lived by very simple means. They drank from a well, raised most of their own food, and had a strong basic connection with the earth” (Robertson, 2016, p. 26). The mystical music and sacred myths he heard on the reservation had a big impact on Robertson, and *Caledonia Mission* plays on these memories. “The watchman covers me (...) I think his magic might be real”, Rick Danko sings in the song’s chorus. “There was a Canadian town called Caledonia we would drive by on the way to Six Nations, and something about that place conjured up strange images and a story of estrangement and solitude in my imagination” he has said (Robertson, 2016, p. 274).

As an effect of the retreat, The Band started to immerse themselves in old-fashioned country and bluegrass (so-called mountain music). They included the country song *Long Black Veil* to show that they were part of a historical tradition, and only the latest in a long line of musicians. The Band had not played much straight country music before meeting Dylan, but when they got to Woodstock, the pastoral construct revealed new insights. “Because we were up in the mountains, mountain music became compatible to us” (Bowman, 2000), Robertson has said. In this sense, The Band are similar to The Rolling Stones, who also recorded country music for the first time during this period (*Dear Doctor* and *Factory Girl* on *Beggars Banquet*).

The rural tranquillity of the area made Richard Manuel write a few slow songs which reinforced the contemplative mood. *Lonesome Suzie* tells the story of a sad old spinster, while *In a Station* is “about Overlook Mountain, and the relative peace we were all feeling after those long years living on the road” (Helm, 1993, p. 166). Robertson alludes to a sense of loss in the track and calls it “dreamy and distant, slightly psychedelic” (Robertson, 2016, p. 301). Without comparing the literary qualities, Manuel’s lyrics (as well as being inspired by The Bible – and Dylan) resemble much pastoral nature writing of the early 19th century, especially the idealization of rural idylls seen in the work of Romantic poets like Shelley, Keats or Wordsworth.

*Once I climbed up the face of a mountain
And ate the wild fruit there
Fell asleep until the moonlight woke me*

And I could taste your hair

Aidan Day writes of the “sense of the health and integrity of the life of nature, in contrast with the depredations wrought by humanity” seen in poems like Wordsworth’s *Lines Written in Early Spring* (Day, 2001, p. 39): “And much it grieved my heart to think / What man has made of man”. The Band’s version of this lies in an implied criticism of the counterculture. Manuel comments on the hippie reveries and their false promises of love and bliss. He is longing for genuine values behind all the noise and commotion.

*Isn't everybody dreaming
Then the voice I hear is real
Out of all the idle scheming
Can't we have something to feel*

The gospel-inspired *We Can Talk*, also written by Manuel, contains a longing for much-needed repose after all the hard work the band had been through: “Moving that eternal plough, we’ve got to find a sharper blade or have a new one made, rest awhile and cool your brow, don’t you see there’s no need to slave, the whip is in the grave”.

Chest Fever is based on Garth Hudson’s organ lines and is a simple track created as a reaction to the intellectual and sophisticated imagery of songs like *The Weight*. Perhaps the most interesting part is the mock-Salvation Army-part in the middle of the song. The sound sends the listener straight to an old jug band performance. Robertson says that the “Salvation Army horn vibe” employed on many of the songs was another example of going “completely against the grain” (Robertson, 2016, p. 307).

The album ends with two songs written or co-written by Bob Dylan. *I Shall Be Released* has since its creation in the basement of Big Pink – and subsequent cover versions by multiple artists – taken on different meanings. The Band’s version, with Manuel’s falsetto vocal, resembles a hymn. The lyrics, about an incarcerated man, might be interpreted as Dylan’s personal hope of release from the stranglehold of popular fame, and as such goes straight into an escapist domain. Clinton Heylin argues that “the release that (Dylan) is singing about (...) is not from mere prison bars but rather from the cage of physical existence” (Heylin, 2009, p. 348).

This Wheel's on Fire was recorded earlier with Dylan in the basement, but The Band's version is completely different; with a higher tempo and more energy. Marcus says it is a harsh, biblical, warning" (Marcus, 1997, p. 81) and claims that the lyrics reject all the values of the hippie era: "The creators of those songs are aware that the world around them is exploding into pieces" (Doggett, 2007, p. 122). Sid Griffin points out that the phrase "this wheel's on fire" sounds like the Old Testament - but isn't (Griffin, 2007, p. 201). One of Dylan's lyrical inspirations here is Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell (Une Saison En Enfer)*, especially the song's opening line "If your memory serves you well", which in Rimbaud's poem goes "If my memory serves me well" (Heylin, 2009, p. 347). Rimbaud's influence makes it possible to imagine a line from the French symbolist writer, via surrealists like Luis Buñuel, through Dylan's absurd (and later biblical) universe - towards Robertson and The Band. It is also fascinating to consider that Mick Jagger was inspired by the symbolist Baudelaire when writing *Sympathy for the Devil* during this period, and that The Stones' forthcoming album would be influenced by the The Band.

Music from Big Pink performed only modestly in the charts. It was, first and foremost, a 'musician's album'. Al Kooper (who had briefly played with Dylan and members of The Band a few years earlier) wrote in his review of the album in *Rolling Stone* magazine: "This album was recorded in approximately two weeks. There are people who will work their lives away in vain and not touch it" (Kooper, 1968). A lot of the big stars of the era, most notably Eric Clapton, were so inspired by what they heard that they changed musical direction completely after hearing what The Band had come up with. Clapton, who was used to playing loud, heavy guitar with his group Cream, wanted to go straight to Woodstock to join The Band: "I felt we were dinosaurs and what we were doing was rapidly becoming outdated and boring" (Harris, 2003, p. 94). Another disciple was George Harrison. The Beatles' guitarist visited Woodstock in late 1968, and The Beatles were immediately inspired by The Band's sound. Ian MacDonald lists not only Clapton and The Beatles as The Band's new disciples, but stretches the inspiration to include artists of such variety as Elton John, Traffic, The Grateful Dead and, not least, The Byrds - on *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* (MacDonald, 2003, p. 83). Richard Thompson of the British group Fairport Convention, who subsequently would focus on making music which was as 'British' as The Band was 'American', has said this about the album's impact: "We loved the rootsiness (...) I think there was considerable cultural

impact for us too. These guys had short hair and suits, totally against the fashions and styles of the day” (Thomson, 2013, p. 46).

Terry Gifford writes about the necessity in pastoralism of ‘return’ after the ‘retreat’. “To fail to return is to remain in a high-flown madness, to have been self-indulgent and to have failed the tribe. Indeed, the whole purpose (...) is to return, not with social solutions, but with strange stories that mysteriously have the power to heal”. The Band used this pastoral pattern to full effect. They had literally retreated into the basement with Dylan, developing their strange stories, before returning with their debut album, which, by inspiring a large amount of contemporary musicians, had the power to heal a rock music world on the verge of chaos. Gifford says that this is “the purpose of art and it describes what happens when the pastoral is working at its most powerful and enigmatic” (Gifford, 1999, pp. 93-94). Along many of the progressive records of the time, *Music from Big Pink* could be described as austere, unpretentious and reactionary.

No one hearing the album for the first time, whilst simultaneously inspecting the photograph of the group with their families on the gatefold sleeve, could easily forget the shock of a rock’n’ roll band appearing to side with tradition against revolution.

(Hoskyns, 2003, p. 154)

Unrelentingly, *Music From Big Pink* promotes the ethos of rurality over the urban. It is the best example in popular music of “the paradox of the pastoral”, when a retreat to a rural place, without the anxieties of the city or the present, delivers insights into the culture from which it originates (Gifford, 1999, p. 82). The Band rejected the values of psychedelia and distorted the hippie theme of universal love, turning it towards home and family. With its emphasis on communal values, down-to-earth lyrics and its use of simpler musical styles, *Music From Big Pink* is a caution against the hostile and alienating direction in which the world was heading.

CONCLUSION

Artists who follow the pastoral pattern of return and retreat are products of their own time and culture (like everyone else). As a consequence, they will share the preoccupations of their own time and culture. Gifford states that a pastoral retreat will always reveal concerns inherent in the present time or culture. “Even if it is an unintended reflection, the most determined escape returns something to its audience” (Gifford, 1999, p. 82). The pastoral construct will therefore always be a part of and consequently expose the current zeitgeist, consciously or unconsciously.

At the conclusion of my analysis of the work of four significant bands, has the hypothesis with which I began the investigation been shown to have force as a way of explaining aspects of the 1967/1968 historical ‘turn’? I would definitely say so. I have shown that the most aware musicians of the sixties were worried about what they saw. As they managed to escape from the rat race of recording, touring, songwriting, press conferences and a reckless lifestyle, this was mirrored in their work. In the cases of the music discussed here, the results were both revealing and visionary. Not all the records studied show the same amount of ‘pastoralism’, however. I would single out the *Village Green*-album by The Kinks as being the most supportive of my argument, with specific lyrics about rural life and definite themes of loss and nostalgia throughout. *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* by The Byrds shows a concrete musical turn towards the traditional, while *Music From Big Pink* by The Band is permeated with musical ideas and sounds that display a ‘rebellion against the rebellion’ of the times. Both these albums (the two American albums of the four) show that old-fashioned musical forms are not only valid, but also useful and necessary in a modern society.

The Rolling Stones’ *Beggars Banquet* has, after close analysis, shown itself to be more ‘urban’ than I thought before I started this thesis. As such it is the least supportive of the four to my argument. *Beggars Banquet* is, however, as pointed out earlier, the one LP of the four definitely most in sync with its times. The Rolling Stones were the sharpest observers of current events of perhaps all the big artists of the sixties, and the song *Street Fighting Man* alone proves the album’s relevance to this study. The Stones also share a similarity with Bob Dylan in that they play with the established conventions of a genre. A song like *Salt of the Earth* appears as a typical pastoral drinking song, but I have shown that such a kind of pastoralism could be all surface.

As a final example of how the mood changed from 1967 to 1968, it is interesting to point towards Jimi Hendrix and his version of Dylan's *All Along the Watchtower*, released in late 1968. The flamboyant guitarist, one of the leading figures of the flower-power aesthetic, had on the song *If 6 was 9* in late 1967 carried a typical hippie message with lyrics about businessmen "pointing their plastic finger at me", and Hendrix hoping that they would "drop and die". One year later, he was still singing about businessmen, but no longer from the hippie perspective:

*Businessmen, they drink my wine, plowmen dig my earth
None of them along the line know what any of it is worth*

The businessmen have stopped preaching morality to the longhaired hippies and have sunken into drunken decadence, emptying the bottles of wine. Still they have no clue about what is *really* going on. The times have changed and there are deeper values at stake. I would argue that the 'businessmen' and 'plowmen' in the song are people draining the resources of the world (or, more literally and more 'pastorally', the soil). None of these people know the real value of things; they just know the value of superficial stimulants found in a modern, consumerist society. In Hendrix' voice and with his heavier musical arrangement, Dylan's words sounds like a warning towards the destructive messages of many countercultural icons. Hendrix has been such an icon himself, but he might have had experiences that have made him reconsider some of his values.

It had been a fine time, with many chances taken and many chances blown,
but it was over, it was soft underneath the flash and it had exhausted itself.
There was a peculiar emptiness in the air, and in the music.

(Marcus, 1997, p. 45)

The best music of 1968 would signal the end of a decade and an era still viewed as extraordinary within Western cultural history. Depending on which side you look at it from, the sixties has been understood as either 'golden' or 'cynical', and even though its main actors, the artists, rebels, politicians, activists, hippies (and 'weekend hippies') are now well into retirement age or have passed away, the reverberations of their

achievements are still felt today. Issues like civil rights, feminism, gay liberation, multiculturalism and environmental awareness are all 'children' of the sixties. The same may also be said for commercialism, globalization and terrorism.

The countercultural attitudes have not only been carried forward but they have been institutionalized by the consumer society. Since many countercultural rebels have adjusted themselves to the world of work, they have managed to bend that world to their own needs.

(Fischer, 2006, p. 315)

By looking beyond the sixties, it is interesting, in the age of Trump, Brexit and social media, to consider the views communicated in the albums discussed, e.g. Ray Davies' take on materialism and globalization. The title song is "an anthem to endangered English experience, to the small details of life that get lost, that no one official will ever miss" (Hasted, 2013, p. 128). Davies has denied that his work has a reactionary slant: "I just wanted to be creative and say something about a part of the world that was not so commercial" (Miller, 2004). Arguing that the sixties were a significant time, both musically and historically, it is fascinating to register that the subject matter of the music studied in this thesis is still relevant today. Themes introduced by groups like The Kinks almost fifty years ago are still being discussed vigorously all over the Western world. What will get lost if we modernize too much? What happens if we take pictures of each other just to show others that we lead fulfilling lives? Will we still be happy when we have got everything materialistic we need to survive? Davies touches on this in *Big Sky*:

*Big Sky looked down on all the people who think they got problems
They get depressed and they hold their head in their hands and cry*

It is worth considering that all the groups discussed could have chosen to go in a more mainstream direction after their pastoral retreats. Nick Hasted says about the music business at this time that "most bands returned to a more indulgent, freeform version of American blues-rock fundamentals in 1968" (Hasted, 2013, p. 130). The groups studied herein could have exploited this and returned with normal, commercial

pop or the heavy rock of the day, as many other artists (interestingly, three of the four LPs discussed did not sell especially well). Because of their creativity, their integrity and their artistic brilliance, however, these groups were not content with replicating themselves. With their new non-psychedelic, realistic worldview, they wanted to return new insight; truthful accounts of the brutal times they now found themselves living in. Using the pastoral construct, these fairly well-off artists could then enjoy the three “solid satisfactions” of the pastoral retreat, according to Virgil: peace, leisure, and economic sufficiency (Marx, 1972, p. 23).

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Gram Parsons – Fallen Angel (2006) Directed by Gandulf Hennig
Janis – Little Girl Blue (2015) Directed by Amy Berg
Magical Mystery Tour (2012) Directed by The Beatles
Monterey Pop (1968) Directed by D.A. Pennebaker
No Direction Home (2005) Directed by Martin Scorsese
Sympathy for the Devil (1968) Directed by Jean-Luc Godard
Under Milk Wood (1972) Directed by Andrew Sinclair
Viridiana (1961) Directed by Luis Buñuel

Records:

(This includes the records directly referenced in the text. A more comprehensive overview of the music of 1967 and 1968 can be found in the appendix).

Music from Big Pink – The Band, Capitol, 1968
Penny Lane/Strawberry Fields Forever (single) – The Beatles, Parlophone, 1967
Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band – The Beatles, Parlophone, 1967
All You Need Is Love (single) – The Beatles, Parlophone, 1967
Magical Mystery Tour (EP) – The Beatles, Parlophone, 1967
The Beatles (White Album) – The Beatles, Apple, 1968
The Freewheelin’ Bob Dylan – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1963
The Times They Are a-Changin’ – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1964
Another Side of Bob Dylan – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1964
Bringing It All Back Home – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1965
Highway 61 Revisited – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1965
Blonde on Blonde – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1966
John Wesley Harding – Bob Dylan, Columbia Records, 1967
Live 1966, the ‘Royal Albert Hall’ concert – Bob Dylan, Columbia, 1998
The Basement Tapes Complete – Bob Dylan & The Band, Columbia, 2014
Mr Tambourine Man – The Byrds, Columbia, 1965
Turn! Turn! Turn! – The Byrds, Columbia, 1965
Fifth Dimension – The Byrds, Columbia, 1966
Younger Than Yesterday – The Byrds, Columbia, 1967

The Notorious Byrd Brothers – The Byrds, Columbia, 1968
Sweetheart of the Rodeo – The Byrds, Columbia, 1968
His Best – Howlin' Wolf, Chess, 1997
Axis: Bold as Love – The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Track, 1967
Electric Ladyland – The Jimi Hendrix Experience, Track, 1968
Surrealistic Pillow – Jefferson Airplane, RCA Victor, 1967
A Well Respected Man (single) – The Kinks, Pye, 1965
Dedicated Follower of Fashion (single) – The Kinks, Pye, 1966
Sunny Afternoon (single) – The Kinks, Pye, 1966
Something Else by The Kinks – The Kinks, Pye, 1967
The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society – The Kinks, Pye, 1968
San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Flowers In Your Hair) – Scott McKenzie, Columbia, 1967
The Piper at the Gates of Dawn – Pink Floyd, EMI, 1967
Aftermath – Rolling Stones, Decca, 1966
Between the Buttons – Rolling Stones, Decca, 1967
Their Satanic Majesties Request – Rolling Stones, Decca, 1967
Jumpin' Jack Flash (single) – Rolling Stones, Decca, 1968
Beggars Banquet – Rolling Stones, Decca, 1968
Singles Collection: The London Years – Rolling Stones, ABKCO, 1989

APPENDIX

Chronology of events and the most important records of 1967 and 1968

1967	Current affairs/events/concerts	Record releases
Jan		4 - LP: The Doors - The Doors
	9 - Rebellion against Mao in Shanghai	13 - Single: Let's Spend The Night Together/Ruby Tuesday - The Rolling Stones
	14 - First human be-in, 'gathering of tribes', San Francisco	20 - LP: Between The Buttons - The Rolling Stones
	29 - Mantra-rock dance, San Francisco	
Feb		1 - LP: Surrealistic Pillow - Jefferson Airplane
		6 - LP: Younger Than Yesterday - The Byrds
	12 - Keith Richards, Mick Jagger busted at Redlands	
	14 - Labour MPs condemns bombing in Vietnam	17 - Single: Strawberry Fields Forever/Penny Lane - The Beatles
		17 - LP: A Hard Road - John Mayall & The Bluesbreakers
	26 - US troops attack Ho Chi Minh Trail	
Mar		11 - Single: Arnold Layne - Pink Floyd
		12 - LP: The Velvet Underground & Nico - The Velvet Underground
	13 - All night 'sit-in' by LSE students	17 - LP: The Grateful Dead - Grateful Dead
		27 - LP: Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits - Bob Dylan
	31 - Jimi Hendrix first set fire to guitar, London	
Apr	15 - 400.000 protest against Vietnam War outside UN, also San Francisco	
	29 - 14-hour 'Technicolour Dream', London	
	30 - Detroit 'love-in' ends in police riot	
May	1 - Paul McCartney admits to having taken LSD in TV interview	
	10 - Mick Jagger, Keith Richards in court in London	11 - LP: Electric Music For The Mind & Body - Country Joe & the Fish
		12 - LP: Are You Experienced - The Jimi Hendrix Experience
		12 - Single: A Whiter Shade Of Pale - Procol Harum
		13 - Single: San Francisco (Be Sure To Wear Flowers In Your Hair) - Scott McKenzie
	21 - Peace rally against Vietnam War, Trafalgar Square	26 - LP: Absolutely Free - The Mothers of Invention
	30 - Biafra secedes from Nigeria	
Jun		1 - LP: Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band - The Beatles
	3 - Race riots in Boston	
	4 - Jimi Hendrix performs 'Sgt. Pepper' in London	
	5-10 - Six-day war, Israel defeats Arab coalition	6 - LP: Moby Grape - Moby Grape
	10-11 - Festival in Marin County, California	
	16-18 - Monterey Pop Festival, California	16 - Single: See Emily Play - Pink Floyd
	23 - Protests against Lyndon B. Johnson in Los Angeles	23 - LP: Small Faces - Small Faces
	25 - 'Our World' worldwide broadcast, Beatles	LP - Safe As Milk - Captain Beefheart and his Magic Band

	perform 'All You Need Is Love'	
	29 - Mick Jagger and Keith Richards jailed on drugs charges	
Jul	1 - The Times publishes editorial condemning Jagger/Richards sentence	7 - Single: All You Need Is Love - The Beatles
	11-15 - Newark race riots	15 - LP (US): Flowers - The Rolling Stones
	23 - Los Angeles 'love-in'	LP - Canned Heat/Canned Heat
	23-27 - Detroit race riots	
	27 - Homosexuality legalised in the UK	
Aug		LP - Big Brother & the Holding Company - Big Brother & the Holding Company
		5 - LP: The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn - Pink Floyd
	8 - George Harrison visits Haight Ashbury, San Francisco	
	14 - British offshore pirate radio stations close	18 - Single: We Love You - The Rolling Stones
	25-27 - 'Festival of the Flower Children', Woburn Abbey, UK	
	27 - Beatles manager Brian Epstein dies	
Sep		LP - Procol Harum - Procol Harum
		15 - LP: Something Else By The Kinks - The Kinks
	17 - The Doors perform and get banned from Ed Sullivan show	25 - LP: Strange Days - The Doors
Oct	2 - Grateful Dead busted at their San Francisco house	
	6 - 'The Death of the Hippie' ceremony in Haight Ashbury	
	9 - Che Guevara dies	
	15 - Vietnam War parades in New York	
	21 - Vietnam War protests outside Pentagon	30 - LP: Buffalo Springfield Again - Buffalo Springfield
Nov	4-6 - Anti-draft demonstrations in New York	LP: I-Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die - Country Joe & the Fish
		LP: Forever Changes - Love
		10 - LP: Days Of Future Passed - The Moody Blues
		10 - LP: Disraeli Gears - Cream
		24 - Single: Hello Goodbye/I Am The Walrus - The Beatles
	27 - De Gaulle vetoes UK entry into EEC	27 - LP: After Bathing At Baxter's - Jefferson Airplane
		27 - LP (US): Magical Mystery Tour - The Beatles
Dec		1 - LP: Axis: Bold As Love - The Jimi Hendrix Experience
	4 - Apple boutique opens in London	8 - EP (UK): Magical Mystery Tour - The Beatles
		8 - LP: Their Satanic Majesties Request - The Rolling Stones
	9 - Jim Morrison arrested on stage, New Haven, Connecticut	LP: Mr. Fantasy - Traffic
	11 - First supersonic Concorde airline	15 - LP: The Who Sell Out - The Who
	26 - North Vietnam attacks Laos	27 - LP: John Wesley Harding - Bob Dylan
1968	Current affairs/events/concerts	Record releases
Jan	5 - Alexander Dubcek new leader in Czechoslovakia	
	15 - Women protest against Vietnam War in Washington DC	15 - LP: The Notorious Byrd Brothers - The Byrds
	20 - Bob Dylan performs with The Band at Woody Guthrie tribute concert	21 - LP: Boogie With Canned Heat - Canned Heat

		30 - LP: White Light/White Heat - The Velvet Underground
	31 - Viet Cong launches Tet Offensive	
Feb	15 - The Beatles travel to India	
	18 - David Gilmour joins Pink Floyd	24 - LP: Fleetwood Mac - Fleetwood Mac
Mar		4 - LP: We're Only In It For The Money - The Mothers Of Invention
	8-12 - Anti-communist riots in Poland	15 - Single: Lady Madonna - The Beatles
	16 - My Lai massacre	
	17 - Vietnam War protest, Grosvenor Square, London	
	31 - LBJ announces he will not stand for re-election	
Apr		3 - LP: Bookends - Simon & Garfunkel
		3 - LP: Wow/Grape Jam - Moby Grape
	4 - Martin Luther King killed	
	5 - James Brown, Jimi Hendrix celebrates King in concerts	
	11 - Riots across US after King's funeral	
	12-15 - Students riot in Germany after attempted murder of Rudi Dutschke	19 - LP: Odessey and Oracle - The Zombies
	21 - Enoch Powell 'rivers of blood' speech in Birmingham	
	21 - French students occupy campus at Nanterre	
May	5-7 - French students riot, street fighting in Paris	
	9 - Soviet forces to Czechoslovakian borders	
	15 - Lennon/McCartney announces formation of Apple Corps	
	21 - French general strike in support of students	24 - Single: Jumpin' Jack Flash - The Rolling Stones
		24 - LP: Ogdens' Nut Gone Flake - Small Faces
	30 - De Gaulle with strong measures against rioters	
Jun		LP: Fairport Convention - Fairport Convention
	5 - Robert F. Kennedy shot	
	12 - De Gaulle bans demonstrations	21 - LP: Bare Wires - John Mayall's Bluesbreakers
		29 - LP: A Saucerful Of Secrets - Pink Floyd
	30 - Gaullist landslide in French elections	
Jul		1 - LP: Music From Big Pink - The Band
		5 - LP: Creedence Clearwater Revival - Creedence Clearwater Revival
		18 - LP: Anthem Of The Sun - Grateful Dead
		19 - LP: Music In A Doll's House - Family
	22 - Alexander Dubcek summoned to Moscow	26 - LP: In Search Of The Lost Chord - The Moody Blues
		30 - LP: Last Time Around - Buffalo Springfield
	31 - Apple boutique closes	
Aug		LP: Wheels Of Fire - Cream
		LP: Together - Country Joe & the Fish
	12 - Race riots in Los Angeles	12 - LP: Cheap Thrills - Big Brother & the Holding Company

	21-23 - Warsaw Pact forces invade Czechoslovakia	23 - LP: Mr. Wonderful - Fleetwood Mac
	29 - Chicago Democratic Party convention riots	30 - Single: Hey Jude/Revolution - The Beatles
		30 - LP: Sweetheart Of The Rodeo - The Byrds
		31 - Single (US): Street Fighting Man - The Rolling Stones
Sep		LP: Crown Of Creation - Jefferson Airplane
		LP: Shine On Brightly - Procol Harum
	26 - Theatre censorship ends in UK	
	27 - Naked actors in the musical 'Hair' in London	
Oct	12-27 Mexico Olympics, Black Power salutes	16 - LP: Electric Ladyland - The Jimi Hendrix Experience
	18 - John Lennon, Yoko Ono busted for drugs	
	18 - First abortion clinic opens in UK	25 - LP: This Was - Jethro Tull
	27 - Vietnam War protest in London	LP: Traffic - Traffic
	28 - Protests in Prague against Soviet occupation	
Nov	1 - LBJ orders cessation of bombing in North Vietnam	1 - LP: Wonderwall Music - George Harrison
		1 - LP: Living The Blues - Canned Heat
	6 - Richard Nixon elected new president	
	7 - Anti-Soviet riot in Prague	
	15 - 500.000 people in peace march in Washington DC	LP: Blues From Laurel Canyon - John Mayall
	17 - Students occupy Prague university	22 - LP: The Beatles (White Album) - The Beatles
		22 - LP: The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society - The Kinks
		29 - LP: Astral Weeks - Van Morrison
Dec		5 - LP: Beggars Banquet - The Rolling Stones
	10-11 - The Rolling Stones' Rock and Roll Circus	
	27 - Apollo 8 around the moon	