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FROM NEBRASKA TO WHALLEY RANGE:

REFLECTIONS ON PLACE AND IDENTITY IN MUSIC

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DE NEBRASKA A WHALLEY RANGE: REFLEXÕES SOBRE O ESPAÇO E A IDENTIDADE NA MÚSICA

Joe David Green

RESUMO

Este projeto é uma investigação sobre a relação da música com o espaço, e a forma como a música é usada para expressar a identidade e as mudanças sociais. Partindo da obra de Greil Marcus, *Mystery Train* (1975), uma exploração da identidade através da relação da música com a América da década de 1970, esta dissertação explora as mudanças que ocorreram no final dos anos setenta e durante nos anos oitenta, e pretende ligá-los aos desenvolvimentos políticos durante este período. A ligação da música com o espaço, identificada nas obras de Ray Hudson, Sara Cohen e Jacques Attali entre outros, é contrastada com gravações de música do final dos anos setenta e oitenta, a maioria da América, mas também da Grã-Bretanha.

Neste contexto, as obras de Bruce Springsteen e Tom Waits são identificadas como expressões de uma nação americana em período de mudança e em crise de identidade, um processo descrito por George Packer como "the unwinding", a erosão de uma identidade e da paisagem americanas. Este projecto identifica a forma como esses artistas tentam preencher esses espaços, o que desejam expressar, e como usam a história mitológica da América como guia, assim como, consequentemente, encontram o seu lugar na história americana.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Música; Anos 70; Anos 80; Identidade; Espaço; Cultura

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ABSTRACT

This project is an investigation into music's relationship with place, and how music is used to express identity and detail societal change. Using as a guide Greil Marcus' *Mystery Train* (1975), an exploration of identity through music's relationship with the America of the 1970s, this thesis explores changes which occurred towards the end of the seventies and into the eighties, and seeks to link them to political developments throughout this period. Music's attachment to place, identified in the works of Ray Hudson, Sara Cohen and Jacques Attali, amongst others, is contrasted with landmark music recordings of the late nineteen-seventies and the eighties, mostly from America but also from Britain.

Within this framework, the works of Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits are identified as expressions of an American nation in a period of change and a crisis of identity, a

process described by George Packer as “the unwinding”, the erosion of an American identity and of the existing American landscape. This project identifies the manner in which these artists try to fill these spaces, what it is that they are trying to express, and how they use the mythological history of America to guide them, and how they consequently find their place in American history.

KEYWORDS: Music; 1970s; 1980s; Identity; Place; Culture

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INTRODUCTION

The very existence of America is a testament to the power of place, its ability to inspire hope and dreams within people. America was built on a fantasy of place, a country that existed because of a desire to escape an old world and create one anew. Faith was put in this new land and for untold numbers of people over hundreds of years, the journey to this so-called New World equalled the removal of the shackles of tradition and the opportunity to reinvent oneself.[1] This New World offered new lives to its inhabitants and when its first settlements started to become crowded, there lay more space and opportunity to the West. For those who chose to advance westward, the process may have been violent, hard and costly (especially in the latter stages of expansion, as the terrain which remained was more rugged), but venturing into hitherto unknown (to them) land offered promise, a romantic prospect that was much stronger in the collective mindset than any fact or report of how hard life was there could prove. Into this West travelled pioneers who "dealt in the superlative and saw their destiny with optimistic eyes" (Turner, 1893: n.p.) with a romanticised vision, wound up in self-belief which, whether thought of as their "manifest destiny" or an American exceptionalism, spoke of a deeply human desire for the the improvement of oneself and the search for a better life.

When the western expansion ended at the end of the 18th century, an American dependance on the promise of place did not. Befitting a huge country which encompassed contrasting histories, landscapes and people, great exploration was possible within the country by using a newly-built road and rail infrastructure. The legend of the frontier imprinted an image upon Americans of their having a "restless, nervous energy" and a "buoyancy and exuberance which comes with freedom"[2] (Turner, 1893, n.p.) and gave its people a relentless, ambitious hunger (even a sense of personal duty) to explore and exploit the land which now belonged to them. America's soul was a searching one. A mythical quality is attached to this exploration: that place in America was romanticised so meant that American cities, for example, were wound up in qualities which could never be attributed to those in the Old World. European cities were synonymous with history and tradition, American ones with a youthful vitality and

[1] Of course, for those with the misfortune to be born in a less prosperous part of the existing world (or in the New World before it came to be known as such) shackles were applied rather than relieved, to support the dreams of the new arrivals.

[2] The fact that Turner's Frontier Thesis contained ideas both elastic and contradictory mattered little, and perhaps even helped, in the creation of a myth that America wanted to believe about itself.

sense of opportunity. Europe was weighed down with past wars and disputes, America offered a utopian hope of a better future for all who came there. This was not something that could be properly explained, and did not need to be. It is a myth that America, its roads and towns, deserts and mountains, rivers and landmarks, has inherited.

Chapter 1. Music's Relationship to Place

> *All music, any organisation of sounds is then a tool for the creation or consolidation of a community, of a totality...it is an attribute of power in all its forms. Therefore, any theory of power today must include a theory of the localisation of noise and its endowment with form. Among birds a tool for marking territorial boundaries, noise is inscribed from the start within the panoply of power. Equivalent to the articulation of a space, it indicates the limits of a territory and the way to make oneself heard within it, how to survive by drawing one's sustenance from it.* - Jacques Attali, *Noise, the Political Economy of Music* (1977)

This essay will investigate (mostly) American popular music's attachment to place, and how this attachment affects and is reflected in the artists identified herein and their works. The use of place as a musical story-telling device is no new phenomenon, nor one which is limited to popular music – sound and song have traditionally been used to map the landscapes people have inhabited, tell their stories and mark their place as part of the land. Australian Aborigine tribes have even used "song lines" as actual maps, helping them to traverse and understand the area they inhabit through monuments and sounds. (Connell and Gibson, 2002: 25-26) Music plays an integral part in many cultures, and youth culture is no different. In 1977, Jacques Attali described music (or "noise", as he termed collections of sounds) as a way of marking out a territory, a place within the land, a way to establish and confirm a community of some kind – an important part of defining a youth culture, in order to separate it from ones which precede it. This process would later be seen in punk music, in which the UK and US engaged in a largely friendly dispute over credit for the invention of the form, and would be seen less amiably in the bloody East vs. West coast rap feuds of the early nineties. Attali describes music as reflecting the "manufacture of society", constituting "the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society." (1985: 16) Music moves quickly, and he finds encoded within its sound and its marking of territory hints of future developments, weather vanes for the directions in which society might be moving in.

But the presence of place within music does not have to be such a suggestive one.

Music can be evocative of place without having to declare it so explicitly, or indeed at all. Some music is attached to place in a more subtle, spiritual way. Jazz music, for example, has become a widely-known music genre practised all over the world, with distinctive variations of the form originating in many different cities. Yet the music will always be firmly associated with New Orleans, the city it originated from. Specifically, it is associated with the now-demolished Storyville district, an area close to the city's main port in which prostitution was tolerated. At the beginning of the 20th century, the area developed a reputation as being somewhat exotic and lawless. Having a population that was largely African-American, it was a place where both white and black visitors from other areas could indulge themselves in a fantasy of black identity: a place that seemed to challenge conventional morality, an area in which people could live in direct and flagrant disregard for what most police authorities would tolerate.

Storyville was treated as something of an amusement park – not in the least as visitors were sold the "Blue Book" guide to the area's brothels upon arrival – and before too long, the authorities were finding themselves under pressure to clean up the area. Jazz music flourished in the area mostly due to the fact that in most brothels it was commonplace to hire a pianist; in this way a great many jazz musicians got their start, and jazz's reputation as a bawdy, sexual, rebellious style of music was cemented. Storyville flourished for only a short period (prostitution was outlawed in 1917, after which the area calmed and was eventually knocked down) but its connection to jazz would endure.

Most popular music betrays at least a passing attachment to place, some serves to romanticise a sense of place, whilst other artists and their songs even effect a change upon the identity of a place. Greil Marcus' 1975 book *Mystery Train* places rock music in the context of American culture, and as a force which forever altered that culture and the landscape of which is was part. It is sub-headed "Images of America in Rock N Roll Music" and he traces the spirit of America through the handful of artists that he chooses. These artists ask what it means to be an American, "what the stakes of life in America might be." His writing "is rooted in the idea that these artists can illuminate those American questions and that the questions can add resonance to their work" (2000: 4). These artists (bluesmen Harmonica Frank and Robert Johnson, The Band, Sly Stone, Randy Newman and Elvis Presley) are portrayed as the inheritors of an American folk tradition of characters like Huckleberry Finn, Moby Dick and Stagger Lee; searching for and stretching the limits of acceptance.

The book was important for two main reasons. Firstly, it was written at a time when few books had been written about rock music and it bears little resemblance to those, or indeed those that would follow it. Rock music was mostly written about in the form of biography; though Marcus does include biographical elements, his is a contextualisation of their art and the nature of the time, and takes little interest in specifics: it tries to write in the same fleeting manner as the music it details. Secondly, it treated those musicians as specific products of America, linking them to political developments of the time and presenting them as harbingers of American mood. Like Attali, he considers them to be the audible vibrations of what is coming, the future encoded between the lines of their songs. Marcus sees their very existence and the myth of which they are part as unique to America because, as he quotes from Leslie Fielder, "...to be an American (unlike being French or English or whatever) is precisely to *imagine* a destiny rather than inherit one; since we have always been, insofar as we are Americans at all, inhabitants of a myth rather than history..." (*ibid*: 5)

What comes through strongly in the book is a sense that these artists are directly attached to the land and that only America, with its particular history and myth, could have possibly given birth to them. He describes a spirit that has survived since the Puritans, a devil spawned by their failure to build their intended utopia, an "American curse" that is also an understanding of the impossibility of building that utopia, and the inevitable disappointment that the realisation of this fact incurs. "America is a trap...its promises and dreams, all mixed up as love and politics and landscape, are too much to live up to and too much to escape. It is as if being an American means to ask for too much..." (*ibid*: 32).

The book was written after the countercultural political intent of the 1960s had dissolved into emptiness and before punk emerged with its own promise of revolution. By the end of the sixties, it seemed that the era's most successful artists found the high of 1966/67 impossible to follow: The Beatles began to be characterised by infighting and released increasingly fragmented albums, Bob Dylan almost completely retreated from view, and the Rolling Stones played at the Altamont music festival which, rather than repeating the success of the Woodstock festival on which it was modelled, was popularly thought to signify the "end of the sixties" when a fan was murdered in front of the stage by the Hells Angels biker gang who were providing event security. The optimism present such a short time before seemed almost entirely to have disappeared. The Band were the first to confront this deficiency in spirit and attempt to channel

something positive and new from the space it had left.

1.1. The Band: A View from the Inside Out

The Band presented themselves as a lively, upbeat alternative to a mood of general dissolution. They reacted to the perceived failure of the counterculture by showing America another version of itself, and they did this by way of the land. The sound of The Band is the sound of five people re-discovering America, the possibilities in its open space. Calling themselves "The Band" was not simply arrogance – it was a statement of intent. They would be the first group to condense decades of myth, history, rebellion and sense of place into music, a new-sounding style of music, one which would borrow heavily from that which preceded it – rock, blues, country – but sound fresh. Especially so because they were (except one member) Canadians, they dreamed in America's landscape. They wanted to teach Americans about their country. "Against the instant America of the sixties they looked for traditions that make new things not only possible, but valuable; against a flight from roots they set a sense of place." (Marcus, 2000: 47)

They had chosen America as their home, and wanted to share their reasons for that with a nation that appeared disenchanted, that had stopped believing in itself, by reminding it of its potential.

> Many young Americans had spent the best part of the decade teaching themselves to feel like exiles in their own country; The Band...understood this, and they were sure it was a mistake. They had come here by choice, after all...they fell in love with the place itself. They felt more alive in America. They came to be on good terms with its violence and its warmth; they were attracted by the neon grab for pleasure on the face of the American night, and by the inscrutable spookiness behind that face. American contradictions demanded a fine energy, because no-one could miss them; the stakes were higher, but the rewards seemed limitless. The Band's first songs were a subtle, seductive attempt to get this sense of life across. Their music was fashioned as a way back into America, and it worked. (Marcus, 2000: 47-8)

The Band pioneered a style which came to be known as "Americana"; a music which is both a discovery of and a continuing search for America. On their second album[3] they tried to show the promise that still existed by revisiting, revising and reliving old

[3] 1969's *The Band*, though its working title *America* is more indicative of its content. The album contains the tracks "Across the Great Divide", "Rag Mama Rag", "Up On Cripple Creek", as referenced in the text.

notions of its potential. Opening track "Across the Great Divide" describes a seemingly simple pastoral fantasy – "Across the Great Divide / Just grab your hat and take that ride / Get yourself a bride / And bring your children down to the riverside" – however they are not literally evoking the dream of crossing the divide which separated the old East from the new West and raising a family, but admiring the simple beauty of such a dream, at a time when the country seemed to have become a much more complicated place to live in.

They showed that dreaming so is not really so far-fetched, because were they not people who had crossed such a divide themselves? They had had an equally simplistic dream – cross the Canadian border and play music in America – and here they were, enacting it, living that about which they had fantasised. The song is the very proof of the dream's viability; the proof that there is still plenty of life in the land, if you look in the right places. Other songs celebrate life on the road ("Up On Cripple Creek") or the pure joy of dance and music ("Rag Mama Rag"), but more than anything the songs exude a sense of what it is to belong to a community, and they thought of America as a giant community: all it had to do was open up to itself.

Aside from lyrical content, they play music as a community, being a tightly-held-together collective of musicians. *The Band* shows that they have a perfect sense of when or not to play, and in which space to sing. The five play as one: each retaining an individual identity yet contributing to a shared, single sound. Phrases that are half-finished by one singer are quickly and intuitively picked up by another member, guitars naturally drop out to leave space for an organ to play. It sounds unrehearsed, natural: they seem to be saying, this is how close you can become if you find the time to really know one another. There is no need for them to ask; they know what the other will do. Community is demonstrated in their single movement, not just suggested in the lyrics. The music tells that presence of a "great divide" is a point where two separate places end, true, but it could also be the point at which two different places convene.

Marcus describes them as musicians that were artistically set free by America. They were dream-chasers in the sense that earlier great Americans were: initially by crossing the border to find their rightful home[4] but also by trying to re-establish a sense of belief in America when they got there. Once he crossed the border, their songwriter Robbie Robertson was inspired by being a part of the land that he had grown up hearing

[4] A well-trodden path at that time: amongst others, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young and Leonard Cohen left Canada in the mid-sixties, ultimately helping to define the American music of the era.

about (“the reality only made the magic that much more fierce”) and this sentiment fostered his “idea that the land makes the music”; (Marcus, 2000: 44) as such, most of the songs on *The Band* seem to literally emanate from the soil, and the characters draw strength and hope from a sense of engagement with their home. The Band do not appear lost in this decade, as many of their contemporaries did, because they were able to take stock in America's history. The album's message is subtle; it demands nothing of its listeners but gently coaxes them to follow the music's example.

At the time, the group lived in Woodstock, upstate New York, in a small community, mostly hidden from the outside world in the idyllic Catskill Mountains. Their music focussed on that which was rural at a time when more Americans than ever before were concentrated in urban areas: The Band make no mention of the cities which surround the majority of their listeners. Perhaps this is why the music was so appealing, as at this time many big cities were beginning to experience problems. New York City, not so far from Woodstock in distance but a world away in terms of reality, was becoming an increasingly violent and disorganised place and was seen as symbolic of American decay.[5]

Towards the end of the sixties, a period of liberal politics appeared to be failing the public that it should have been serving and the organisations which pushed the left-wing agenda were tired, “no longer provided the driving force in American culture. Once so hopeful of rapid, almost instantaneous change, many veterans of the various movements gradually wore down from too many battles.” (Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1991: 201) The energy of change and promise had died off, nothing had been found to replace it, and the American public were beginning to lose faith in the country. The reality of life in urban America was, clearly, not one with which The Band had to deal. Their focus on the land and its history is not exactly escapism, because it was reflective of the real place in which they were living. But it does avoid speaking about the lives of many people, and as such is somewhat detached from the community of which it is supposed to speak.

The Band found out how far their vision was from reality when they embarked upon their first tour in the Spring of 1969. Up until this point, their somewhat idealised

[5] Ruminating on the state of the city in 1970, author Saul Bellow cast a holocaust survivor awash in the city's decay in his novel *Mr. Sammler's Planet*. His character finds himself thinking that “like many people who had seen the world collapse once, Mr. Sammler entertained the possibility that it might collapse twice...you could smell the decay. You could see the suicidal impulses of civilization pushing strongly.” (1970: 26)

versions of a bucolic America had not yet met the reality of America's big cities as the group had been in seclusion: they had not performed in public for years. Their first concert of the tour, in San Francisco, was a disaster. Their music was transplanted to the city, and it did not travel well: it appeared to baulk at the prospect of urban reality. In part, this was because (though they had previously been a band accustomed to life on the road) they had never played a concert this large before, and as they hadn't performed for some time they were understandably nervous. But it was also because the music didn't make the same sense outside its environment.

On record, it was easy for the listener to become engrossed in their vision of the country. On stage, it was another matter. Though the remainder of the tour was more successful than their opening night, The Band never recaptured their early vision.[6] They left Woodstock, apparently tired of being insulated from the rest of the country, but found that the country was not consistent with their vision of it. Subsequent albums, though not without merit, contained nothing on the scope of their first two; they were the sound of a retreat, relying on cover versions and rock cliches where they had once offered something new. Their sense of being a unique American band, at a particular time and place in American history, had gone.

1.2. Bob Dylan: New Folk Songs for a New Frontier

The period following their first tour was not the first time the Band had retreated, unable to sustain their hopeful vision of America. They had previously shaped America's musical landscape in another way, before the release of their first album: as the backing band for Bob Dylan's controversial "electric" period. Their experience on the tours they performed with him clearly shaped their way of looking at America: audiences were notoriously rowdy and outspoken about Dylan's attempts to back his formerly acoustic music with a loud rock band. It was because of this that they decided to retreat into the countryside; after so much media focus and pressure, the group and Dylan decided to avoid the limelight.

Dylan had spent the first half of the sixties being lauded as the "voice of a generation" and indeed he had expertly captured the spirit of the time: backing himself with just an acoustic guitar and occasional harmonica, his music appeared both honest

[6]They were clearly traumatised by the event: their next album was titled *Stage Fright* (1970).

and plain. When he decided to use an electric band (The Band, though at this point they were going under their former moniker, The Hawks) to accompany him, he was derided, accused of selling out, betraying his past, muting his message, being dishonest. In reality, Dylan was always changing styles; he sought new methods of expression and became tired with constants of almost any kind. The problem was that his initial style, a rambling rural folksinger who had somehow wound up in the centre of New York City, was such an endearing one that the public found it very hard to let go.

Like all personalities, Bob Dylan's was a construction.[7] He variously claimed to have grown up in a carnival, in New Mexico, in South Dakota...any tall tale that would add to his mystique. In reality, he grew up in rural Minnesota and moved to Minneapolis for a short period before heading to New York City, "a city like a web too intricate to understand." (Dylan, 2004: 9) His music and writing display a fascination for the city. Moving there in 1961, he was amazed at the size of the place, the way it interconnected, the number of lives being lived at the same time and, of course, the seemingly endless number of possibilities it could offer the young musician.

He found poetry in the city's web, and almost all of his early songs feel as though they take place in the city, whether it is directly referenced or not. His very first songs written in the city are sung with a sense of awe,[8] as plenty of songs had been before his. But it is not these homages to New York that connected Dylan with the city. He quickly became adept at playing the folk-music scene, dotting between clubs in a then-bohemian Greenwich Village to perform his music, signing a record contract and releasing his first album after barely a year in the city. His first album, 1962's *Bob Dylan*, was a mixed bag of original and cover versions, but the three albums which followed (1963's *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* and 1964's *The Times They Are A-Changing* and *Another Side of Bob Dylan*) would be albums which defined the period. The song "Blowin' In The Wind" brought him to the public's attention as it caught the mood of the time perfectly: describing fears of nuclear war with either a shrug of the shoulders or utmost terror; the listener can never quite be sure whether Dylan has an answer or not.

Following it up with a host of other topical songs, he quickly gained a reputation

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[7] Even his name was an invention (though it is an old blues and folk custom to rename oneself, and Robert Zimmerman certainly does not sound like the name of a folk singer).

[8] 1962's "Talking New York" captures an outsider's amazement at the sheer scale of Manhattan: "Thought I'd seen some ups and downs / 'Til I come to New York town / People going down to the ground / Buildings going up to the sky."

as a “protest singer” (a title to which he was not partial), and New York City was his backdrop. His image subscribes to a fantasy of the metropolis: a place where all kinds of people converge, where politically liberal (even communist) views were tolerated, and where the outcast could find a home; making art as they pleased while paying little in rent. Indeed, it would appear that nowhere else could have nurtured an artist like Dylan. He would help to characterise New York; the image of the coffee house still goes hand in hand with a folk-singer like Dylan. Though he only lived there for four or five years, he managed to capture something of the energy and appeal of the city, and add another layer to its legend. Even when trying to escape the trappings of the small Greenwich Village folk scene, in the 1965 single “Positively Fourth Street”, its title still speaks of an unknown (to the casual listener) New York; the apparently mysterious meaning encourages the listener to investigate further.[9]

Many of Dylan's lyrics are extremely open-ended (as they had been from the start, with “Blowin' In The Wind”) and ask the listener to fill in the blanks. Dylan himself searches for the blanks too: he has frequently alluded to songwriting as a process that is impossible to understand or describe, but he attributes much of this phantom power to place, as he attests to consistently throughout his autobiography, 2004's *Chronicles: Volume One*. After his tours with an electric band, he retreated to Woodstock, and he found himself at something of a creative impasse: having previously been able to write songs in quick succession, he now began to struggle for inspiration. His life had slowed down since he left New York, and it seemed that his talent had slowed with it. Though his albums in the late sixties and early seventies are far from poor they lack a certain aspect present in his earlier work, and betray few of the qualities that had made him so popular. His finger almost seems to be deliberately off the pulse; as he had retreated from the city, he too had stepped back from what was going on in present-day America.

Eventually, he decided to try to recapture his earlier spirit by moving back to Greenwich Village, recruiting local musicians to record and tour with him and hoping that renewed contact with the city which had come to define him would replenish his talent. He has always maintained that, rather than writing songs, they pass through him, and perhaps that is why he returned to the scene of his earlier creative bursts of activity

[9] The song is, in reality, a put-down of the folk scene, in what would become Dylan's new style: his songs became increasingly personal and bitter as the sixties progressed, and less interested in topics of social concern.

to try to recapture that same spirit.[10] Naturally, the city had changed, and he was now too well-known to be able to casually hang around in the low-key bars and clubs of Greenwich Village as he had in his younger days, and his stay there was relatively short. He managed to catch some of the fire that had burned earlier, but he was aware that it was not quite the same.

Perhaps it is to this that he was referring when he wrote that "New York City was the magnet – the force that draws objects to it, but take away the magnet and everything will fall apart." (Dylan, 2004: 77) When he first left New York he left a time and place that may not have literally been his home, but it was the place in which he transformed from a young singer, imitating his idol Woody Guthrie, into the artist with which he achieved success. He explains this in his 1961 song, "I Was Young When I Left Home." A mournful ballad of someone's estrangement from family, the singer receives the news that his "mother's dead and gone....and your Daddy needs you home right away." The singer, though, "cannot go home this way"; ashamed of his own state of affairs, he cannot bear to face his family. Dylan sounds much more weary than his 20 years, and when he states his intention to pawn his watch and chain to pay his debts, the listener knows this will not happen. The past is a foreign country; he is mourning the passing of his youth and the fact that he can no longer connect with it, as he has chosen another life for himself.[11]

In his first years as a performer, he took so much from Woody Guthrie (who will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter of this essay) that he felt himself to be an inheritor of the folksinger's "mission" – Dylan supposedly chose to come to New York in the first place because he heard that Guthrie was hospitalised nearby, and wanted to talk to him at his bedside. But by taking his folk music to the city, he was showing something about modern America. Guthrie was a rambler, who travelled the land singing songs of protest, travelling to the "frontiers" of the country (the furthest outposts he could find, from San Diego up to Seattle). Dylan then took his folk songs, the songs of the people, to the new "frontier", the new point at which the future of

[10] It would seem that his instincts were right. The two albums from this period (*Blood On The Tracks* and *Desire*) and the "Rolling Thunder Revue" tours were his most well-received and enduring outings until he hit a creative renaissance in the late nineties, which in turn was the result of a prolonged stay in his native Minnesota.

[11] James Baldwin talked of the same emotion in his exploration into the transient nature of time and place, *Giovanni's Room* (1956): "You don't have a home until you leave it and then, when you have left it, you can never go back." (2007: 77)

American civilization would be decided.[12]

These songs were alive, and naturally were a transformation of folk music, in order that they talk of new concerns, new fears. Of course, with his sound being alive and representative of the city, they would take in something of that which was around. Dylan reacted to the sound which New York emitted, and in that metropolis, all sorts of music surrounded him. He did not want to be limited to just the sound of an acoustic guitar and harmonica, and his basic folk sound was shaped by the city into a more complex rock sound, which he and The Hawks debuted at the 1965 Newport Folk Festival. Because Dylan thought of himself as a vessel for the sounds he heard around him, he couldn't understand the outrage that greeted his new music.[13]

Dylan's knowledge of place had helped him throughout his career. At first, hustling for enough pay to survive in the small folk clubs of Greenwich Village, his literal knowledge of the city and its "web" gave him the connections to perform, and eventually make records. But he also found that his ability to connect with a place, to enter into that place, allowed him to write the songs that tapped so well into the spirit of the era. "A song is like a dream, and you try to make it come true. They're like strange countries that you have to enter. You can write a song anywhere...it helps to be moving." (Dylan, 2004: 165). His autobiography is almost a memory of the songwriting process, an analysis of an inexplicable period of intense creativity, and the frustration he has had in trying to capture that spirit again afterwards. Throughout the book, he is always attempting to tap into a place, to somehow evoke the spirit of, at one point for example, New Orleans, though the city was largely alien to him. Wherever he is, whatever he is playing, he finds that it is always somehow evocative of place.

The front cover of the book is not a picture of Dylan but of Times Square. Who is he suggesting is the real songwriter? Thinking of his childhood, he states that as he grew up at the top of the Mississippi River, "it was my place in the universe, always felt that it was in my blood." (Dylan, 2004: 241). He imagines that the location of his birth made him authentic, though the actual town (Duluth, Minnesota) bears no relation to the

[12] "By the mid-twentieth century, the United States was an overwhelmingly urban nation...The combination and interaction of political, demographic, and economic change turned cities and suburbs into battlegrounds over the most pressing and unresolved issues of twentieth-century American history..." (Self and Sugrue, 2006: 20)

[13] There is much evidence of this lack of acceptance available to see in Martin Scorcese's recent *No Direction Home* (2005) documentary of the time, but perhaps the most telling is the moment at which, during a concert in England in 1966, a heckler yells out "Judas!" during a quiet moment before the final song. The crowd cheer wildly whilst a clearly surprised Dylan says into the mic "I don't believe you....you're a liar!" before turning around to instruct the band to "play it fucking louder".

blues performers he connects himself to, whose homes were hundreds of miles and many states further south down the river. But, as Marcus states in *Mystery Train,* as an American, Dylan grows up as an "inhabiter of myth rather than history", and of course the myth is somewhat elastic: it is a myth, not a fact. Therefore if Dylan wishes to believe that he grew up in the same blues world as his heroes, there is no reason for him not to feel so. Dylan could have come from almost any area in America, tapped into some myth or legend and repurposed it to suit himself. He is able to repurpose the land, and his place in it, to give him a power, an energy, a way to tell his story.

His observation regarding the need to move while writing is pertinent as Dylan spent most of his life moving across America: though he is strongly associated with New York, he only lived there for four or five years in the sixties, and for a brief part of the mid-seventies. All of his moves, however, were not so successful: as noted earlier, he left the city with his backing group to go and live in Woodstock. In 1967 they made music (eventually released as 1975's *The Basement Tapes*) which was light and carefree: after leaving the city, Dylan suddenly seemed unengaged with the social issues that he had previously been so synonymous with. Inspiration came harder; as he later wrote, New York had been the magnet, and by taking it away everything had fallen apart. He would spend much of the rest of his career in the shadow of those fast early years. There is a sense in which he was simply in the right place at the right time: Greenwich Village, an established centre of American Bohemia and dissent long before Dylan arrived, proved to be fertile ground for a young folksinger who could use song to give a voice to the hopes and fears felt by a generation. New York City would, of course, begin to change: as the sixties progressed, hippies would begin to outnumber beatniks, and the character of Greenwich Village would change. Perhaps Dylan just felt that the time was right to leave, before he himself became outdated.[14]

Both Bob Dylan and The Band took existing styles of music and re-contextualised them. Their manner of doing so is an idealistic use of space: they use particular styles of music to show the similarities which exist in different parts of the country. The fact that Dylan uses a basis of rural folk songs to help explain the feelings of young urbanites shows how many similarities exist between the struggles and emotions of apparently different people; The Band's focus on the history of a country to

[14] Dylan had of course told us, through 1964's "The Times They Are A-Changin'" that the "old road is rapidly changing" and we should "get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand": perhaps he felt it was his time to leave his position, as he was no longer willing to help the cause?

help guide it towards a better future shows how much remains constant throughout that history. If these different types of music, places or histories can be joined together, seemingly different people can be joined together too. The spaces they viewed were windows of opportunity, places that offered the possibility of unity. Both took music out of its traditional space and allowed it to grow in a new environment, showing that place offered potential, whether it be the city or the country.

1.3. Into the Seventies: The Times are a-Changed

Dylan and The Band's idealistic use of place was quickly becoming uncommon, however. As the sixties turned into the seventies, music became decidedly less optimistic. Unity and community, important facets of the idealistic message that the counterculture preached, quickly disappeared. For Rosenberg, The Rolling Stones' "Sympathy For The Devil", released at the very end of the sixties, "presaged the music of the 1970s, which replaced songs of community and hope with ones of individualism and decadence. In contrast to the communal spirit of the late 1960s, much of the music of the 1970s highlighted the cult of rock stars as "lonely isolated artists", people set apart from the larger community." (1991: 229) Neil Young captured the isolated, somewhat paranoid feel of the start of the seventies more fully than The Rolling Stones. He felt uneasy after the unexpected success of his *Harvest* album in 1972, which he felt put him in the "middle of the road," an uninteresting position, which inspired him to "[head] for the ditch. A rougher ride but I saw more interesting people there." (Bronson, 2003: 308)

His next set of albums are observations from this ditch. 1974's *On The Beach*[15] is at first deceptive: the album's cover shows a sunbather and starts with the sunny track "Walk On". But it soon becomes apparent that he is "on the beach" in the sense of being washed up. "Revolution Blues" shows Los Angeles as an artist's retreat: he presents an image of musicians and movie stars living isolated lives in the hills, cut of from the community that they surround. The narrator lives "in a trailer at the edge of town", unobserved by the stars that live in the mansions he is prowling around outside. Their lives are in danger, because they are isolated, they have forgotten the community of which they were part. The song is something of a tribute to Charles Manson; Young

[15] Which contains the songs "Walk On" and "Revolution Blues" referred to in the text.

found himself intrigued as to why Manson felt and behaved the way he did.

The stars that the song's protagonist stalks are those who were supposed to have been the vanguards of the sixties revolution: by the seventies, they are just as separate from the community as those who they were supposed to have replaced. There is disappointment that those who once preached about community were so quick to retire from it, become a new elite, and fence themselves off from the rest of the city. Los Angeles is nothing if not a city of contrasts: the luxury of the housing in the various hills and canyons which sprawl north of the city contrast sharply with the crowded neighbourhoods downtown and further south. These differences could be seen during the riots of 1992 and even today, as large American cities have generally experienced heavy gentrification, central L.A. remains poor, desperately so at times. In Young's vision, his adopted home[16] is a geographical manifestation of the divide between communities, and shows the weaknesses that are the result of this division.

When The Band retreated to the country, they asked people to join them, to get in touch with the land. Young's retreat is for pure isolation, a desire to disengage with the world. Like those he observes in the song, he lived in a large house in the hills once he could afford to leave downtown Los Angeles. He deliberately divided himself from the rest of the community, an idea which seemed to resonate in the popular discourse of the time. Spiro Agnew, Vice President in the Nixon administration started the decade by advocating the "disturbance" of the American people in order to deal with anti-war protestors. At a 1970 speech in Pennsylvania, he said: "If in challenging, we *polarize* the American people, I say it is a time for a positive polarization...It is time to rip away the rhetoric and to divide on authentic lines." (*apud* Chafe, 2007: 387) The implication is that it was time, after the liberalism of the sixties, for those in power to crack down on those who opposed them. There was no room for fence-sitting, and if that caused divisions, so be it. The music that started the seventies would be something of a retreat from the promise of the sixties: mostly personal, on the whole most popular artists avoided talking what was happening around them. But a divided society would not stay silent for too long: the foundations had been lain for a new musical movement which would attempt to tackle the issues the decade presented head-on.

[16] Young is Canadian; he arrived in California in 1966 and has lived there ever since.

Chapter 2. No Future?

By now, each citizen has found his own little obsessive corner to blast his brains in: as the sixties were supremely narcissistic, solipsism's what the seventies have been about, and nowhere is this better demonstrated than in the world of "pop" music. Lester Bangs- 1977

Towards the end of the seventies, a number of disparate groups and musicians would be collected together under the moniker "punk"; an ill-defined genre whose practitioners shared little except a certain animus for the music that preceded them. That the movement was based on a negation is indicative of the temperament of the time: the form would generally seem to concentrate on the things that it was not, and through this rejection of the past, attempt to forge a path towards what music could become. Most focus on place leans towards the territorial: often location is used as a point of division, a way to establish differences, a natural extension of the polarizing discourse of the time.

Rock music had gained a degree of acceptance by the start of the seventies; to many it no longer seemed the cry of youthful rebellion, and the wealth flaunted by bands like Led Zeppelin and The Rolling Stones (travelling in private jets, holing up in luxury villas to record albums) made them seem distant, and also made it seem that making music was indeed a good business venture. That was not the original point of the form. Punk aimed to instil vitality and rebellion back into a music whose spirit had dried up, and reduce the divide between performer and audience. So thorough was punk music's distaste for what rock 'n' roll had grown into, they usually rejected the "rock" label altogether. However, it is clear that, both musically and stylistically, it was an extension of the form, and thus it will be classified as a type of rock music within this essay.

2.1. Devolution: Moving Backwards in Order to Progress

Devo were among the earliest of the groups that would come to be recognised as punk, and show how clearly the genre's disaffected spirit stemmed from the politics of the age. Formed in Ohio in the wake of the 1970 National Guard shooting at Kent State University[17] the band were obsessed with what they saw as society's "devolution"

[17] Where, during a peaceful protest, "suddenly, with no warning, National Guardsmen turned, opened fire, shot four students dead and left eleven wounded. None of the four victims had broken a law; two of the girls killed were simply walking to class". (Chafe, 2007: 407-8)

(hence the name). The band's founder Gerald Casale: “We thought we were going backwards...at best history was discontinuous and cyclical. And we were going through a devolved cycle”. (*apud* Reynolds, 2009: 40) Their lack of optimism regarding the future is easily understandable given the circumstances under which they came to be, and as a reaction the group played a style of music that not only opposed that which came before it, but tried to actually become its musical opposite.

Jerky, staccato rhythms tried to remove all trace of rock 'n' roll or blues from the band's sound, guitar solos were quick and repetitive affairs that served to punctuate the jagged nature of the rhythms. If there was to be a dividing line to be made, it would be done with an attempt to completely reject the old, in any way possible. The band marked out their own territory with a devil-may-care attitude that showed almost complete disregard for what the listener may find appealing. If rock music was popular, they wanted to deconstruct it and piece it back together in a way most listeners would be unable to understand. If musicians were supposed to pose onstage when playing music, they wanted to dress up in boiler suits and plastic hats and dance as if pretending to be robots. If New York was to be the centre of punk music, they would stay in Akron, Ohio.

The group were a reaction, the sound of a disaffected youth. At the height of the counterculture's power they were told that they, as young Americans, would have a voice, would have power. Devo came of age while that voice was being squashed, and the sound of the band is them making sense of this loss of promise. For them, the school shootings marked a line of no retreat: a complete rejection of old ways. Casale was totally changed by them.

> I was kind of a hippy until then. For me it was the turning point...All these kids with their idealism, it was very naïve. Just shoot a few and it changed the whole world. Everybody straightened up and went home. Got their hair cut and worked for their daddies. It worked. (*apud* Reynolds, 2009: 42)

The group were deeply cynical, disappointed with almost everything happening at the time. They were an early incarnation of what would be a new stage of rock music: a thorough rejection, because their own sense of being part of a rejected generation was so overriding. They cherished their location in Ohio because it allowed them to grow at their own pace, out of any media spotlight and distant from a society of which they

wanted no part, as part of America's so-called "Rust Belt"[18] which appeared forgotten and served as an appropriate dividing line for the group. As the rest of America wanted to leave the area (population was fast dropping in the rust belt cities) they would therefore decide to stay. Their location is very important in understanding their music. Place can traditionally be seen to "mark the natural and social landscape" of a group of people, "locating it in time and place, in history." (Roseman, 1991: 175) Devo chose a forgotten industrial city as a place in which to expound their view of a "devolved" world; to point out all that is wrong in society while drawing attention to its most neglected areas. They used it to tell the story of a section of society that was not being represented in mainstream culture; they used music to mark their place in that society, to locate it in time and history.

Perhaps the clearest demonstration of their aesthetic is to be found in their second single, 1977's cover of The Rolling Stones' "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction". The song, and the album from which it came, titled *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!* were not received favourably upon their release, with reviewers noting a lack of feeling or warmth in the sound which, of course, was the point of the music. "Satisfaction" opens with an awkward drum pattern, followed by a series of rearrangements of the guitar and bass riffs from the original recording, which frequently appear to parody rock guitar playing. Musically, it is difficult to tell whether the song is insult or homage: they could be trying to bring an old song into a new era by reconstructing it, or they could be deconstructing it to show how ridiculous they felt the original really sounds, showing the need for a new form of music.

What the listener can be sure of is that the band are unsatisfied. There is a tension in the sound that puts the listener on edge, this is not relaxed music with a "groove", and this tension seems inseparable from their experiences at Kent State earlier in the decade. There is no warmth in the sound because they feel cold, the sound is edgy because the group are uncomfortable. They can get no satisfaction, either from life or from music, and most certainly not from previous forms of rock music. This is not the sound of entertainment, the search for a fleeting kick of satisfaction, of escapism; this is the sound of discontent being reflected back through your stereo, amplified for the listener's displeasure, the sound of American dissatisfaction from the rusted industrial

[18] An informal name for an area of the north-western United States that suffered economic decline and population loss as industrial jobs moved to other regions of the country, and the consequent urban decay which would follow. Though the term was not coined until the eighties, the effects could clearly be seen in the affected areas at the beginning of the seventies.

heart of America.[19]

Devo, and punk music in general, would make a point of amplifying these dividing lines. By identifying themselves as people who lived outside of the mainstream, they managed to forge an identity and a place for themselves, a process that brought with it a certain degree of power. But this did bring up some contradictions. For a start, it used the lines of division as a source of power. If society wanted to divide, punk would run with the idea; choosing to put itself on the wrong side of the line before anyone else had the choice to, indeed it was proud to do so. But by defining itself by using the lines of division, did this not serve to enforce an idea to which they were initially opposed? In some way it created a sense of unity, as those who felt they were outside of the mainstream had the opportunity to become part of a scene. But it also worked to keep those boundaries in place, by means of its dependence upon them in order to express itself. Furthermore, if punk then was to become mainstream (as it later would), how could it continue to exist? Would it not then simply negate itself, being at root a rejection of what was considered to be mainstream music?

2.2. Punk: Repudiation Enters the Mainstream

Punk music dealt with more contradictions once it grew to become a movement, and when more, mostly young, musicians formed bands which conformed to a punk style. Musically, most of these groups were not as musically adept as Devo. Many were formed in a more traditional rock vein: groups like The Sex Pistols, The Clash, The Ramones and The New York Dolls may have been rebelling against the music of the past but they took most of their sound and image from that very same past. They were also from the same places: New York and London were long-established centres of rock music, and to come from a smaller city in the Midwest appeared to be quite a cut in rock tradition, whereas to be another rock band in New York or London made a break with tradition that much harder.

[19] Strangely enough, the band were one of the first to appear regularly on MTV. When the channel was first launched in 1981, there were relatively few music videos available. Devo, as part of their desire to pull rock music apart and try to utilise different forms of expression, had decided to make short movies to accompany their songs (though mainly for entertainment, seeing little potential for their release). In the absence of having much else to play, MTV put their videos on heavy rotation despite their dissimilarity to the rest of the playlist. The group hoped that the channel could be a real alternative to the traditional methods of promoting the group: they were confounded when, once other artists started to make videos after realising the commercial potential of MTV, they were swiftly dropped from the playlist.

Furthermore, these bands were not as musically adept as Devo. One way of attempting to detach themselves from the past was by removing the self-indulgent elements of rock music: that meant less guitar solos and complicated chord patterns, and a deliberate lack of proficiency[20] which lent the music an "authenticity" as it would need to be simple and to the point. Still, not having any technical proficiency meant that most musicians would be forced to copy existing ways of playing their instruments, which for most ultimately meant copying existing records. Therefore much of the earliest punk records imitated the rock that preceded them, and that which came later imitated the existing punk records, not exactly a blueprint for starting a revolutionary new form of music. Since records that devolved too much from the form were deemed too "arty" or "fancy" to be punk, it gave groups little space to move within the form, making the sound as limited and claustrophobic as the societal forces it was supposed to be escaping from. How was it possible to have a form of music that was suggestive of progress when one of its defining principles stated that it must remain simple?

These limitations were a particular problem in Britain, at least at first, when the then largely-unknown Sex Pistols caused a tabloid furore by swearing on live television. The following days newspapers detailed the incident, and a suitable scapegoat for a nation's discontent was found: reporting on punk proved good copy, and the tabloids continued to report on The Sex Pistols' (and to some degree, other punk group's) every movement. The movement was until then largely undefined, and in the absence of a clear message from The Sex Pistols or any other punk group (aside from fairly ambiguous references to anarchy or general discontent) meant that most fans were informed of punk rock via the sensationalist headlines of the British press,[21] and this would turn out to be a message far stronger than any attempt the bands could make to steer the ethos of the movement.

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[20] The amount of talent which was supposed to be required is displayed by the 1976 English punk fanzine "Sideburns", who printed their guide to playing in a band, the "first and last in a series" – it was a picture of three guitar chords, followed by the instruction "Now form a band!" (Savage, 2001: 280) Image available to view online at www.punkjourney.com/fanzines.php

[21] The group's repeated swearing on live television, where they were supposed to be promoting their debut single, the appropriately-titled "Anarchy In The U.K." led to a "moral panic", a media reaction Stanley Cohen observed (through the British tabloid's fixation on the Mods and Rockers youth subcultures of the sixties) as having a snowballing effect, where a "deviant or group of deviants is segregated or isolated and this operates to alienate them from conventional society. They perceive themselves as more deviant, group themselves with others in a similar position, and this leads to more deviance".(1972: 9) This same effect can be clearly observed in media reporting on The Sex Pistols and, by extension, punk rock: the group and their followers, according to tabloid headline, came to represent all that was wrong with society, rather than being seen as a reaction against the elements of that society which constrained them.

In America, punk was seen as something mostly attached to an underground or alternative style that had been in existence, especially in New York, for almost as long as rock music itself. Therefore its bands, The Ramones and The New York Dolls excepted, were generally more willing to push the boundaries of rock music in a variety of ways, initially at least, as they were able to operate within the structure of the existing alternative rock music framework which was well-established in the city. But as this strand of punk was, by and large, limited to New York, the first most of the rest of the country heard about punk music was from England, where its infamy had led to its being seen to be as much as a youth movement as a style of music. Through this coverage, isolated groups (like Devo) were drawn into the current of the wider movement, which stretched across the Atlantic. Though territorial pride would prevent groups from either country admitting so, punk came to feed off the energy between both countries.

The tabloid furore which drove the movement had an interesting effect on the identity of the movement. Punk in the UK had been steadily growing from 1976, mostly just in the capital, as a reaction to "a fully fledged capitalist recession, with extremely high rates of inflation, a toppling currency, a savaging of living standards, and a sacrificing of the working class to capital." (Hall, 1988: 58) The Labour government, traditionally champions of the working class, were failing to provide jobs or alleviate poverty; as in America, many of the inner-cities were in a state of advanced decay, and the morale of those who lived there had taken a beating too.[22] Punk in Britain was the voice of these dispossessed: those brought up in the shadow of greatness, trying to find a new identity in a nation which seemed to constantly look to the past. Punks were those who had grown up with the ideals of the sixties but come of age too late to enjoy the liberation it was supposed to have given, those who had been schooled to appreciate the importance of the Empire and the end of war, who were told of the nations greatness but lived on a rotting council estate, outside which bin-bags piled up because the workers were on strike against the Labour government that was supposed to be looking out for its workers. The nation seemed exist as a contradiction of itself and offered little to its youth: it was only natural that youth would want to rebel, and punk was the sound of

[22] John Lydon, lead singer of The Sex Pistols, shows how low self-esteem had sunk in his description of his background: "I consider myself working class. We're lazy, good-for-nothing bastards, absolute cop-outs. We never accept responsibility for our own lives, and that's why we'll always be downtrodden. We seem to enjoy it in a perverse kind of way. As working class, we like to be told what to do, led like sheep to the slaughter." (1994: 49)

that rebellion.

In London, at first, the movement was headed by The Sex Pistols. Like Devo, they spoke of a divided society. Unlike Devo, their basic rock sound offered little that was musically different, except lyrics that try to break out of the confines of the society that contained them: Sex Pistols songs railed against the Queen, the I.R.A. and the fractious state of the Union at the time, suburbia, the inner-city – anything which was trying to contain them. They were extremely angry, but once their anger had burned out, they had nowhere left to go. None of their songs clearly state what they support or enjoy; their entire repertoire is built on the negative. Their songs do exhibit a certain power: they speak of an underbelly, an almost Dickensian subculture, what John Lydon, their vocalist, would later sing of as "the side of London that the tourists never see".[23] London was a clear fixation in most early punk songs: it was established as a decaying metropolis, the physical manifestation of a declining nation which appeared to be fine on the surface, but was rotten underneath.

The Clash, contemporaries of The Sex Pistols, paint a cracked picture of a sedate, not swinging London in "London's Burning", from 1977 - "London's burning with boredom now" – amongst images of high-rise tower blocks, the ultimate image of failure in Britain. Built in the post-war economic boom as an alternative to the crowded Victorian housing of which most cities were made up, council housing was supposed to fight the evils of poverty identified by William Beveridge at the end of the Second World War by creating housing that would offer open spaces and high standards of living for the poor and working classes. By the seventies, the houses had fallen into disrepair: they may have been improvements upon the tiny slums they replaced at first, but councils had not maintained them, and they were regarded by many as the worst housing available.[24] What should have been one of Britain's proudest achievements, and a gift for the working classes, turned out to be a curse: condemned to standards of poor living in a series of modernist blocks which were out of step with the architecture that surrounded them. If their inhabitants felt outcast because of their social class, now the

[23] With his group Public Image Ltd, on 1979's "Chant" from *Metal Box*

[24] The Labour party of the time almost refused to build anew, or improve what had been built. J. Davies describes a situation in which "a social democratic society had been created and in its wake both Conservatives and Labour had done little more than administer it...it was as if a sturdy family car which had given excellent service over the years had now begun to develop a series of faults. Instead of scrapping the car and buying a new one, the Wilson administration had instead confined itself to tinkering, with patching up here and there and hoping this would suffice." (1996: 332) What most took from this was that the situation they were in would not be improving any time soon; it is not much a jump from here to the message given by the Sex Pistols, that there was "No future for you!"

buildings in which they dwelt marked them out as different as well.

Punk fits into this landscape, it establishes itself as the music of tower blocks, the music of the failed council estate's high rise tower block. It focuses on a more realistic depiction, because the images of Britain that appeared in rock songs of the preceding years did not represent the lives of people on a council estate. Like Devo, they wanted to amplify their discontent and play it back to the listener through song. The sound of the tower block is isolated in "London's Burning", the protagonist hears "the wind [howl] through the empty blocks looking for a home", and like the wind, "I run through the empty stone because I'm all alone".

Susan J Smith describes place in music as something used to "express and reinforce the status order, challenge some of the more stifling aspects of the economic hierarchy, and help make sense of the political geography of identity". (1997, 505) The Sex Pistols sought to find the limits of what they could say in song, 1977's single "God Save The Queen" being a deliberately offensive mockery of the national anthem in time for the Queen's Silver Jubilee. The record was banned from most radio stations[25] and accelerated the sense of outrage the group was generating: thus they asserted their place in society by constantly challenging to those in power. They were those who were supposed to have no power, and their continued assertion of themselves, their continued challenge, were attempts to establish their identity and to challenge conventional wisdom of those in power.

Like Devo, they also used cover versions in an attempt to assert their status and kill their idols: unlike Devo they lacked the technical proficiency to deconstruct. They covered The Small Faces' "Whatcha Gonna Do About It", subverting the song slightly by singing "I want you to know that I *hate* you baby" in lieu of "love you", and when performing rock 'n' roll classic "Johnny B. Goode" Lydon appeared to forget the words, instead asking the band to stop, because he hates the song. But ultimately, all that these versions could do was show the musical influences of the band, and the limits of their abilities; musically, the band sounded like a cover band, and not a particularly good one. Where Devo used a cover to deconstruct their idols and undermine their worth in a new age, the best that The Sex Pistols could manage was an insult.

Ultimately, their attempts to defy the confines of society only worked to hold

[25] Mostly due to its description of the Queen as "a moron" and the leader of a "fascist regime", not particularly popular sentiments. The tabloid furore that had been ignited from their having sworn of live television meant that the lyrical content of the song became front-page news, only serving to hasten the "snowball effect" of the moral panic observed in Stanley Cohen's study.

them in place. Though they could react against the British establishment, it is ludicrous to think that they could ever properly challenge it. They provoked some unrest, but ultimately could not escape the confines of their identity, just as their cover versions can never move further than imitating the groups they want to destroy. In their 1977 song "Satellite", they reacted against the dormitory towns of London which foster conservatism, but all they can offer is hate - "You know I don't like where you come from / It's just a satellite of London" – the implication is that London is somehow better, and they mark a divide of place. But as they could offer nothing constructive, the use of place is simply to establish a division. Of course, they were challenging "aspects of the economic hierarchy" (Smith, 1997: 505), but when there is little constructive being said, when there is no insinuation of what could come, the message is only powerful or meaningful for as long as an angry outburst can last, which as turned out was not for very long.

The chorus to "God Save The Queen" told listeners that there was "no future for you" and it was true for the band too: they broke up whilst trying to break out of Britain, on their first tour of America at the beginning of 1978, and set a precedent: many English punk bands would not succeed in America. In hindsight, it is obvious that the tour would be a disaster. Planned to deliberately avoid the media centres of the East Coast and concentrate on areas that would be hostile to the group (to provoke a reaction) but hopefully enrapture the disaffected youth who they thought were their rightful audience, they started in Texas and toured the South, and as expected encountered plenty of violent confrontation that only exasperated tensions within the group. America could have been a chance for them to escape the confines of the small British punk scene, as America was certainly interested in their music and what they had to say. But ultimately they chose to retreat, and after a short tour they flew back to England separately.

Much discussion of punk focusses on this period, from 1976-77, where a host of groups formed in reaction a hostile environment. But most of these groups explore place no more than The Sex Pistols, and have similar limitations. Across the Atlantic, the media sensation that accompanied British punk confused most New Yorkers. The movement to which the American musicians were attached had only loosely been identified as punk; though the term had originated in America from *Punk Magazine* (published in 1976) they had not adapted it as a general term for the music, wary of becoming part of a mass movement. At first, it may have seemed that the movement

lacked power because it lacked cohesion. After the effects of the tabloids on English punk, it became clear that its disjointed nature was more of a blessing than a curse: the power in the music lay in the fact that it was indefinable. As soon as the mainstream had an understanding of what punk was in the UK, it lost most of its power, and many fans lost interest.

2.3. New York: Music and Survival in the Fear City

The suffocating sense of boredom that accompanied life in Britain did not translate in New York; perhaps this is because their sense of place was not as constricted as that of the English punks. New York City, as represented by its punk inhabitants, still offered a great degree of freedom. It still functioned a beacon for those from surrounding parts of the country, a place to come to in order to escape the boredom of suburban America. In many ways, the city's status of being dangerous had only increased its appeal.[26] Cheap rents abounded in the (fairly dangerous) East Village and Lower East Side of downtown Manhattan which gave birth to punk, and the lawless nature of its streets afforded its inhabitants a degree of freedom unavailable elsewhere. A sense of belonging was attained by those who lived there: the hard nature of life in the city formed part of their identity. To be there despite the danger that existed on its streets was proof of artistic commitment.

The location of, and indeed the name of, the East Village is important.[27] The former centre of bohemian activity was Greenwich Village; the East Village lacked any cultural cachet, being considerably more down-at-heel. Having a movement based in the East Village was symbolic of a new era: its practitioners were declaring something new, by way of using the boundaries that existed within the city. The main boundary between the two neighbourhoods was The Bowery – at that time a skid row populated mostly by alcoholics. Punk's main club, CBGB,[28] was opened right in the middle of the street. If

[26] Urban decay had grown to such an extent that even the police considered it dangerous, and in 1975 they distributed a pamphlet to tourists called "Welcome to Fear City: A Survival Guide for Visitors to the City of New York" that advised tourists: "Until things change, stay away from New York City if you possibly can." (Baker, 2015) Though it was made for political gain (while handing them out, the police were in a pay dispute with local government) the points it contained were real enough, and resonated with New York's inhabitants, who lived with rampant crime. The East Village and Lower East Side neighbourhoods, where punk was centred, was particularly affected areas.

[27] Today the East Village and Lower East Side form two fairly distinct neighbourhoods of Lower Manhattan, but in the seventies they were thought of as two parts of the same area, being proximate and largely similar in character.

[28] Which stood for Country, Bluegrass and Blues, and betrayed owner Hilly Kristal's original musical

people wanted to get involved with the music, they would have to deal with the realities of life in the city; punk would not take place in the bohemian Greenwich Village. This was *east* of the village, removed from the past.[29] Much of the neighbourhood was ravaged by drugs, which only appealed more to the sense of decadence. Rent was so low that many landlords preferred to burn down their buildings to collect insurance money, unthinkable in today's New York, but typical throughout the seventies and eighties. This was the identity that the New York punks chose for themselves.

Though the East Village contained a special boundary from the rest of the city, the city itself was also a marked removal from the rest of America. People came here to lead different lives, as Bob Dylan had in the sixties, and many, many more before him; it was removed from the mainstream of American life, a place where one could live out a fantasy of oneself. Patti Smith described the city's appeal to the suburbanite in the pre-punk track "Piss Factory" from 1974. Dreaming of New York from across the river in New Jersey, she expressed the sensation of being trapped in a low-paying job, lacking in self-respect and friends, having "nothing to hide here save desire" and dreaming of the liberation of New York, begging to be set free from the monotony of her life. Once she arrived in New York she never looked back, the city becoming a part of her identity. Another early punk, Lydia Lunch, arrived from the north of New York State when she was 16 in the mid-seventies, and described the city's appeal:

> We all felt like: Here was the family you didn't have at home...It was very social. People were going to have a goddamn good time because it was rebellion against death. As everything's collapsing, as buildings are burning, as poverty spreads its evil face across the whole fucking city, as everyone is starving...the music became the rebellion against all that. It was denying death, even if it was doing it in an angry, nihilistic kind of way...because it felt like the apocalypse had happened. It felt like this city was the end of the world. (*apud* Moore and Coley, 2008: 131)

If the world was falling apart around them, New York offered these artists what might be their last chance to express themselves, and they took up that offer, factoring in the danger of the city as a necessary price for creativity. The sense of place attached to the city is not just one of pride, it is also one of uniqueness: Smith and Lunch both

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intentions for the club (though in full, the club was called CBGB & OMFUG, the second part standing for Other Music for Uplifting Gormandizers, which seemed more appropriate for the music which made the club famous, though this full name was rarely used).

[29] When legendary British musician and producer Brian Eno came to New York to record a punk album (1978's *No New York*), he deliberately stuck to this rule of boundary: though some prominent groups lived in the more arty areas of Soho, the only ones he recorded were those east of The Bowery.

imply that New York City was like nowhere else. The dirt and crime were a perverse attraction for those who had looked for danger in America's wholesome suburbs and failed to find it. Combined with the mystique attached to New York, artists were proud to call it home, flawed though it may have been.

Perhaps it is because of this sense of freedom that existed there that New York punks failed to understand its English variant. Nonetheless they had to deal with it, as the two scenes became quickly entwined: most of the more successful groups spent plenty of time touring both the US and UK, in addition to the fact that both countries have a long history of sharing their musical exports. As punk became increasingly popular in America, the fact that the New York scene was so small meant that many in, for example Los Angeles, took their musical cues from the British more than they did from New York.

America, anyway, was dealing with similar solvency problems to the UK, and in many ways their future outlook seemed nearly as bleak, so the message from the UK made sense to plenty outside of the small group of New York punks. Working class Americans could empathise with the British who were let down by their left-wing party, feeling similarly abandoned, and like the British, would ultimately decide to vote for a right-wing party. "The expansion of the Republican party fed off the disillusionment of many union members who, along with others in the lower middle and working classes, felt the Democrats, and allied union leaders, had abandoned them." (Chappell in Agnew and Rosenzweig, 2006: 316). Though downtown New York was an excellent playground for those with few responsibilities, for others it was fast turning into a ghetto, and people wanted a change.[30]

2.4. Post-Punk: Exposing the Miserable Lie

Punk's initial burst of anger exhausted itself fairly quickly: it was difficult to make music based on only hatred. The most interesting music continued in the vein of what had been happening before punk, which turned into a movement that would come to be known as post-punk. The time period from which the group actually came from is not

[30] Self and Sugrue detail a "feedback loop" in which people fleeing American downtowns reduced the tax-base, causing cuts to services which encouraged even more to leave, amplifying the cycle. "As a consequence, by the 1960s and 1970s many major cities teetered on the brink of bankruptcy...Cleveland and New York declared fiscal collapse in the mid-1970s...while their suburban neighbours prospered." (2006: 25)

important: the label designates an attitude towards music which features much of the rejection and sense of identity which punk had. Generally, the music was more open: technical proficiency was not seen as a problem, as the new mainstream had become groups which imitated the punk sound, which in turn imitated the rock sound. The music was decidedly more experimental, and took in a wide range of different sounds; the musicians "dedicated themselves to fulfilling punk's uncompleted musical revolution, and explored new sonic possibilities through their embrace of electronics, noise, reggae's dub techniques, disco production, jazz and the classical avant-garde." (Reynolds, 2006: 17)

Post-punk found two natural homes. In America, it still centred around New York and its surrounding areas, and in the UK, the movement took place largely in the post-industrial North. When promoting Devo's first album in the UK, a competition was offered in which a listener could win a trip to Akron, Ohio. Listeners were invited to "marvel at the desecration of the earth's crust, where the American dream ends." (Reynolds, 2006: 30) This made perfect sense to those in the north of England: they inhabited a very similar landscape. Ghosts of previous generations were scattered across the city in the form of factories and the remnants of industry: constant indicators of the decline in manufacturing, the decline of the importance of the North. Those who lived in Sheffield, Manchester or Liverpool were confronted daily with reminders of better old days and no hint of an improved future. As with Devo in post-industrial Ohio, the post-punk groups clung to this barren landscape to assert their difference to the rest of the country. The landscape is marked: post-punk music would document the erosion of the North of England through its attachment to the landscape.

Ohio proved fertile ground for post-punk; Pere Ubu were another group from the state, hailing from Cleveland, less than an hour's drive from Devo's home of Akron. It formed a huge part of their identity: their earliest interviews were full of references to the inspiration they found in the empty spaces and industrial ruins there. Singer David Thomas "thought it was magnificent...like going to an art museum or something." (*apud* Reynolds, 2006: 31) The comparison to an art gallery is revelatory, as they pioneered an "industrial" sound that attempted to match their surroundings with their music. Thomas said that he "understood the relation of sound to vision. You'd go by the steel mills and there was this very powerful electrical feeling, combined with a particular sound in the air that conjured up a whole set of visions with it." (*apud* Savage, 2001: 441) Pere Ubu were a product of their environment, and they managed to carry the same sense of

wonder at the power of it that Dylan did at New York. Like The Band, they take power from the land, and work it into their identity.

Debut album *The Modern Dance* places mechanised scratching and wailing sounds next to guitars, off-beat rhythms create a "modern dance" that sounds nothing like the old dance. Their sense of place is simply celebratory; they do not wish to invite comparisons to more prosperous parts of the country, they are happy experimenting with the many possibilities Cleveland can offer. In their experimentation, they found the future that the Sex Pistols insisted didn't exist: and they found it through taking pride in their home, not trying to destroy. They abstrusely depict the landscape of their home because it offers them so much potential: the tower blocks are not dwellings of misery, but "dub housing", as the title of their second album declares. Undoubtedly the image is still a negative – the imposing blocks that are depicted on the cover do not look inviting – but after the negativity of punk they wished to at least attempt see the world in a different light, to analyse rather than dismiss, because it gives way to opportunity. Keyboard player Allen Ravenstine: "Things are rough, things are weird, there's no sense in ignoring that – which is why Ubu music isn't all sweetness and light. But you gotta *confront* the problems." (*apud* Reynolds, 2006: 36)

In Britain's North, it was easier for artists to create as they existed outside the focus of the media's gaze, which was to remain obsessed with London and punk for some time. Not only were the groups freer, but they had less expectation placed upon them: it had been some time since any significant music had emerged from the North, and it built up its own scene quite independently of London. Factory Records gave the movement a home in Manchester (the largest city in the North) and functioned as both a record label and a music venue. Location was important to the music: it established itself as a different music base to London. Its name was a comment on the area, as much of the northern landscape was blighted by factories which had fallen out of use, the label stated an intent to rejuvenate the area: one such factory in the heart of the city centre was turned into the Hacienda nightclub so emblematic of the label.[31]

Factory Records helped greatly in the formation of a regional identity by being a small label that could compete with those from London or even further afield by virtue of its strong identity, and one which was specific to and fed into the past of Manchester.

[31] The famous Hacienda nightclub ushered in two movements to Manchester: post-punk and acid house. Acid house and the raves and drugs with which it were associated would become another moral panic in Britain in the 1990s.

The labels strong aesthetic was reminiscent of the golden period of American independent labels like Sun or Stax, though with a distinctly punk-influenced twist: Factory did not offer its bands contracts, they were free to come and go as they pleased, a highly unusual move as bands were often signed by a small label who invested money and time in them before they moved over to a bigger label, and so the use of contracts secured the small label's investment. Not having them was an arrogant gesture but also one which spoke of a great pride in the distinct personality of the North, and the proud desire that the label had to break the mould, whatever the cost. The label helped foster a musical importance which still exists in the Manchester of today, a city that still exists outside of the London-centric music media of Britain. Most of the bands did indeed stay with the label, though unfortunately its unconventional business practices eventually rendered it bankrupt.

Joy Division were one of Factory's first signings, and would prove to be Pere Ubu's English counterparts. Formed around Manchester, their sound was a distillation of the north's largest conurbation: musically, the sound is full of wide open space, almost hollow, like the moors that surround the city and the empty factories that dotted the landscape. But the lyrics are full of isolation and deep anxiety; the landscape is not close to powerful enough to escape into, rather it provides a barren and unresponsive ground on which singer Ian Curtis' observations are projected. Manchester sounds both suffocating and full of promise, a suitable description for the city at the time. Like The Sex Pistols before them, Joy Division baulked at the prospect of America; on the eve of their first tour there, Ian Curtis hung himself at his home. The reasons for this were manifold, but ultimately it seemed to confirm an unfortunate side of not just British but especially Northern identity: one was not able to leave the place to which one belonged.

Manchester, in seeking to become a new centre of music that removed itself from London, occasionally fell into punk's trap: by focussing too much upon the negative (wanting deliberately to be removed from the capital, and thus opposing any ideas which came from there on principle) it narrowed its own possibilities. Still, because Manchester was such rich ground for exploration, it allowed for much music that really connected with place. Describing Joy Division and their contemporaries The Fall, Simon Reynolds suggests that “it's hard to imagine them coming from anywhere other than 1970s Manchester. Something about the city's gloom and decay seemed to seep deep into the fabric of their very different sounds.” (2006: 174) John Cooper Clarke, the celebrated “punk poet”, detailed Manchester's poverty meticulously in

1980's “Beasley Street”, a place where even the rats have rickets, and that was so far removed from the bright lights of opportunity that it is defined by its lack of anything: “Where the action isn't / That's where it is.”

But the band that would become most strongly identifiable with Manchester would be The Smiths,[32] a band that took most of punk's preoccupations but dealt with them in a more ingenious manner. Being far enough removed from punk in location and time (they formed in 1982) allowed them to avoid many of the trappings of the genre; their sound reflected their city in the sense of providing an alternative to London. Where punk shouted to get its message across, The Smiths offered a more subtle criticism that was equally damning and, underneath, equally angry: Manchester's lack of opportunity and poverty was more severe than London's.

They also succeeded in bringing a literary element back to the form. At punk's height, anything seen as being too well-cultivated would be treated with scorn or suspicion, a good education being something associated with wealthier people, who were of course the enemy in England's class-ridden society. But the group recognised the importance of being able to properly express themselves; they would have to be articulate in order to make themselves heard. They were an example of the long-lasting legacy of punk: a group that managed to be extremely critical of authority whilst incorporating elements of pop music; their sound was light and breezy, almost managing to mask the acrimony bubbling underneath, and deliberately opposing the dark sound and nature of Joy Division.

1985's “Nowhere Fast”, for example, is an exploration of the limitations of place and the expectation of a miserable future in a humdrum surrounding: surrounded by household appliances, the singer imagines that “If the day came when I felt a natural emotion / I'd get such a shock I'd probably jump in the ocean”, and the thought of the world outside only serves to remind him of missed opportunities: “When a train goes by, it's such a sad sound...” Like many of singer and songwriter Morrissey's creations, he is stuck in a limbo of emotions: “When I'm lying in my bed / I think about life and I think about death / But neither one particularly appeals to me”, nothing will satisfy him, but this is no great surprise, as he has come to expect no satisfaction from his life either. His lack of contentment is clearly linked to one of punk's main sources of discontent, in a way which appears to be entirely natural: “I'd like to drop my trousers to the Queen /

[32] 'Smith' being the most commonplace surname in Britain, the implication being that anyone could play music, a subtler version of the “now form a band” message from the “Sideburns” fanzine.

Every sensible child will know what this means / The poor and the needy are selfish and greedy, on her terms". Hatred for the establishment is not an act of rebellion, but a display of intelligence.[33]

London features heavily in The Smith's repertoire as a kind of temptation or betrayal of one's identity; not so much in terms of the place itself, but in the fact that you would have to turn your back on Manchester to get there. In 1987's "Half A Person", the singer sums up his life thus: "Sixteen clumsy and shy, I went to London and died", that is, he entered a place which opposed him during the eighties, when the north was essentially left to decay by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government; an administration who placed little interest or investment in Britain outside the southern half of England. Moving to London then presents a moral dilemma: should one stay in Manchester or seek a better life in London, and which of these is true to one's identity? Does staying true to this northern identity preclude happiness?[34]

In comparison to London we are shown, in 1984's "Miserable Lie", the alternative: a life's hard work to achieve the glum comfort of a house-share in a stuffy suburb: "What do we get for our suffering and pain? / A rented room in Whalley Range". Whalley Range was (and remains) a nondescript area of South Manchester and exists in the song as a symbol of the suffocating nature of existence in the city. The suburb is part of the city, yet removed from it, and from the tone of the song one would imagine that its inhabitants shared a similar feeling. Not distinct enough to be noted in any way, the area simply exists, and this sombre and unremarkable existence is the "miserable lie" of the worker's life.

Perhaps we understand this part of Mancunian identity best in the 1987 song "Is It Really So Strange?", in which the song's protagonist flits between Manchester and London: he finds no pleasure in either, leaving one for the other in quick succession. Ultimately, it is Britain that is unsatisfactory: by blaming his displeasure on North or South, he is responding to the divisive tactics at play and misses the bigger picture, that he should be directing his displeasure at those in charge of the country. The Smiths

[33] In "The Queen Is Dead", a fantasy of a Britain without a monarch from 1986's album of the same name, Morrissey apologises to sinking to the level of punkish violence which he inherently feels toward the monarchy. Thinking of "her very lowness with her head in a sling, I'm truly sorry but it sounds like a wonderful thing."

[34] 1987's "London" (in which moving to the capital is a possibility every northerner has entertained at least once) the southern-bound traveller notes "the jealousy in the eyes of the ones who had to stay behind"; envy at his having crossed the border, escaped the confines of his environment. But he cannot enjoy this move, asking himself "do you think you've made the right decision this time?" Escape is possible, but it will not bring pleasure.

portray a divided and stifling nation, with no clear way out.[35] They reject the more ill-informed ways of escape – against drugs and the quicksand darkness that absorbed Joy Division – but they also failed to show anything positive. This is the "miserable lie" of existence in the North at the time; an identity rooted in a sense of place that confines one's movement and limits one's future.

Not every group allowed themselves to be so confined, however. The first British group to truly break from the confines punk set was actually one of the earliest punk groups, The Clash. As has already been observed, their early material was very much rooted within London. After the Sex Pistols broke up at the start on 1978, they became de-facto leaders of the punk movement. At first, this was a title they were unable to handle: The Sex Pistols drew most media attention, and the groups that existed in their shadows found life much simpler. But with The Sex Pistols gone, The Clash were expected to carry the flame, and they did not know how to do this. The Sex Pistols had showed the limitations of their place, and the limitations of using the negative. But punk aesthetics seemed to preclude one from doing anything else, and The Clash were firmly established as a punk band. They wanted to break out, but were wary of doing so.

They show this, and the limitations of their identity, in the *Cost Of Living EP* which was released at the beginning of 1979. Musically, the band are lacking in direction, and lyrically they show the difficulty of mapping out a future while trying to stay true to the straitjacket of punk's code. "Groovy Times" and "Gates Of The West" show how they split their thinking. In "Groovy Times" – so named because such times are in short supply – Britain is run-down and racked by recession ("The high street shops are boarded up and the terrace is fenced in"). Indeed, lines run right across society ("see-through shields are walled across the way that you came in"). This truth is then mocked by the false promises offered, that would be believed only by the most naïve: "groovy times are here again". The word "groovy" is deliberately redolent of the sixties, the mood of which is long gone, and the desire amongst some for a return to that past is made to appear not only retrogressive but ridiculously optimistic.

In "Gates Of The West" the group are poised on the verge of success in America,

[35] Morrissey would later make another way out clear: by the end of the eighties, heroin had ravaged Manchester, particularly its poorer estates. 1989's "Interesting Drug" is written from the perspective of an addict heavily in debt, who opines: "You wonder why we're only half-ashamed...look around, can you blame us?" The environment provides nothing to hope for, and many did indeed sink into the desperation of heroin addiction: the council estates mentioned previously, away from the view of the main road, provided excellent space for dealers to covertly peddle their trade.

and they are hesitant to embrace it. One would imagine that they would embrace the opportunity with open arms: whilst America embraced the group, the British press lambasted them for looking West, both because the country was seen as the home of the corporate culture that rock was trying to destroy, and because The Clash themselves had so explicitly stated their supposed hatred of all things American on one of their earliest songs, 1977's "I'm So Bored Of The U.S.A.", a diatribe against perceived American dominance. The press – and the band themselves, on this song – typify prevailing British attitudes towards America; jealous of its many successes, ignorant of its obviously similarities, and quick to blame it for apparent failings at home. When the band toured America twice in 1979 and not in the UK at all, they were accused of selling out their fans to focus on becoming successful in the home of corporate culture.

"Gates Of The West" identifies this crossroad. They are standing "in the shadow" of the city: do they move out of it ("There's a move into the future – the U.S.A.") or stay behind? Certainly they cannot enjoy their current status: "I should be jumping shouting that I made it all this way / From Camden Town station to 44th & 8th / Not many make it this far, and many say we're great / But just like them we walk on and we can't escape our fate". So they remain "standing at the gates of the west", staring opportunity in the face, not sure which way to move. Aside from their own worries about their identity, many before them had failed; could they make it there?

At some point that year, they decided to make that move, and they chose America. 1979's seminal album *London Calling* would be released at the end of December, and would push open the door to a new decade. Perhaps more than anyone else analysed herein, the Clash imbibe a sense of place into their music, and indeed their personalities. They escape the confines of punk music – their sound in 1978 and the start of 1979 was starting to sound distinctly rock-inspired – by opening themselves up to a new place, letting in a whole new variety of sounds. They had always included the sound of the city on their records; even when they were a straight-forward punk band they included a dub-reggae cover of Junior Murvin's "Police and Thieves" in their set. But now they had an entire history at their fingertips.

They may have once stated that they were bored of the U.S.A., but they were all brought up on American music, and to become a part of that history was irresistible: once they opened themselves up to it, their joy was palpable.[36] They reduce their

[36] Their change in attitude can be seen in the difference between "Gates Of The West" and "Lightning Strikes (Not Once But Twice)", recorded just one year later. Where they had once cowered in the

reliance on boundaries which had come to define punk music[37] and let in sounds from anywhere: rockabilly, rap, zydeco, soul, New Orleans R&B all jostle for space on *London Calling.* The longer they remained in New York, the more the city came through in their sound; they attempt rap, and describe arguably their proudest moment as when they were getting regularly airplay on a hip-hop programme on New York's WBLS station; they are happiest now when crossing genres and defying expectations. (Letts, *The Clash: Westway To The World* 2000)

That London is central to their identity is undoubtable. *London Calling* kicks off with the doom-laden song of the same name, detailing an apocalypse which will drown the city. But after asserting this, they launch into a joyful rendering of "Brand New Cadillac", a rock 'n' roll song played straight: this is no negative cover, but an honest and jubilant celebration of rock 'n' roll music, something the group all enjoyed but which had been denied by punk due to its supposed refusal of the past. They revel in the recovery of their identity: they are rock 'n' roll fans, and don't care who knows it. In the album, they will deliberately deal with concerns that fall outside of their remit: they are no longer cowering at the gates of the west, they have walked through them. The album excites because, though it is centred in London, as their previous albums had been, it looks towards the world. They use London to show that they can have a deep attachment to place yet still be moved by others, and of course they hark back to London's former preeminence in world affairs as the centre of an empire: the phrase "London calling" is a grandiose and imposing statement.

The album is exuberant because of the myth of America, and because of the myth of rock music, so long denied that it could be reasserted with great and pure pleasure. The album's recording process had a legend literally hanging over it; the producer was Guy Stevens, an English producer who played a great part in the development of rock music in the UK during the seventies. Just as it was liberating for them to cover the illicit rock 'n' roll song, it was liberating for them to admit their connection to the past in choosing Stevens as a producer. The Clash also show their willingness to maintain the legend; Stevens was close to death at the time of producing the album due to an alcohol dependancy which meant that, in truth, he was only present

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shadow of America, they shout in a gleeful faux-American accent: "Did you hear the news y'all? / London town on the Broadway!"

[37] Early track "1977" (from the same year) detailed a divided and violent city in which the type of weapon defined the postcode: the poor had "knives in West 11" whilst the rich had "sten guns in Knightsbridge".

for a very small part of the albums recording and production, which the band largely took care of by themselves. (Letts, *The Making of London Calling: The Last Testament* 2004) They are unwilling to let the truth get in the way of the myth, though, and still insist that Stevens was the producer; or perhaps they simply believed that the power they gained from being involved with a rock legend was more important than any time which Guy Stevens physically spent in the studio.

The Clash's excitement with place is markedly different to their counterparts at the time, and indeed their own previous output. The Slit's "Newtown", also from 1979, shows a claustrophobic Britain which only looks towards itself. The UK's new towns were build following the Second World War to eradicate inner-city slums (part of the same process that birthed the tower blocks mentioned previously) but ended up creating a new kind of slum, a suburban one, which disconnected people from their neighbours and represented a failure of place. (Loach, *The Spirit of '45* 2013) Excitement never arrives in the new town, and its inhabitants turn to drugs; whether heroin, television, or the violence of a football gang, it does not matter: its inhabitants are afraid of "going sick" and constantly "need another fix". This vision of the UK was not unique; mired in its own problems, it failed to look outward, as it once had, an experience that can be seen in America around the time too. But Britain's problem was more acute, being a small island. Therefore groups like The Slits and The Smiths appear trapped: The Clash, on the other hand, are able to run free by looking to America, and indulging themselves in a mythic view of their own city.

Much of the rest of The Clash's career was concerned with the space that existed between them and their fans, them and the places with which they were involved. The group broke up once they became too big; playing stadium shows removed them from their audience and their sense of place. But the way in which the group took their vision of themselves, and a vision of the future, would be indicative of the manner in which place would be used in the eighties.

Chapter 3. Place as Expression of Societal Discontent in the 1980s

I spent most of my life measuring the distance between the American dream and American reality – Bruce Springsteen

I would wind up in these very strange places – these rooms with stains on the wallpaper, foggy voices down the hall...I knew there was music

Post-punk, then, changed the way in which place could be viewed through rock music. Discontent had not disappeared; far from it, the eighties would be marked in both Britain and the US by continually growing disparity between rich and poor. Music, as Attali observed, predicted the sentiment of a nation more quickly than other forms of art could hope to, and punk was an early indicator of the discontent that would be present throughout the eighties. But the manner in which post-punk viewed place, which disregarded the limitations imposed by punk's somewhat limited view, would shape the way it would be used in the future: Bruce Springsteen and Tom Waits are examples of societal discontent being expressed through the use of place, which avoid the anger or realism which typified punk's expressions of dissatisfaction and use of place.

3.1. Everything Dies, Baby That's A Fact: Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* and Place as Escape.

In the first few days of 1982, Bruce Springsteen spent an evening recording new songs at his home in Colts Neck, New Jersey, unaware that these tapes, unpolished as they were, would be released as the album *Nebraska* at the end of that same year. Though the lyrical content of his music had been becoming more introspective over time, this album (his sixth) was a marked departure. Intimate to an almost uncomfortable degree, the emptiness of the arrangements (usually just an acoustic guitar and vocal, with an occasional mournful harmonica or tense, high-pitched second guitar) served to highlight the starkness of the tales told.[38] *Nebraska* is a collection of tales of desperate people, searching a post-industrial American landscape for a dream.[39] They are constantly moving, chasing stability and pursuing a permanent place in a fast-changing and often frightening landscape.

Place serves a central function on the album. That the specifics of the place are often imagined (the "Michigan County" of "Highway Patrolman" doesn't exist) or

[38] The return on his next album to a more traditional production would suggest that perhaps he had bared a little too much of his soul on *Nebraska.* 1984's *Born In The U.S.A.,* though not entirely bereft of challenging lyrical content, managed to bury its anti-war message under a radio-friendly, bombastic sound; it was an ostensibly patriotic record that would become one of the best-selling albums of all time.

[39] *Nebraska* contains the songs "Nebraska", "Atlantic City", "Mansion on the Hill", "State Trooper", "Open All Night" and "Reason To Believe" which are referenced within the text.

irregular (though the album is titled *Nebraska* almost all geographical references are much further east of that state) is not of importance. *Nebraska* is located in hard terrain, recognisable to Americans of any region. The album is folk-rock, but with a heavy emphasis on the folk element, in the sense of it being a music of and for the people. In a study of folk music's function amongst an uprooted people, Sara Cohen notes that "the production of place through music is always a political and contested process and music has been shown to be implicated in the politics of place, the struggle for identity and belonging, power and prestige." (1995: 445)

Though the inhabitants of *Nebraska* share little with those of Cohen's study, Jewish immigrants to Liverpool at the turn of the 20th century, the use of music to invoke and desire place in their search for identity and power displays similar traits to those observed by Cohen. Though the political side of their struggle is implied rather than explained, most of the songs make reference to a loss of something, most often a job, and the accompanying difficulties.

In the early 1980s, life became harder for working class Americans. Historian William H Chafe notes that although Ronald Reagan (the Republican president for almost the entire decade) responded to the recession which was beginning when he entered office by creating jobs, they were mostly low-wage. In a climate in which "half of the *new* jobs *paid wages below the poverty line for a family of four*" (2007: 467), optimistic outlook was in short supply as workers faced decreasing living standards. Though the recession was not caused by Reagan's administration, his manner of dealing with it seemed disproportionately hard on America's poorest citizens. Despite lacking funds for social services, his government managed to significantly increase military spending, leaving many asking whether the government's priorities lay with its people or war, in a country whose people "have been sold a false set of choices by [their] national leaders who tell us we must choose between jobs and peace." (Zinn and Arnove, 2004: 513)

As a result of these policies, "the country seemed destined to experience an ever widening gulf between the haves and the have-nots", producing individuals who have "been completely severed from what we consider normal relationships, someone who's outside the pale." (Chafe, 2007: 468) *Nebraska's* characters come from these have-nots; they experience the social dislocation identified by Chafe and we see them engaged in struggles identified in Cohen's study: they are searching for identity, a sense of belonging, and power. To present these struggles, Springsteen creates a place, a kind of

microcosm-America, tangible to those affected by his subject matter rather than his specific geographical references. Cohen also notes music's ability to express the inexpressible through attachment to place; and through *Nebraska* a voice is given to the thoughts and desires that would otherwise lay dormant, unexpressed or unexplained.

In the album's opening track, also titled "Nebraska", these thoughts and desires lead its protagonist on a particularly dark path. We hear a lost young man, detailing his only wish; that he and his girl could "have us some fun", and we discover that the only place they could find it was on the open road. But this is not an open road filled with promise, as hinted at to the listener by the album's bleak cover; a black and white photograph taken from the front of a car, showing nothing but a cloudy horizon on a slightly disarming slant. The flat, barren landscape offers nothing, is going nowhere, and the viewer imagines that there is nothing behind, either. The track is based on the story of spree-killer Charles Starkweather[40] and borrows imagery from Flannery O'Conner's short story "A Good Man Is Hard To Find." Reflecting upon his crimes, Springsteen's character offers only the line "You wanna know why I did what I done / Sir, I guess there's just a meanness in this world" as justification.[41] He can explain his crimes no more that anyone else. The remainder of the album's personalities do not react in such an extreme manner, but they are all shown to be products of their environment.

Especially evocative of a specific time and place is "Atlantic City". At the time of its being written, Springsteen was living only a couple of hours drive from New Jersey's famous resort city, enjoying a boom at the time due to the recently passed bill legalising gambling and hoping to reverse a long period of economic decline. In his profile of the city, Nick Paumgarten notes that "most cities exist as a consequence of commercial or strategic utility. Atlantic City is a proposition and a ploy." (2015: 58) Its residents deal with living somewhere which exists purely as a result of others' whims and fancies; first as a resort town, next as a prohibition-era centre of vice (excellently portrayed in HBO's series *Boardwalk Empire*) and then as a centre of legalised gambling.

Atlantic City, then, has existed in a constant cycle of boom-bust, always hoping

[40] It should be noted that Springsteen's portrayal of events takes as much from Terrence Malick's 1973 film *Badlands* as it does from Starkweather's rampage in the late 1950s; it is more concerned with the myth of the killings than anything else.

[41] His words echo those of The Misfit, the criminal-on-the-run of O'Conner's story who believes that there's "nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you've got left the best way you can – by killing someone or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him. No pleasure but meanness." (O'Connor, 1980: 1750)

for a new scheme to return it to its increasingly distant glory days. The city serves as an appropriate location for the song's characters to escape to, being a place of escape itself, as they pin their hopes almost blindly upon a new place to ease their current malaise. They despair at their lives, presumably being lived in nearby Philadelphia where the narrator presciently notes that they "blew up the Chicken Man" the previous night (the Chicken Man being real-life Mafia family boss Philip Testa, assassinated at his home in 1981), having managed to accumulate "debts that no honest man can pay"; their only escape is to Atlantic City, where the narrator is, ominously, "going to do a little favour" for someone he met. "Tired of coming out on the losing end," he had decided to stake it all on an almost certainly mob-based activity, despite his acknowledgement of the Chicken Man's recent fate.

The desire to escape, of course, follows a long-established story-telling tradition. John Connell and Chris Gibson note that "every genre, above all in the United States, envisages some physical escape from constricting confines." (2002: 82) Though of course the theme of escape is prevalent throughout films, books, stories of all kinds, it is especially prominent in music, and specifically in the life of musicians; the image of, for example, Robert Johnson, is inseparable from that of the roads and railways which he spent his life travelling on. The bluesman embodied a vision of freedom that appeared both exotic and attractive to those who didn't have to live it. The way in which this vision is portrayed leaves it open to misinterpretation: Connell and Gibson state that "in blues and country music mobility was often a response to poverty and a necessary escape; travel was accompanied by heartache but rarely by success." (2002: 82) This is both an overly facile statement and a common misconception: heartache is certainly synonymous with blues music but to say that it precludes success takes a very limited view of what success could be. If one's desire was to escape the confines of poverty and live the life of an itinerate musician, is not the fact that there were a great many musicians who achieved this a display of a type of success?

In Johnson's case, though his state of constant movement may have aided his downfall (he died at 27, supposedly murdered by the jealous husband of one of his lovers), it had much more to do with his own vices than any financial or social need to escape. He was not born into hardship, but to a relatively prosperous landowner in rural Mississippi in 1911, dispelling the myth that prevails of a bluesman escaping poverty. If he was escaping anything, it was most likely boredom: his habit of using false names in different cities suggests an aversion to any form of settled life. For Johnson, the ability

to travel unencumbered from city to city, separate life to separate life, playing music and meeting women, was a way to escape whatever darkness was inside of him. In doing this, he managed to find his place in the world. That he found it can be seen as a success; if he was looking for a more traditional or conventional measure of success, he could have easily found it by staying at home to partake in the family business. Johnson found his place in the world by travelling it.

Connell and Gibson accurately observe that rock 'n' roll music changed the popular conception of travel in music: "Mobility was about freedom and adventure, born of affluence and access to cars or motorbikes." (2002: 82) The image of movement popularised by rock 'n' roll was far more celebratory than that of blues: the process was entirely unnecessary, it was for entertainment, the search for *something*, whatever pleasure or danger might lurk around the corner, or lay at the end of the road. It spoke of a lack of responsibility, a youthful celebration of newly-gained affluence and freedom.

In *Nebraska*, affluence and freedom are distant memories; its expressions of travel bear both the scars of the knowledge of a better time, and the burden of crushing responsibilities. Still, the couple in "Atlantic City" are obliged to try to fit into the fantasy that accompanies their journey. The narrator attempts excitement – instructing his partner to "Put your make-up on, fix your hair up pretty / And meet me tonight in Atlantic City" – because it is felt that the journey *should* be exciting, when really his tone is far from optimistic. Rather, this escape is a last chance at making something of his life. Everything aside from the phrases forming the end of each chorus imply a certain doom; he wants them to escape a town with gangster problems but the only way he knows how is by doing a favour for a shady character, in a city notorious for its corruption. He is trapped, and an escape to a new location will do nothing to help him.

Due to its being a demo rather than a conventionally recorded album, much of the lyrical content is not yet fully formed. Phrases occasionally re-appear in different songs, most distinctly the line "I got debts no honest man can pay" which features in "Johnny 99" as well as "Atlantic City." The repetition of the phrase serves to emphasise the manner in which the characters have the odds stacked against them.[42] On some songs, the narrative is affected by the lyrics' incompleteness; in "Atlantic City" the

[42] These statements of disenchantment became increasingly noticeable throughout the 1970s. The way the phrase is used is reminiscent of Paul Schrader's 1978 film *Blue Collar*, which captures the anger of being trapped financially and sold out by the very unions supposed to protect. "Why do you go to the line every Friday? Because the finance man's gonna be at your house on Saturday, right? That's exactly what the company wants...anything to keep us in our place." Inevitably, their "debts no honest man can pay" lead to rash actions which further exasperate their situation.

narrative shifts between the first and third person, and allows us to hear the narrator effectively foreshadowing his own fate. What does does this reveal about his view of escape? Springsteen had already dealt with the notion in 1975's "Born To Run." Though the protagonist did not expect to find happiness by doing so, he was enthusiastic about the prospect of a life of movement. While acknowledging that "this town is a death trap, a suicide rap", there is no expectation that the next will be any better; he is born to run, that is, happy to be in a state of perpetual motion, constantly searching for something, somewhere. This still sounds like an exciting venture though; the escape from the "death trap" is proud, defiant, a celebration of youthful exuberance. The journey may not lead to anywhere better, but it will certainly be thrilling.

The escape in "Atlantic City" does not induce the same thrill. For a start, they are not going to be running but rather travelling with "two tickets on that Coast City bus", a distinctly less romantic prospect. The escapees are weary, one noting that "everything dies, baby, that's a fact", and when he talks about everything, he really does mean *everything:* hope, dreams, even love – "Our luck may have died and our love may be cold, but with you forever I'll stay". With this, he despairs at the journey they are about to undertake, but states the intention to go through with it anyway. After noting that everything dies, he says that "maybe everything that dies someday comes back", but he is fooling no-one, least of all himself.[43] He knows that Atlantic City will almost certainly fail him, but what other choice is there?

Though the unfinished nature of the lyrics may occasionally sully a narrative, it gives more of an insight into the writer's thought process at the time: the lyrics appear honest and bare, his stories of hardworking individuals crushed by an oppressive system and a tough economic environment show the beginning of his interest in politics. Not yet flaunting his political colours the way he later would, he was moved to deal with the issue of politics shortly after the next album's release, when president Reagan name-checked him in a speech on 19th September 1984, presumably misinterpreting, as many have, the criticism-buried-under-pomp of the hit single "Born In The U.S.A." for patriotism.

[43] This phrase could accurately describe Atlantic City's apparently constant supply of hope in the face of defeat. Observing the city's long decline, Paumgarten notes that "when word gets out that a city is on the skids, people seem eager to imagine post-apocalyptic desolation, a rusting ruin at Ozymandian remove from the glory days. But American cities don't seem to die that way. They keep supping up tax dollars and risk capital, thwarting big ideas and emergency relief, chewing up opportunists and champions" (Paumgarten, 2015: 60). The city refuses to truly die – it survives bankruptcy, the loss of its main source of income, but never gets close to its former glories, and inevitably sucks up many people's hopes, dreams and money in its attempt to crawl back from the brink.

A short time later, Springsteen told a Pittsburgh crowd that “the president was mentioning my name in his speech the other day, and I kind of got to wondering what his favourite album of mine must've been, you know? I don't think it was the *Nebraska* album, I don't think he's been listening to this one” (*apud* Dolan, 2014). At first he appears confused at such a misinterpretation of his music, which comes from having increased his audience so extensively with the mass success of the *Born In The U.S.A.* album in 1984. Realising that his music can be used for political gain he was forced to analyse elements of his own identity, and this event seems to have been a turning point for him: appearing to decide that if he is going to be forced into a political stand it should at least be the right one, later concerts would always feature stands dedicated to left-wing causes, and his very public endorsements of Democrat presidential candidates left few guessing as to his political inclination.

However in the mid-1980s he was still thinking politically in a 'small-p' fashion. At the same Pittsburgh concert he noted that “it seems like something's happening out there where there's a lot of stuff being taken away from a lot of people that shouldn't have it taken away from. Sometimes it's hard to remember that this place belongs to us” (*apud* Dolan, 2014). It is this loss that is the primary subject of *Nebraska;* and not so much the loss of a job or house but that of an identity and a future. The phrase “this place belongs to us” is strongly reminiscent of Woody Guthrie's “This Land Is Your Land,” an artist with whom Springsteen shares much in terms of subject matter. Guthrie's songs were stories of people on the move, searching for a better place or escaping an existing one. The two performers differ mainly in their tone, Guthrie's being far more optimistic. His America, though hard, is a land of opportunity, potential, discovery. To ride the railroad or to hitchhike on the highway is to discover not just oneself but America too; he sings with exuberance as though advertising the virtues of life on the road to those not naturally inclined to travel.

Guthrie's enthusiasm for the land and all it can offer befits the time in which he lived. Born in rural Oklahoma in 1912 and moving westward along with many from surrounding states during the terrible 'Dust Bowl' storms of the 1930s (an experience chronicled in his *Grapes Of Wrath*-esque autobiography, *Bound For Glory*) he speaks of an age in which left-wing activism was turning from idea into power and trade unions were on the rise. He saw many hardships on his travels, but had a great faith that the solutions to them were just around the corner, an attitude exemplified in the song “There's A Better World A-Coming,” a heart-felt rallying call written during the 1930s

calling out to those struggling to improve their conditions: if you strive and search for something better, you will find it. His almost relentless optimism may sound almost naïve to modern ears, but it is the product of a belief in the ability of mankind to triumph over whatever evil it may face, and which, after all, sustains a similar belief ingrained in the American psyche.

Springsteen shares much sentiment with Guthrie, but any optimism in *Nebraska* is blind. The album's closing track, "Reason To Believe," is an expression of amazement that, in the face of their hardships, people find the strength to continue: "Struck me kinda funny, funny yeah indeed / How at the end of every hard earned day you can find some reason to believe." This blindness should trouble the listener. Folk music traditionally functions in part as a way of spreading news, information and ideas to the general population. Springsteen had, whether through accident or design, temporarily eschewed his rock sound for folk, as if it was the correct medium with which to deliver an important message. The problem is that he appears unsure as to what that message is. *Nebraska* is a collection of hopeless, lost Americans, consumed by their past and unsure of their future. And Springsteen gives us no hint of what should be done with this insecure future; he can only express surprise that some still find the willpower to enter into it.

Another of the phrases which are repeated on the album illustrates this loss of direction. First appearing in "State Trooper," in which a man prays to the open road not to be stopped for a nameless offence, "In the wee wee hours your mind gets hazy / Radio relay towers lead me to my baby" also appears on "Open All Night" which, on the face of it, is a hyperactive hymn to an industrial New Jersey that stays open around the clock. Significantly, it is the only track on the album to feature an electric guitar and a rock 'n' roll sound, as it seemingly expounds the virtues of driving through the night. Beginning with conventional references to "having the carburettor cleaned and checked" then "going out tonight" to "rock that joint," a sinister undertone creeps in once the journey has begun. Something is missing, and New Jersey appears as a "lunar landscape." Through this barren environment, the narrator recollects past glories "with my baby" and thinks of his current boss, that "don't dig me so he put me on the nightshift." Because of this, he's out at five o'clock in the morning, alone on the New Jersey Turnpike.

As the pace of the song increases, the language becomes increasingly frantic: noting impending doom (in the form of his car's failing health) he reaches out

desperately for American icons, clutching at a Texaco roadmap, Route 60, diners, gas stations, D.J's...all passing by in rapid succession, as though he is free-falling through America. Nothing satisfies, nothing comforts, nothing will save him: left alone, he finds out that his journey turns out to be "spooky at night when you're all alone." The song ends with him listening to a "gospel station's lost souls calling long distance salvation" without even realising that he is one of those lost souls, begging "Hey Mr. D.J. won't you hear my last prayer? / Hey ho, rock 'n' roll deliver me from nowhere." Searching the American night for promise and adventure, he finds only a desolate and lonely view, much like the one encountered on the album's cover. We don't find out if he *is* delivered from nowhere, but his chances seem slim.

On this song, the escapism of travel is again shown to be useless in the times in which it is set. Though geared up for adventure with the traditional requirements (car, girl, desire, some free time) in place, he finds only emptiness. Icons of America, no matter how desperately he tries to cling to them, ring hollow. Searching for escape, fun, adventure, he finds only himself alone on a highway in the small hours, clinging to a radio for solace. We see an America, equipped with all that is necessary for a journey, but with nowhere to go: the terrain is more desolate than exciting, and loneliness rather than fulfilment dominates.

In *Nebraska*, no action taken by any character seems to lead to any positive improvement in their situation. The best they can do is hope to evade the authority figures which shield an almost invisible power, so far removed from them as to be undetectable. Their sense of desolation is palpable; there is an enemy, somewhere, holding them back, but they cannot locate it, and it is clear that none feel fully in control of their own lives, trapped inside *Nebraska.* The future is dealt with as a mixture of *maybes* and blind optimism. Compared to Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land," a song which describes a landscape of similarly oppressive forces, Guthrie's America feels like a much younger land than it should, written in 1940, about 50 years after the Western frontier was 'closed'. In Guthrie's imagination, at least, this is still a land in which one can roam around.

The song opposes private ownership of land but more importantly espouses a view of personal freedom: this land is anyones, to do on it anything they please (except curtail the liberty of another). In his vision of the land, the rules are not yet set in stone.

In one version of the song[44] Guthrie is rambling and encounters a signpost. On one side, it says 'private property'. On the other, it is blank. We are told that "this side is made for you and me." The message is unmistakeable: if the rule is unfair then ignore it, fight it, protest it, do anything but follow it. Springsteen notes that though life in Guthrie's time was hard, "somewhere over the horizon there was something. Woody's world was a world where fatalism was tempered by a practical idealism. It was a world where speaking the truth wasn't futile, whatever the outcome." (*apud* Rolling Stone, 2012)

Seen through Springsteen's eyes, America has aged much in the 40 years that separate "This Land Is Your Land" and *Nebraska.* Power is no longer something fought for together, rather every man fights for himself. In "Atlantic City" the lead character tells us: "I've been looking for a job, but it's hard to find / Down here it's just winners and losers and don't get caught on the wrong side of that line / Well I'm tired of coming out on the losing end, last night I met this guy and I'm gonna do a little favour for him." His intention is to do something almost certainly detrimental to those "caught on the wrong side of that line" but, disillusioned from getting nothing by doing things the right way, he decides that he wants to win at any cost. This is the only way he can feel any hope for the future: he's not dreaming of a better world, just hoping for a better place in it. Thinking of Guthrie, Springsteen says that he "always got you thinking about the next guy, he took you out of yourself. I guess his idea was that salvation isn't individual. Maybe we don't rise and fall on our own." (*apud* Rolling Stone, 2014) Springsteen does not, then, repeat this sentiment in the world which he devised, surely believing that too much has changed.

In his creation of *Nebraska*, then, a desolate, upturned version of the America he learnt from Guthrie's music, corrupt for so long that it is barely remembered that it was any other way, Springsteen voices his disappointment in a people unwilling to fight power together, unable to see the possibility that unity can bring about something more. *Nebraska's* character are very much individuals: lonely, disconnected, and resigned to being this way. They are victims of their time: unable to see a way towards unity when their unions were being picked apart - by the end of Reagan's governance, "barely 15 percent of workers belonged to a union" - their job future looked shaky - "famed job expansion under Reagan had produced disproportionate numbers of nonunionized, low-

[44]"This Land Is Your Land" underwent many rewrites: frequently, popular renditions of the song elect to omit the verses which contain the strongest objections to land ownership and allusions to communism peppered throughout the song and lack much of the power of the original, which Guthrie wrote as an angry response to Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," a song he considered trite and complacent.

paying service jobs" (Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1991: 291) - and dragged down by their debts. The phrase "debts no honest man can pay" is particularly illuminating in an era which saw massive fraud in a financial market which became rich from 'junk bonds' and a period of unprecedented borrowing which "allowed Americans to run up record levels of personal indebtedness." (Rosenberg and Rosenberg, 1991: 292)

Springsteen shows us people who can see their situation, who can see what is wrong with the world, but think that they have no out, no way to fight for power and identity except by fighting for themselves. As they become increasingly less dependant on and interested in one another, we can see that the characters are all ultimately doomed to fail. They are lacking in power because they are divided. None of the characters speak of their community, or attempt to work together in any way. Through his negative portrayal of those who choose to look out only for themselves in an increasingly self-centred American outlook, Springsteen reminds us of the power of the group.

Springsteen uses place mostly in a realistic manner, in order that his listeners can identify with his world and see it as a somewhat fantastic version of the real world. In her study of place, Cohen describes place in music as being used in a struggle for identity, belonging and power. Springsteen shows this struggle, and the manner in which it is being enacted, as a solitary, selfish one. His use of folk music calls to mind a different era: by reminding us of Woody Guthrie, for whom speaking the truth "wasn't futile, whatever the outcome," he asks us to consider others, and shows us that in an era of increasing corporate dominance, there is more power in a group than amongst individuals.

3.2 Tom Waits: Chronicling the Unwinding of a Nation

Tom Waits has played a multitude of characters. He has been a sailor, a jitterbug boy, an escaped convict, a radio DJ, a "manic mechanic" and a seemingly infinite number of half-identified mysterious personalities seen propping up bars, talking to lamp-posts and spying on their neighbours. Throughout the course of his work, whether as an actor or a musician, he has presented a romantic vision of what lurks in America's shadows. These characters and stories are vivid and, like the paintings of Edward Hopper, are mostly set at some point between the encroaching darkness and the early light of morning, and most often in the moments that precede some sort of dramatic action. Also like Hopper,

Waits' imagination grows from a disinclination towards the conformity of American society after the Second World War: his characters are often isolated, melancholy and out of step with that which surrounds them.

Waits enjoys living on the fringes of society, and all which that entails. He takes great comfort from imperfect situations and enjoys life's rough edges; on film, playing a slight caricature of himself in 1986's *Down By Law*, he puts great stock in the phrase "it's a sad and beautiful world," and this could serve as an apt description of his work. Born in 1949, Waits idealised and at first imitated the beat poets (Jack Kerouac especially) and was disappointed upon travelling north to San Francisco from his Southern California home in the late sixties to discover that the city had changed from that which Kerouac had written about. Refusing to let this deter him from living out his fantasy of bohemian existence, he simply moulded himself into their shape and played a character, one which existed within the beat universe created in his mind and which was oblivious to his actual surroundings. By his own account he was "smelling like a brewery and looking like a tramp" (in the song "Pasties and a G-String" from 1976's *Small Change*) and he became something of a cult figure in the Los Angeles music scene of the seventies, living a bohemian existence at the famous Tropicana Motel and crafting stories of people and places which, like their author, displayed a deep nostalgia for another time and place.

Key to these stories is the ability of Waits to create place. A casual listener will notice the almost constants geographical references which appear in his songs; the website "Tom Waits Map" (www.tomwaitsmap.com) collects and plots each place named in his songs, and with it can be seen how numerous and far-reaching they are.[45] Unlike Springsteen's use of place as a tool for inviting comparisons to the real world, Waits uses elements of the real world to take us to an invented place that somehow manages to stay identifiably American. He notes that the use of place names creates "a certain anatomical aspect to a song that I respond to....I can go into that world." (*apud* Montandon, 2007: 356) By the end of the seventies his bohemian life was beginning to catch up with him; he was getting close to becoming a character from one of his songs, steadily slipping into a life of alcoholism. "Drawn to the vision of Beat experience as literary mode and as a blueprint for an existence he could cultivate at the enticing, if somewhat frayed margins", (Warner, 2013: 340) Waits had set out on a hedonistic

[45] It also becomes clear that Waits is expert at inventing place names. Mayor's Income, Tennessee, for example, displays his low regard for career politicians yet seems entirely plausible as a place name.

journey and, like Kerouac, he ultimately found neither answers nor pleasure in his quest.

If the seventies represented his search for an *On The Road* (1957) moment, the eighties would play out more like a version of *Big Sur* (1962) albeit with a fruitful outcome. Searching for an alternative to a decadent lifestyle which was increasingly being played out publicly, Tom Waits began the decade by settling down and marrying, becoming increasingly private and creating his most successful and distinctive music. Waits' music is indelibly associated with place not just because of the proliferation of place names which occur in his songs, but because of the power he has in creating a unique space. It is during this period that he becomes accomplished at this craft. A loosely-themed trilogy of albums (1983's *Swordfishtrombones,* 1985's *Rain Dogs,* and 1987's *Franks Wild Years*) describe a mostly urban America, alternately dream or death-like, that mixes ghosts of the past with uncertain visions of the future.

"Underground", the opening song of *Swordfishtrombones* introduces us to a "world going on underground" and serves as a suitable introduction to his new style. This style is scarred by the crises which occurred in the eighties, in which the general standard of living in America decreased. Allan M. Winkler notes that crises "do not make people radical or compassionate. They are frightened, and most people concentrate on saving themselves." (1989: 388) People turned inward, and tended to ignore the suffering of others whilst attempting to survive themselves. This is in contrast to earlier decades: "Where the sixties spoke of possibilities, the eighties were forced to become aware of limits, which some assumed, wrongly, were ugly necessities to be imposed on those at the bottom of society." (Winkler, 1989: 388) Waits had always lived amongst (though not necessarily been a genuine part of) those at the bottom of society, and these changes in attitude affected him deeply. If the beats rebelled against a newly affluent society, Waits was rebelling against a society which intended to recapture its affluence, and the disappointing effect that had on national character: "America had lost its own generous vision of what it might be..." (Winkler, 1989: 388)

Of the three albums, *Rain Dogs*[46] is the most clearly rooted in a particular place and time, New York City in the mid-eighties. Waits relocated here while writing the album, and its sound reflects that of the city: harsh, violent rhythms and jagged electric guitars mimic the construction work Waits heard outside his downtown Manhattan home and the album's subject matter covers characters more diverse and eccentric than

[46] Which features the songs "Singapore", "Rain Dogs", "9th & Hennepin", "Downtown Train" and "Anywhere I Lay My Head" referenced in the text.

those he had written about before. Whereas Waits' hometown of Los Angeles sprawls across Southern California, Manhattan is a densely-populated island, and *Rain Dogs* channels a feeling of everyone living on top of one another: the compositions have less space, musically, than those from earlier in his career, the combination of contrasting rhythms and dissonant sounds makes the record feel almost claustrophobic at times. Theodor Adorno declared "the forms of art reflect the history of man more truthfully than do the documents themselves" (Adorno, 2004: 22) and *Rain Dogs* is a record of its time: a chaotic New York channeled into rhythms and dissonant sound; a rough and brittle sound that contrasted with much of the popular music of the time which appears clean in comparison, both in terms of lyrical content and musical texture, and reveals the lie behind the decade's ostensible cleanliness.

His story-telling from this period has something of the quality of Joseph Mitchell to it: the writer was famous for his profiles in the *New Yorker* which portrayed those living on the fringes of society in which he searched for what he called the "real truth": not one to be found with hard facts or data, but by the way in which a finely-honed descriptive half-truth or fantasy can bring the reader closer to an emotion that one feels in a particular place, speaking to a particular person or observing a particular scene. Thus, his "profiles" of mid-twentieth century New York's characters are often full of Mitchell's own imagination and descriptive flourishes, yet paint a picture of a New York which feels authentic. (2012, 14) In a similar manner, Waits' wild fantasies of people and place somehow feel reflective of the "real" New York.[47] Dislocation is a dominant theme; indeed, the title refers to the effect a thunderstorm has on stray dogs, causing them to "seem lost, wandering around. The rain washes away all their scent, all their direction. So all these people on the album are knit together by some corporeal way of sharing pain and discomfort." (*apud* Maher, 2011: 157)

In New York, Waits noticed an increase in the number of homeless on the streets, a result of the recent crisis and cuts in a variety of public services, one outcome of a society that, as Winkler noted, "turned inward" and lacked compassion. The album's characters, whether homeless or not, all suffer from some form of dislocation, wandering lost and scarred through New York's streets, the "world going on underground" he had mentioned before, visible to all yet unnoticed by so many. Waits

[47] In "Tango Till They're Sore", Waits informs us that he will "tell you all my secrets but I'll lie about my past", seemingly indicating that the two things can exist in unison with one another. He is asking us, what is a truth, and what constitutes a lie?

tells us that he identifies with these characters; on the song also titled “Rain Dogs”, after a summing up of their spirit and lifestyle, he informs us that he will “never be going back home”, because “I am a rain dog too.”

At the beginning of *Rain Dogs* we hear an odd, bird-like sound followed by a jarring rhythm track suggestive of movement: our journey has begun. Over the strange rhythms and dissonant sounds, Waits hurriedly informs us that we will “sail tonight for Singapore”, the first of many distant places referenced in quick succession. In relation to his earlier work, the use of “we” is important here. Previously, he has presented himself as a character, a spectacle. Mostly in the first person, his songs were all about his feelings, his stories, his thoughts. In *Rain Dogs* he rarely addresses us in the first person: though the stories presented have grown more incongruous, we are now a part of them. Intentionally or not, we set sail with his crew at the album's beginning, and we will share their sense of dislocation, we will live with the “rain dogs”, and share their pain and discomfort.

This sense of dislocation is not shown as being a particularly positive or negative thing, mirroring Waits' ambivalence to his new home.[48] New York City's enormous diversity (and its reputation as one of the centres of the world) is reflected in the song: in the first thirty seconds we hear of Singapore, China and Paris. Waits, our guide, advises us that “from now on...this iron boat's your home” – a temporary moving home, but a home nonetheless, with likeminded residents who display an enthusiasm for the discovery of new places. This excitement at the potential adventure to be found in the world outside of the United States goes against general American sentiment of the time. Garry Wills notes that Reagan's presidency played well with a population that were more interested in domestic affairs than what was occurring abroad; his “very provincialism formed a bond with his fellow citizens and a bastion for his office”, in contrast to preceding presidential focus on foreign policy, Reagan had “travelled little in other countries before taking office, and he was not going to acquire that taste.” (*apud* Winkler, 1989: 364) The threat of communism and events in the Middle East initially took a backseat, certainly in much of Reagan's discourse, to domestic policy. That which was feared was essentially pushed from view, or it was attempted so.

Whilst to some it may have seemed that the world outside of America was a

[48] While noting that New York City was an inspiration for writing the material that appeared on *Rain Dogs*, he described it as being a difficult place to live in, a place where “someone could stand out in the middle of Fourteenth Street stark naked, playing a trumpet with a dead pigeon on their head and no-one would flinch” (*apud* Maher, 2011: 159)

frightening place, Waits was more interested in resurrecting the spirit for adventure seen in Guthrie's music and Kerouac's writing; an ability to view the world as a blank canvas.[49] He encourages the listener to reject the urge to narrow one's worldview, to instead embrace all the world has to offer. Of course, this was impossible to do whole-heartedly in the face of the very real threats which existed in the eighties and, much more so than in Guthrie's or Kerouac's views, the world that Waits describes usually carries dark undertones.

Describing the feeling he hoped to convey in his music, Waits talks of a "common loneliness that just stretches from coast to coast. It's like a common disjointed identity crisis. It's the dark, warm, narcotic American night." (*apud* Montandon, 2007: 10) His early work personalised this loneliness: he identified this feeling as something within himself, and presents himself wandering through that dark American night, watching others enjoy themselves while he revels in his own solitude. 1974's ballad "(Looking For) The Heart Of Saturday Night" describes happiness as something that can only be truly attained when one is melancholic for the past – an unusual sentiment for someone under the age of 25.

With *Rain Dogs*, he tries to portray this loneliness as something shared; a crisis of identity shared by a nation. He tries to use the album to address the crisis he viewed in America; escapist and fantasist though the album may be, it clearly works in parallel to its time. He describes a society that is starting to fall apart, one identified by George Packer in *The Unwinding*. Packer pinpoints 1978 as the year in which "social contracts" between citizens, government and business began to unravel. As traditional industries shut down and faith in government disappeared in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal,[50] a nation found itself "alone on a landscape without solid structures", leaving Americans to "improvise their own destinies, plot their own stories of success and salvation." (Packer, 2013: 4) In this America, all is suddenly temporary. Communities fall apart, and the identities of individual members leave with them. Those who were

[49] This world view is not one shared by all of Kerouac's contemporaries. Allen Ginsberg's poem "America" (1956) displays a fear of the world, a world America has changed for the worse. Ginsberg talked about the anxiety which had been bubbling underneath popular discourse for the Cold War and communism, amongst other things. Some of the language used, though, tries to keep an optimistic outlook, despite the bleak view of the poem: Ginsberg "refuses to give up [his] obsession" (2001: 40) and somehow manages to maintain some faith in a better future for the world and for America, and implicates his own effort as being central to that improvement.

[50] Following President Nixon's resignation in 1974, a poll asked people "how much faith they had in the executive branch of government. Only 14 percent answered "a great deal", 43 percent said "hardly any."" (Tindall & Shi, 1989: 919)

once a part of that which has now gone must redefine themselves or be left behind as the nation changes.

Packer tells the story of people forced to re-dream, essentially reinventing themselves, because what they thought permanent had vanished. Packer speaks of the process as a rapid, almost unforeseen series of incidents which redefined the landscape; its people passing "alongside new monuments where the old institutions once stood," (*ibid*: 9) looking for guidance amongst the ghosts of a past life. Packer describes a people who, though fearful of a new future, are yet aware of the potential for positive change: the dislocation they feel in leaving in the past does not necessarily have to impede the creation of a new, potentially better future. With this, they are trying to create a new place, somewhere in which they can escape past failures and prepare for a new future. That this is not easy is apparent: on *Rain Dog's* "Downtown Train", we see an carriage full "with all those Brooklyn girls" who "try so hard to break out of their little world" but of course cannot: an identity is not something that is easy to leave behind. Like The Smiths' characters, trying to escape to London, their identities are somehow marked: these characters cannot escape their surrounding.

Rain Dogs, and the other albums which form Waits' trilogy of the urban dispossessed, can be seen is some ways as a retreat from modernity. They are deliberately retro in terms of production: the records deliberately avoid the digital sounds that were so popular at the time in favour of real instruments. These instruments are often old ones which hark back to European traditions, for example the accordion is a prominent instrument on *Rain Dogs*, and the lyrics also display a strong penchant for nostalgia. The past always appears to be on Waits' mind. Of course, the choice of New York City as a location is important: by the eighties, the city was seen as something of a relic[51] whilst Los Angeles and other West Coast cities were younger in both age and spirit; Waits' move from West to East is symbolic of his thinking at the time. His use of nostalgic and sometimes maudlin lyrics expresses a sense of disillusionment at the changes he has seen in society. Barney Hoskyns notices that "Waits appears to lament the fact that America has become a country where any solitary activity spawns suspicions that there is a serial killer, or a unabomber, living next door." (Hoskyns, 2009:

[51] Along with others in the North-East, New York formed part of the "Rust Belt", a series of cities in which, as previously mentioned, traditional industry was in severe decline. They were viewed as a symbol of America's industrial past, and seemed to have little to do with America's future. Today, some have recovered - New York City being a notable example - whilst others continue to experience difficulties - Detroit is notorious for its range of financial and social problems, and Ohio's Akron and Cleveland are similarly troubled.

12) Waits spent a lot of time with those at society's poorer fringes and observed the effect this suspicion has on those who do not conform to society's expectations, and at times the listener feels that *Rain Dogs* is the sound of a retreat from modernity.

But it is not simply a retreat: it also contains within it an alternative plan for the future, which is the production of place. In Cohen's study, the "struggle for identity and belonging" (1995, 445) is equated with the production of place, and we can see this process in action in *Rain Dogs*. To some extent, Waits was a victim of the same process himself: in the seventies, he existed as something of a cult artist, having a small but loyal following and making enough money to sustain his lifestyle through his art. But towards the end of this decade, the music business became increasingly corporate.[52] Independent labels were bought by larger ones, and became much less open to taking chances on smaller artists who would not reach a mainstream of listeners and therefore reap far smaller financial rewards. Similarly radio stations, which provided important exposure for burgeoning artists, relied increasingly upon market survey data for their playlists, and therefore "eliminated the discretion of disc jockeys, and emphasized the music that their data said would not appeal to their clients' desired audience. They ignored artists and musical styles that did not fit "the program."" (Rosenberg, 1991: 229-30)

The music world was becoming a progressively narrower one; previously a home for misfits and eccentrics alongside the more commercial artists, they were increasingly being squeezed out. Waits was lucky in that he had got his break at the start of the seventies (he released his first album in 1973) but even so he had to play the industry's game: "It was the old case of the one-size-fits-all industry push on a new songwriter...I didn't know what the hell I was doing." (*apud* Montandon, 2007: 28) Still, he was lucky enough to get a recording contract and be himself at a time when the industry was not quite so demanding and permitted the artist more freedom. As the seventies progressed, artists increasingly had to live up to preconceived expectations. If they did not, there would be no record deal. Thus musicians became more uniform, and less inclined towards taking chances artistically, and it is during this period of homogenisation and conformity that Waits decided to change his style and create music

[52] Frank Zappa attributes much of this problem to the proliferation of younger executives hired in the record companies. While the older executives who were unfamiliar with the music were prepared to take a chance on a new artist even if they didn't understand them, "the 'bright young men' [were] far more conservative," (Zappa, 1989: 204) giving much less freedom to new recording artists and instead searching for musicians who fit into existing trends.

far more challenging than that which he had made before.

In essence he created a world, full of reference points to (but existing in tandem with) the real one, in which he could express himself freely; in which he could experiment as he wished without being shoe-horned in, stylistically. He places great importance on the opportunity for a musician to experiment with the form: "...most things begin as a mistake. Most breakthroughs in music come out of a revolution of the form. Someone revolted, and was probably not well liked. But ultimately he started his own country." (*apud* Montandon, 2007: 91) In this "new country", Waits can live to some extent by his own rules, and create to his own expectations.[53]

Returning to the ideas put forward in Cohen's study, which identifies the creation of place within music as a representation of an identity struggle, we can view what Waits did as a way "in which music not just reflects but also produces place." (Cohen, 1995: 444) He takes a set of existing landmarks, in this case New York City and its homeless population, and reproduces them in an alternative space, one in which they become "rain dogs". This inversion is necessary in order to deal with the anxieties of the decade and to empower the characters of his songs. But the creation of a new place is also needed in order to prevent him from becoming stuck as a part of the past.

Blues musician Abner Jay showed, in the late sixties, what happens to a musician ejected from his own place. Jay grew up in rural Georgia and participated in medicine shows across the state before starting to play the blues as a one-man-band. To hear him sing is to hear a man losing his place in the world. His version of the classic "Cocaine", recorded towards the end of the sixties, is particularly poignant, as within it he details his feeling that his way of life is being rapidly consigned to the past. The verse and chorus maintain the songs' original lyrics, but during the breakdown section Jay improvises. He tells us that he *craves* cocaine, but can find none in Georgia, because the "hippies done used it all up" – the listener can sense a desperate tone to Jay's voice, as he searches for something, something which perhaps no longer exists. In 1967 much blues music was morphing into blues rock or psychedelia, and was centred away from the South of blues legend and had moved to big coastal cities like San Francisco and New York. Jay is "tired of waking up feeling bad every morning", so he decides to "go back down to South Georgia" where he expects to find a pharmacist to "pep him up".

[53] The new place he created was mirrored by the new place he found to record, the appropriately named Island Records. Until the end of the eighties, the label remained independent, and had a reputation for esoteric music.

The listener is given a sense that this pharmacist, and perhaps even this place, are no longer in existence.

Jay is looking for something which used to exist, something from a younger version of himself, where he can get "pepped up". We can read this as a simple quest for drugs, or we can read it as him searching for the last remnants of his disappearing place and culture – he complains that the hippies have replaced his beloved cocaine with LSD, the drug symbolic of the psychedelic movement. But he doesn't want any "of that kids stuff." In a delightfully enunciated passage, he declares that he "want[s] the *reeeaaaal thing*....cocaine." The new culture simply will not satisfy him; though it is available to him, only the "real thing" will make him well. Jay will not adapt his music to suit the tastes of a new audience. The listener has a sense of him being the last of his kind, a relic of the past clinging on to his music as a way of holding on to his home.[54]

A similar fate could well have befallen Waits had he not been inspired to change his musical path. Much of his inspiration for change came from the the composer Harry Partch, a fellow California native who, after spending his twenties writing in a conventional style, abandoned traditional approaches (and indeed traditional musical theory) by inventing his own musical scale and a set of musical instruments to play it on. Between 1935 and 1943, Partch hitchhiked through the American North-West, living amongst hobos, and alternated between begging and manual labour for money. During this period, he described his previously beloved classical music as having "only the feeblest roots in our culture." (*apud* Yang, 2008: 53) He expressed the desire to create something more reflective of the American people.

At the time America was in the midst of the Great Depression, a time of great social (and geographical) upheaval. It was no coincidence that he designed a form of music that was detached from the concept of "home" in music. From the early 1700s onwards, almost all Western music has used the system of equal temperament, a rarely-challenged manner in which to to organise sound into harmonically-pleasing patterns, and one in which all sounds were produced using just twelve notes. In this system, music generally moves through a series of prescribed musical patterns, much like a journey, before finally returning "home"; that is, returning to a note or chord which provides a sense of resolution for the piece.

In Europe, from the 1920s to the middle of the century, a compositional style

[54] Jay continued to play up until his death in 1993, still billing himself as the "last of the old-time minstrels" and urging his small audience to "keep American culture alive" by purchasing his records.

called Serialism became more and more popular amongst younger composers. It rejected entirely the notion of "returning home" by making each of the twelve notes of equal importance. The music could not return home because there was no home to return to; because the notes were placed in a series (hence the name Serialism) it completely ignored the rules of conventional harmony, and did not use the established patterns to which people had become accustomed to.[55] This treatment made the music uncomfortable for the listener as it was difficult to follow the movement of the piece. The music played with expectations to such a degree that listeners felt disoriented when listening to it; at first, a piece composed in the style appeared more like a series of random notes than a carefully constructed piece of music. Of course, this style is inseparable from political developments of the time: Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern and Alan Berg, the foremost exponents of the style, were based in Austria and found it progressively difficult to live and work there.[56] The displacement felt when listening to their compositions is the manifestation of their attempts to express that which they and those around them felt.

Though Partch's compositions were linked to the Serialist style, he took the disorienting effect of removing 'home' from music much further with the creation of his own scale. Instead of the traditional twelve-note scale, he used forty three notes instead, and a series of instruments which he designed himself on which to play the new scale. In the documentary *The Outsider: The Story Of Harry Partch*, the composer describes conventional notation as a kind of conspiracy designed to limit the composer. By expanding the number of notes available to the composer, it was possible to access a far wider variety of sounds and potential combinations thereof, a range of possibilities he saw as being consistent with the human voice, and thus much more natural than the system of equal temperament. A similar method of arranging music can be found in traditional Chinese or Indian music; thus, by using the system, Partch naturally invites comparisons to (and images of) a different place, one far removed from the experience

[55] As is the case with most artistic movements, the form did not spring out from nowhere. Composers of the Romantic period (which dominated the 19th Century and the start of the 20th) stretched the boundaries of harmony and occasionally offended the audience (for example, Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* incited a riot at its Paris premiere in 1913). Serialism, however, was a grand departure from even this attempt to stretch the limits of harmony, and most Serialist pieces still elicit strong responses from casual listeners today.

[56] This was a particular problem for the Jewish Schoenberg, who emigrated to America in 1934. His Jewish lineage further tainted a style which, in the eyes of those in power, was already much too modern. Like most dictatorships, individualism and the intention to challenge established conventions were not considered highly prized qualities.

of the average American (or European).

Tom Waits was inspired by Partch to create unusual, "out of place" sounds on *Rain Dogs*. Waits combines them with traditional Western genres, giving the listener the sense of being in another place whilst retaining familiar landmarks by using a range of existing styles of music. The range of traditional styles used on the album is dizzying in itself: from blues to polka, rock ballad to New Orleans funeral music, the styles represent a collision of different worlds, all, we imagine, uprooted somehow yet surviving by mixing with one another. Even Waits' voice changes drastically from song to song: sometimes a rasping and angry shout, sometimes tender, sometimes a sinister, half-whispered-half-spoken-word narrative. None of these are retained for long enough for the user to become accustomed to him, as few of the songs last longer than three minutes.

Combined with the fact that certain instruments (also homemade, like those created by Partch) float over the traditional ones in a sound that at first seems dissonant but on repeated listens reveals itself to be planned, songs which at first feel conventional and offer the listener a sense of security or a notion of a musical "home" will suddenly be thrown off course, like a strong wind altering a ships path on an otherwise calm journey. This is Waits' place: somewhere recognisable, in the sense that it has landmarks, but which is wont to be overrun suddenly by factors outside of the listener's comprehension. In this way, the place that Waits takes us to often feels like a dream: almost tangible, yet somehow just out of reach or understanding.

This disorienting feel also manifests itself in the lyrics. In the spoken-word piece "9th & Hennepin" (which in reality is an intersection in Minneapolis, but in the song is filled with New York imagery) the listener encounters a nightmare town or suburb, reminiscent of the television show *The Prisoner*, where ordinary events seem to foreshadow disaster. Here, "steam comes out of the grill like the whole goddamn town's ready to blow." We are shown a recognisable landmark – New York's manhole covers which famously expel steam – but with elements that upset our traditional understanding of the event, in this case, the area below the surface as some kind of furnace, which could erupt at any time. These surreal or sinister elements to the lyrics take us outside of our comfort zone. It is noticeable that this song is both the furthest from a musical "home" and the most geographically specific and descriptive on the album.

Through this song particularly, Waits most clearly details his opinions on the

direction of America at the time. The song presents a nightmare future in which he informs us that the only way anyone got here in the first place is because “they start[ed] out with bad directions.” Amidst a plethora of hard-luck tales in a town where passing trains only serve to sadden the inhabitants by reminding them of the existence of a life outside, the only suggestion of promise comes in the form of money. When describing the love-scarred bargirl, the “crumbling beauty with a razor sadness”, Waits throws us the suggestion (with a cold scowl) that “there's nothing wrong with her $100 won't fix”, both admitting the truth in the statement and despairing of the fact that it is so. In this world governed by by the quick fix money may provide, Waits chooses to render himself invisible – “I'm lost in the window, and I hide in the stairway, and I hide in the curtain and I sleep in your hat.” If forced to inhabit this world, Waits chooses the shadows; rebelling against the system by refusing to fully participate.

At the song's end, when he says that he has “seen it all through the yellow windows of the evening train”, we see that it is not, then, a place that he has visited, though elements of it are certainly identifiable. Rather, this is somewhere dreamily observed. In this case, it is somewhere that can be observed by anyone travelling on their way back home to the suburbs on the overground 'El Train' that passes through the outer boroughs of New York City.[57] Suburban America is not portrayed simply as a place of conformity (the listener imagines Waits' unnamed passenger to be a somewhat bored person, scared of that which he views of the world outside but somehow attracted to it as well, it representing a promise of excitement not found in the sterile suburbs) but as a place which deliberately ignores and avoids that which it surrounds. Extremely popular with young Americans in the period following the Second World War, a move to the suburbs was a confirmation of success and prosperity. New and seemingly utopian, they were uniform not just in their appearance but in the way in which they contained a narrow cross-section of the American population.[58]

By their nature, they (and therefore the people they contained) ignored the more needy who couldn't afford to move from the inner-city, and this in turn helped to create inner-city ghettoes: as tax bases were eroded by an exodus of the more wealthy, public services decreased, opportunities were less forthcoming, and thus the cycle of poverty

[57] Though the Southern Pacific did not operate from New York, Waits takes artistic license with the names of train companies, and has clearly alluded to the song as being specific to New York City (Montandon, 2007: 87)

[58] So few old people lived in the suburbs that one interviewed resident realised that it was “hard to remember how to get along with older people”, and there was such a degree of segregation that “the nation's suburban population in 1970 was 95 percent white.” (Tindall, Shi, 1989: 820-21)

amplified and continued. Many downtown areas (especially those in the big eastern cities) became run-down, but New York City was perhaps the most symbolic of all. Coming close to bankruptcy, suffering violent riots during blackouts and achieving the infamy of the Son Of Sam's brutal set of serial killings all contributed to its bad reputation in the seventies, and the eighties did not start off much better for America's largest metropolis. In "9th & Hennepin" we can see the effects of the complacency with which Americans watched once-great cities decay from the "windows of the evening train". The sights seen will presumably be forgotten when home is reached, distant and safe from the chaotic and frightening images seen on the journey.[59]

In *Mystery Train*, Greil Marcus describes those he deems important American musicians as being those who "tend to see themselves as symbolic Americans" and whose "music is an attempt to live up to that role. Their records...dramatize a sense of what it is to be an American; what it means, what it's worth, what the stakes of life in America might be...these artists can illuminate those American questions and...the questions can add resonance to their work." (2000: 4) Waits uses his music to attempt to answer central questions of American identity. He tries to enter the minds of the American public, dreaming the dreams they have and pondering the same questions.

In 1985, from the view of a passing train, it did appear that the "whole goddamn town's ready to blow", and this was a very real fear for New York's inhabitants. As best as they might have tried to ignore it, that which occurred in the inner cities did spill over into their lives in an often violent manner, and New Yorkers had good reason to ignore certain parts of the city.[60] Though commuter and ghetto are separate, the train's passenger knows that only his good fortune has kept him from becoming one of the "urban dispossessed", and that this fortune could change at any time. Waits wants us to remember how thin the dividing line between the two is, and the ease with which it can

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[59] Waits alluded to this wilful ignorance of surroundings in an interview: "I was thinking of the guy going back to Philadelphia from Manhattan on the Metroliner with the New York Times, looking out of the window in New York, he pulls out of the station, imagining all the terrible things he doesn't have to be a part of." (Montandon, 2007: 87)

[60] We observe a similarly tense scene (though from a slightly later date) from a passing taxi in *Night On Earth*, the 1991 Jim Jarmusch film for which Waits provided the soundtrack. As cab-driver Helmut, newly arrived from the former East Germany, moves from Times Square to Brooklyn, he slowly begins to see what lies behind the glitz of Broadway. As fire engines rush to burning buildings and people fight in the streets, he slowly intones "New York...New York" under his breath, considering the difference between a distant image of America and the reality of the city. This is familiar ground for Jarmusch; his 1989 film *Mystery Train* (which also features Waits) chronicles a Japanese couple's holiday in Memphis, and, surrounded by the ghosts and images of the city's past, they discover the difference between the myth of the place in which rock 'n' roll was born, and the reality of life in the poor South.

be breached.

So then, what happens to America once its great cities become shadows of their past? And what should be done; should they be ignored, celebrated, or rethought? In truth, Waits empathises with each of these points of view. His character thinks about the passing images but does not act on them, and clearly gains some sort of excitement from the process. At the same time, this image is somewhat romantic, despite the sadness and desperation that he identifies as being in this place. He also encourages the view of rethinking, as we have seen over the course of the album that he asks his listeners to imagine another place, or to enter his newly created place, where the homeless are "rain dogs" and he hides in shadows. But in reality this does nothing to alleviate the problems faced by the people he identifies.

Overall, his message on *Rain Dogs* is celebratory. He seems to be telling us that we can create a space in our own minds to escape that which surrounds us, that this is what his creation of place represents. We see this most explicitly in the album's closing track "Anywhere I Lay My Head", a half-phrase which is completed with "I'm gonna call my home", a nod to Marvin Gaye's 1962 track "Wherever I Lay My Hat (That's My Home)". Lyrically, this song provides the most clear summary of Waits' beliefs on the album. The narrator tells the listener that home is simply a state of mind, and that he's happiest when in a state of flux. Always gravelly, his voice is manically so here, though exhibiting joy at the same time, as though he is standing on a street corner in the small hours of the morning shouting his thoughts to the night air. His thoughts, correspondingly, are as scrambled as that setting might imply: "My head is a-spinning round / My heart and my shoes." The world in which he inhabits is as inexplicable to him as his representation of it is to us, and he likes it that way: "When I see that the world is upside down / It feels like my pockets are filled up with gold." He is screaming a rejection of the changing world from the street corner - "I don't need anybody / Cause I love to be alone" – and rejecting the guidance and values of his betters.

After this shouting, a burst of full-blooded (and unexpected) New Orleans funeral music closes the album. In this sense, the joyous celebratory nature of the music represents the ability to enjoy life in the face of defeat, and ultimately shows the nature of the production of place in *Rain Dogs,* which equates to a manner of defiance. In a time in which the lifestyle Waits was leading becomes more difficult, an age in which corporate identity overtakes artistic freedom, he chooses instead to celebrate the way in which he can still live his life in the face of adversary. It may be more difficult, and he

may mourn the passing of his earlier, decadent lifestyle, but he can also live out another fantasy in an invented, inverted place. This song tells us that just as place is temporary, life is temporary too, and it is important to celebrate the life that one has, while one still can.

CONCLUSION

Richard Slotkin's *Gunfighter Nation* describes the continuing power of myth in American history, specifically that of the frontier. It shows how frequently and easily this myth has been re-appropriated because of its malleability; it has shown itself as able to be applied in a wide variety of contexts: progressive or conservative ideologies, in politics or film, in history or the present day. The myth is evocative of a historical narrative implicitly understood from the use of a selection of words, and can be used to fight enemies as diverse as Indians, poverty, or communism. Music is equally susceptible to the power of this myth: indeed, the music examined herein achieves much of its elusive power through some usage of it.

The Band offer a purely ideological reading of America, knowingly tapping into the power of mythology[61] through their use of place. They stretch and manipulate the myth to combat a "foe": in this case the fallout from the excesses of the sixties and a lack of belief in America. The group wanted to "offer a way back into America" (Marcus, 2000: 48) but in truth offered only a dated reading of the country, out of step with the new era they were entering. The Band's use of myth subscribes to a reading in which myth comes from the land, analysed by Slotkin as manifestations of tradition which make them appear natural, "expressions of a trans-historical consciousness or of some form of "natural law."" (1998: 6) Its appearance in song gives a justification, or answer to all of society's problems or conflicts, which is more powerful than any attempt at critical analysis, disarmed by the myth's "appeal to the structures and traditions of story-telling and the cliches of historical memory." (*ibid*: 6) From this sense of place, of history, of legend, The Band drew their power.

The limitations of this viewpoint, however, were obvious. Their use of American myth and legend undoubtedly proved attractive, but as discontent grew during the seventies, their ideological imagery faltered: The Band retreated into themselves, and the use of a mythic America in music in general became more scarce. Renderings of America tended more towards the negative and there was a move away from any mention of community; a move away from a common vision that was too idealistic or perhaps simply too difficult to deal with. In an age that saw income inequality grow, it

[61] In which they invoke, for example, the ideas espoused by Crevécouer in which "men are like plants" (1997, 45) that will grow in a manner dictated by their environment, or when they call upon quixotic images of the "great divide".

became more difficult to focus on the struggles of a nation or group of people, and much easier to focus on oneself. Hard times and discontent do not foster communitarian thinking. Punk was the natural outcome of this period of disillusionment: an embodiment of discontent which railed against a system which it saw as wrong, or overbearing, the music was a demand for change. Slotkin observes this process as "a crisis that cannot be fully explained or controlled by invoking the received wisdom embodied in the myth" (*ibid*: 6) – a period during which, as observed in punk, the myth almost disappears, in this case replaced by a chant of "no future", a deliberate and pointed rejection of the myth.

But ultimately, punk's challenge to the system was a total failure. This was because it allowed itself to become identified and understood too easily, but also because it did not have the power required to subvert or fundamentally alter any of its targets. It attempted to upset a corporate music industry that was already well established by the early seventies, and it only served to reinforce the dominance of that industry: punk was quickly identified, commodified, and broken down into a more commercially palatable version; even renamed as "new wave", a much more sanguine description of that which was supposed to be disrupted. By allowing itself to become easily identified and commodified it lost its power, and the increase in album sales (by intentionally naïve groups that appeared to be proud of the fact that they could not negotiate a good contract for themselves) in fact strengthened the industry. When The Sex Pistols' John Lydon sang in his post-punk group Public Image Ltd (PiL) that "Anger is an energy", he conveyed the virtues but also the limits of that anger, and how easily his disenchantment could be repurposed. His old friend and bandmate Sid Vicious died young amidst drugs and violence, a caricature of the real anger Lydon had felt, and his death only served to reinforce how disempowered a movement with no apparent future was. Singing that there was "no future for you" was a dead-end street.

Punk, then, proved that a musical movement could not exist for long, or hope to change anything, without some belief in a future. Punk existed as a violent disruption in the reading of the myth in American music, in which the "ideological principles with the narratives of myth may be disrupted and a more or less deliberate and systematic attempt may be made to analyse and revise the intellectual/moral content of the underlying ideology." (Slotkin, 1998: 6) The myth then blends these elements of change into a new, revised version of itself. In New York's take on punk, the myth never really died, and its practitioners were less susceptible to the out and out negation which

so characterised their British counterparts. Indeed, most of its practitioners did not try to remove the promise of place: when Lydia Lunch sung the praises of New York's dirty and run-down qualities, she was singing the praises of a place that afforded endless possibility. New York became her identity: an alternative version of America to idolise, but one that fits equally into a historical canon: a tough landscape, full of open space and opportunity, ready to be explored by those with the resilience necessary for such a journey.[62]

Positive influence and progress came most prominently in punk's reverberations. Independent record companies flourished in the late seventies, and have survived to the present day: Rough Trade, set up in a small West London storefront in 1978 to release records by a few small punk and post-punk bands, managed to survive as a co-op modelled on San Francisco's legendary City Lights bookshop and is today is still independent; a survivor amongst the more powerful major labels by virtue of their staunch refusal to adopt a more commercially viable business model, which fostered a following amongst like-minded musicians and music fans. California's Black Flag used punk's ideology to tour America through the late seventies and early eighties, literally leaving a community in their wake.[63] Punk's rejection, when combined with a future, invented the community that was so lacking during the early seventies, and this became the revised mythological vision.

Gradually this community flourished, and through this the myth re-asserted itself: The Clash thrived on the power of an American image that so recently they had rejected as phony; like The Band, they were outsiders looking at America, and they wanted to make British and American fans alike see the beauty and potential in the country; they wanted to enter and breathe new life into that legend. They took power from it, and revitalised themselves and a music genre which had grown stale using a vision of

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[62] That the New York punks saw themselves as one strand of this myth is evident in their cover versions. While Devo and The Sex Pistols attempted to detach themselves from what had passed by warping their versions of past songs, Patti Smith covers The Who's "My Generation" (on 1975's *Horses*) with sincerity. The lyrics and music remain; all that is added is an ending in which she laments that she's "so goddamn young" over and over, before inviting her listeners to take music back from the hands of the old. Nowhere in her rendering of the song does she suggest that there is anything objectionable or wrong in the original, she rather reaffirms The Who's message for a new audience, and that she is part of the same line of musicians. Her cover of Them's "Gloria", from the same album, is similarly sincere.

[63] The group, finding the Californian punk scene to be too narrow-minded, set out on the road hoping that a punk community existed across America. Through years of hard touring (detailed in frontman Henry Rollins' account of his time, *Get In The Van*) they connected fragile communities, shared phone numbers with bands for places to play and stay, and formed a record label which released bands from all over the country. The network of contacts that the group set up, though it has naturally transmuted greatly over time, still exists in America today.

American promise. The way in which they expressed themselves often still held onto the cynicism of the times, but their blend of musical styles and open-minded manner created a heady brew which sounds fresh today: in the mire of late seventies punk, it must have sounded positively liberating, exhilarating.

By the 1980s, we begin to see a return to outright expressions of an American fantasy, with utopian language reminiscent of The Band, though it is often dressed up in the language of discontent from the years that preceded it. On Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska,* the song *"*Mansion On The Hill" is a corruption of the "city on the hill" of early American lore; the story of a group of workers who grow up in the shadow of the factory worker's mansion. Like the frontier myth, the idea of the city on the hill has been re-appropriated various times throughout American history and Springsteen utilises it to depict the way a child remembers the wealth of one member of his industrial hometown shining over the city, "rising above the factories and the fields". Through his young eyes, he observes the effect that it has upon the other workers: they are in awe of the houses owner, and his are the lights which guide the townspeople.

By negating the image, Springsteen asserts the power of the original image: this is a town guided not by ideological imagery but by capitalism, a vision that is an exclusive version of what one person's wealth can do to a community. He shows throughout the rest of *Nebraska* the effect of that greed, and what will happen to a community that cannot look out for each other, one that has been guided by the lights of excess. In showing how far America has drifted from its original image, the invocation of the original city on the hill sounds both pure and distant. His use of mythological American imagery is not so different from The Band's use of the "great divide"; he has only updated the imagery and thus confirmed Slotkin's argument: "If symbol and experience match closely enough, our belief in the validity and usefulness of the symbol will be confirmed; if the match is disappointing, we will be forced to choose between denying the importance of the new experience and revising our symbolic vocabulary." (1998: 7)

Punk was therefore a rupture which revised symbolic or mythical use of place and identity in music. The reconstituted myth is wrapped in more negative images and language, but it still places faith in the land. Attali recognised that music constitutes "the audible waveband of the vibrations and signs that make up society" (1985: 16) and Bruce Springsteen's music represents this: a society that still wants to hope, that still wants to have faith in America. Springsteen's presentation may be different, but

ultimately he is the same as the young Bob Dylan, who came to New York to inhabit an American dream, and tried to make sense of himself and his history in mythical terms. Both artists attempt to update the folk-song: *Nebraska* is as much of an update on folk music as Dylan's first albums were, and both embodied a new American reality.

That *Nebraska* deals with a darker subject in a more sombre style is only indicative of its era. A difference between the two is the need to empower itself which *Nebraska* displays. Roseman believes that place is used to "mark the natural and social landscape" of a group of people, "locating it in time and place, in history" (1991: 175) and the album is evidence of this: amongst a group of people lacking in power, perhaps even a future, *Nebraska* tells their stories and hopes to create a future for them, just as Tom Waits plots the stories of society's unwanted, its "rain dogs". Attali observes music's ability to reflect the thoughts and ideas of society, and *Nebraska* points to an America that, while broken, still wants to believe.

We can see both Waits and Springsteen as uniquely American artists, that have been shaped by the land just as much as Elvis or The Band were. They came of age, musically, in an era of disillusionment but they cannot let go of what it means to be an American, they still imagine the destiny, identified by Leslie Fielder, which separates them from others. The Clash are a part of this too: they did not have to be born in America to be excited by its imagery, or enjoy the opportunities of a land that, after all, was built by people who did not originate there. Their *London Calling* album marks the end of punk's rupture and the re-establishment of myth in rock music which came, suitably enough, at the very end of a decade, released on the 14th December 1979. The album joyously rejects the confining properties of space (the trap of a deliberately inward view which halted the growth of The Sex Pistols and led to the perpetual discontentment felt in The Smith's work) and displays such pleasure at having managed to transcend previous limitations. In the music that follows, the idea of escape will at least offer some hope; Springsteen's characters, though perhaps doomed, at least have an opportunity. In The Smiths catalogue, they deal with the "miserable lie" of being trapped in their own lives in a dull suburb like Manchester's Whalley Range; London represents escape but never happiness, often followed by a defeated, cap-in-hand return. In Tom Waits' music, escape is a lifestyle choice, a way of beating an oppressive system and escaping conformity.

Mystery Train was written in the mid-seventies, a period in which rock music was beginning to fragment and lose confidence in itself, but only hints at its suggestion

that “America is a trap...its promises and dreams, all mixed up as love and politics and landscape, are too much to live up to and too much to escape. It is as if being an American means to ask for too much...” (2000: 32). In the years that followed its publication, the truth in that statement would become more clear. Albums like *Raindogs* and *Nebraska* would explore what it meant to live with that promise, and mainly within its shadows. Marcus notes of The Band that their “songs were made to bring to life the fragments of experience, legend and artefact every American has inherited as the legacy of a mythical past” (2000: 58) but the same is equally true of Waits or Springsteen, or indeed The Clash, who still grew up under the shadow of those uniquely American experiences.

The use of place throughout the eighties and beyond becomes loaded. A polarisation is implied in almost any use of place: while Dylan and The Band could use place as an almost neutral construct, the divisional rhetoric of the seventies meant that it had to mean something to be from a particular place: this is why *Nebraska's* depiction of rust-belt life is instantly applicable to life in an industrial town in, for example, California. The use of place is political, in that it invokes some sort of prejudice regarding that place and its history, or those who may be associated with it.

Ultimately, place and the power of myth are seen to be inseparable. To have a faith in the land without invoking something of the myth that has been associated with it is impossible: the artists concerned use that myth to try to find a space between it and reality in which they can create. The myth ultimately endures because it is so strong, and, as Slotkin notes, so malleable; providing an identity under which artists can imagine: whether they are exaggerating their own truth, as with Bob Dylan, imagining their own past and present, as with Tom Waits, or inventing a future wrapped up in the present, as with Bruce Springsteen.

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