

‘There are places I’ll remember ...’: A Sense of Past and Locality in the Songs of the Beatles and the Kinks

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Introduction¹

Accounts of popular culture and, in particular, popular music of Britain in the 1960s describe the decade as, above all, the era of accelerating social changes, of youth, and of the ‘here’ and ‘now’ (c.f. Frith, 1978; Frith, 1983; Frith, 1992; MacDonald, 1998). Within this discourse, the rapid and general spread of mass culture through the mass media is assumed to play a primary role. Rock/pop music is often interpreted as both generating and reflecting these social and cultural processes, with the leading role of the Beatles, as one of the most significant Western European pop groups of the decade. Accordingly, the Beatles’ songs have traditionally been interpreted within this framework. For instance, according to Ian MacDonald, what he terms a ‘post-Christian “newness”’ is central to the work of the Beatles: ‘[e]ntirely lacking the uptown urbanity or proverbial worldly wisdom of pre-1963 popular music, their early lyrics are careless, streetwise, immediate, sensationalistic – the expression of minds without respect for age or experience, interested only in the thrills, desires and disappointments of the present’ (MacDonald, 1998: 20). Not only is their songwriting and recording style being governed by a ‘present-time mentality’, which MacDonald identifies as ‘central to Sixties culture from the outset’, they are to be understood as ‘perfect McLuhanites’, as ‘pioneers of a new ‘simultaneous’ popular art’ (MacDonald, 1998: 18-20).

This simultaneity and ‘nowness’, however, is only one side of the coin, as far as either the Beatles or rock music in general is concerned. George Lipsitz, drawing on a Bakhtinian concept, calls our attention to the *dialogic* aspects of pop music: Rock and Roll, despite representing an entirely new direction and mentality in pop culture, is in constant dialogue with the past; it is part of ‘an ongoing historic conversation’ (Lipsitz, 1990: 99), building on traditions, and can therefore only be interpreted within a historical context. This dialogism is proven by musical styles, forms, song lyrics and, in particular cases, the mentality of performers (c.f. Lipsitz, 1990). In *Revolt Into Style*, George Melly (1990) points to an important fact in connection with the Beatles: according to him, the group is practically alone in pop culture to be ‘happiest when celebrating the past’ and to show no enthusiasm towards the lifestyle of the present (Melly, 1990: 28). This claim is undoubtedly exaggerated: the Beatles may have been the first post-war British pop group to openly engage in conversation with the past, yet a similar tendency may be observed in songs by other popular bands representative of 1960s’ British pop music, such as the Kinks and the Small Faces². In addition, the attitude of the Beatles to the lifestyle of their present, the 1960s, is not unambiguous, as I intend to demonstrate below. In any case, this positive attitude to the past contradicts not only the ideology of pop, but also the general assumptions and interpretive framework concerning the 1960s’ British pop music, including the Beatles.

Although Melly refers to this remarkable aspect of the Beatles' music at one point, he does not explore its significance in detail. Andy Bennett discusses representations of 'Britishness', of particularities of British cultural life in the music of the Beatles, the Kinks and the Small Faces; yet he, as opposed to Melly, interprets such representations solely as ironic, parodic, critical, or even satiric (Bennett, 2000: 192-195). Lipsitz (1990) provides an elaborate explanation of the theory of the dialogue with the past; however, he examines the question only in connection with American Rock and Roll, while, due to cultural differences, the problem has entirely different aspects within British pop music. This will become clearer later, when I look at the local and national aspects of nostalgia. My intention is to fill this gap, and prove that using the tools of the mass media, certain songs of the Beatles and the Kinks transmitted and reinforced, or at least commented on values that had become threatened or repressed by the emerging globalising effects of the mass media themselves.

These values are related to the *past* and to *locality*, with a strong and inherent connection and interaction between the two notions. The fact that pop songs, transmitted through the vehicle of the globally-spreading mass media, actually reflected upon aspects of a clearly definable local environment with its own cultural roots and traditions has considerable significance. My analysis also points to the close association between space or place and music — a connection which exists even in a context of globalisation, and one that was an important concern even in the case of British pop music of the mid- and late-Sixties, which had only recently begun to influence the music industry and music market on a global scale.

Longing, escape and the idyllic

For the Beatles, the double-A side single 'Strawberry Fields Forever'/'Penny Lane' (1967) signified the beginning of a new period. Their first release since the band had permanently stopped touring, the recordings benefited from a significantly increased amount of studio time, which allowed for more room to continue the experimentation that had already begun with the album *Rubber Soul* (1966), and extended with *Revolver* (1966). This is a well-known fact; however, interestingly enough, this period of experimentation also coincided with an exploration of themes of places and memories.

The place depicted by the lyrics in 'Strawberry Fields Forever', especially if we consider its association with the actual Salvation Army home for children in Liverpool, evokes memories that emerge from childhood in a mysterious and dream-like way, where reality is mixed with childhood imagination: 'nothing is real'. The language of the lyrics is hesitant and fragmented, consequently it is similar to the language children use, and reflects children's imagination; besides this, its aim is clearly not communication; we seem rather to be listening to the rambling train of thought of the lyrical I: 'Always, not sometimes, think it's me / but you know I know when it's a dream;' 'I think I know I mean a 'Yes,' / but it's all wrong. That is I think I disagree.' This fragmentation of the lyrics is reinforced by the fact that the song is the result of two takes, differing in key and tempo, joined together, with the transition clearly audible at 1:00 (Lewisohn, 1996: 235). Furthermore, as Alan W. Pollack's analysis reveals, the frequent use of IV to I cadence changes instead of the standard V to I underpins the uncertainty of the lyrics, "the vacillation between 'I think' and 'I know' " (Pollack, 1995: 105).

In popular culture, childhood generally represents such values for the adult as innocence and purity; it is seen as 'a separate space outside of adult manipulation and control' (Moran, 2002: 157, 161). At the same time, the 'inner child' present in the adult soul stands for 'unrestrained emotion', directness and self-forgetfulness (Moran, 2002: 157, 161). Nostalgia, as Fred Davis observes, is often connected to the rediscovering of a presumed 'secret self'; a 'strange' and unique self that one prizes in oneself and therefore finds important to hide and protect, but which is placed in the past and thus called upon through nostalgia (Davis, 1979: 39-46). Here we find this phenomenon: the inner child or the strange, secret self is recalled through the place associated with childhood. The nostalgic view in 'Strawberry Fields Forever' is present in an implicit way, traceable only in the feeling of longing, without any attempt to achieve completeness — in other words, it is *reflective* in nature³. Its constant presence is indicated by the recurring line 'Strawberry Fields Forever.' Consequently, the place Strawberry Field functions as a symbol on the one hand, representing children's imagination, freedom and desires that later, in adulthood, become suppressed. On the other hand, in a less abstract sense, it is itself the object of nostalgia.

Taken literally, the name of the place itself, 'Strawberry Field/s', brings nostalgic images to the listener's mind, evoking possible childhood memories, referring to a kind of golden age, 'an eerie longing for a wild childhood of hide-and-seek and tree-climbing' (MacDonald, 1998: 191). By recalling the freedom of childhood, longing for those times and its dream world becomes a theme of the song, besides inner insecurity, hesitation and, using MacDonald's term, 'uncertain identity' (1998: 191). MacDonald also points to the significance of introducing

the 'child's-eye-view', as 'the true subject of English psychedelia was neither love nor drugs, but nostalgia for the innocent vision of the child' (1998: 191).

M. M. Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope*, introduced by him within his discussion of the novel (from the Greek Romance to the novel of the 19th century), integrates the aspect of *time* and *space* on the basis of 'the unity of time and space markers (a unity without a merging)' (Bakhtin, 1996: 97). According to Bakhtin, in literature and art, 'temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values' (Bakhtin, 1996: 243). A crucial aspect of the chronotope is that its represented world is created by the audience on the basis of the text, as a result of a dialogue between the reader or listener and the text (Bakhtin, 1996: 252-253). Considering the context of the reception of popular music and similarly understanding it as a dialogue, the notion of the chronotope could be applied in the same way to the pop song.

In 'Strawberry Fields Forever', the name of the place itself evokes the *idyllic chronotope*, which, in the present case, is connected to childhood, thus linked with the past on the one hand; on the other, it is also connected to the motif of escape. The special relationship of time and space within the idyllic chronotope, as Bakhtin describes, involves 'an organic fastening-down, a grafting of life and its events to a place, to a familiar territory with all its nooks and crannies, its familiar mountains, valleys, fields, rivers and forests, and one's own home.' The idyllic life depicted is 'inseparable' from a 'concrete, spatial corner of the world' that is 'not linked in any intrinsic way with other places, with the rest of the world'; another characteristic is 'the conjoining of human life with the life of nature, the unity of their rhythm, the common language used to describe phenomena of nature and the events of human life' (Bakhtin, 1996: 225). In 'Strawberry Fields Forever', the presumed idyll that is located elsewhere is only referred to through the name of the place; equally important is the *personal* nature of the place — its connection to personal memories and its relationship to personal identity.

Nostalgia as a reconstructive process

In 'Penny Lane' (1967), the other A side of the single, the name of the place represented again already appears in the title, and is emphasised not only in the refrain but also by constituting the beginning words of three of the verses. 'Penny Lane' is an openly nostalgic song of cheerful tone, its location — clearly described this time, contrary to 'Strawberry Fields Forever' — being the suburban shopping centre with its shops, stalls, and the roundabout. The characters depicted are, accordingly, those perceived to be the simple and familiar 'everyday' people of the suburban area: the barber, the banker, the fireman, the pretty nurse, the little children, the passersby⁴. We can say, therefore, that the song represents the everyday environment of the majority of the implied audience. The text presents scenes from everyday life with small, elaborate details to animate them. Such details are characteristic of images kept by the memory. Musical effects also emphasise particularities, such as the bell of the fireman, or, quoting MacDonald, 'the arthritic double-bass depicting the Banker lowering himself into the Barber's chair for a trim' (MacDonald, 1998: 197).

Emphasising details has a special significance, namely that tiny motifs function as *mnemonics* (Lovell, 1998: 15-16), which facilitate the reconstruction of memories. 'Penny Lane' can thus be considered as an example of restorative nostalgia (Boym, 2001: 41). Small details also strengthen attachment, the feeling of belonging to a particular place. Familiarity in itself induces attachment, as Yi-Fu Tuan points out in his discussion of attachment to the homeland (Tuan, 1977: 159). This is related to the idea that specific places and details of places — landmarks — that are familiar recall memories in us and the associations that are attached to those places (Casey, 1987: 198). MacDonald, justifiably, states the following: '[s]eemingly naturalistic, the lyric scene is actually kaleidoscopic': it rains and shines at the same time, it is at once winter, as the 'poppies' indicate, presumably being sold by the nurse for Remembrance Day, and summer (MacDonald, 1998: 198). Harmonically, it could be added, that the occasional shift from major to minor also reinforces this ambiguity. MacDonald apparently interprets this phenomenon as an allusion to LSD, yet this juxtaposition of images may have an additional connotation. The unrealism of the imagery is also in connection with the selective nature of the human memory: in the case of remembered images, the various pictures intermingle and become condensed; they appear in our mind somewhat different from reality. What the text presents, therefore, is not merely a description of a place; it is definitely related to the memory-nature of the images, as the refrain indicates explicitly: 'Penny Lane is in my ears and in my eyes'.

The 'I' of the lyrics is looking back on the presented scene from both a spatial and temporal distance; the location of his upbringing appears before him in sparkling colours ('blue suburban skies'), as a kind of 'golden age'. Profound attachment to the homeland is a universal phenomenon: it is associated with fond memories; moreover, looking back, people attribute 'motherly' characteristics to it. The homeland in turn provides security and inspiration through its constancy in the present (Tuan, 1977: 154).

The significance of studying representations, as Holloway and Hubbard also point out, lies in the fact that *place myths* are communicated by such representations (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001: 143). Mythologies or myths of place are based on a collective but not universally shared understanding of place (Hubbard, 2001: 116); they comprise ‘a “set of stories” about a place, stories whose origins and characteristics are difficult to pin down but become widely known, and often accepted, as having some basis in truth’ (Hubbard, 2001: 117). The authors present *urban myths* and also *anti-urban myths*, the *rural idyll*, and (both positive and negative) *myths of the suburbs* as examples (Hubbard, 2001: 116-142).

In view of the above, in ‘Penny Lane’ the myth of the suburbs is related to the myth of the golden age, which is also inherent in the Bakhtinian idyllic chronotope; it is through this association that the values attributed to nature and the rural come to be understood as the values of the suburbs also. This is in line with Tuan’s suggestion, according to which the *suburbs* possess, and stand for, some of the values of the countryside, such as freedom, a ‘healthy’ human family, ‘life’ as it appears in nature (Tuan, 1990: 236). In addition to these associations, values relating to community and social life (‘all the people that come and go / stop and say hello’) are also included in the place myth of the suburban, making it function as a unique chronotope in itself. The temporal aspect is emphasised by the focus on the memory nature of the represented images.

Through its positive attitude towards the homeland, the song thus suggests the same kind of locally understood ‘patriotic’ behaviour to the implied audience, with, for instance, minute details, place names and characters helping the process of identification. The character of the fireman is a good example, in whose ‘pocket is a portrait of the Queen’. This notion emphasises ‘Britishness’ or national consciousness. According to Liverpool poet Roger McGough, the reason why ‘Penny Lane’ is significant is that ‘it was the first time that places other than Memphis, and roads other than Route 66 or Highway 61, had been celebrated in rock’ (in Turner, 1994: 119). The detailed listing of place names indicates a special ‘local knowledge⁵’, which has a positive effect on the forming of a community. This particular knowledge provides symbolic protection, even in the case of a virtual place: those who possess it belong to the same group, separated from the outside world (Frake, 1996: 246-247).

It is also worth looking at an earlier Beatles song, ‘Yellow Submarine’ (1966), released on the album *Revolver*. Corresponding to children’s songs and nursery rhymes, its lyrics consist of deliberately simplistic words conveying unambiguous images. The melody is, similarly, without any complexity, which makes it suitable for singing along. The harmonic structure, moreover, consists of a mere five chords. Further musical features such as the refrain being sung in chorus, the march played by a brass band (a straightforward allusion to traditional working-class culture), or the application of aural effects that remind us of children’s activities (for example, blowing bubbles), serve the same purpose. Further sound effects are applied to reinforce the image of the sea and the submarine, including the sound of waves, the voice of the captain, people shouting and the noise of machinery.

Children’s imaginations are also reflected in the imagery of the song, much more obviously than in ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, where we only have obscure images emerging from a mysterious ‘other’ world. Here it is the images of the ‘yellow submarine’, the ‘sky of blue and sea of green’ that represent a possible ‘other world’: a distant land far from all human civilisation, in nature still unspoiled — a possible escape destination (‘and we lived beneath the waves’). The imagery, which revolves around the notion of the sea, also evokes the specific chronotope of travelling, of ‘sailing away’ to a distant land. The image of childhood in itself, as we have already seen in the case of ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, carries this contrast of ‘unspoiledness’ and ‘civilisation’: it stands opposite the adult world of ‘manipulation and control’ (Moran, 2002). In this way, the ‘yellow submarine’, which represents the world of children’s tales, of fantasy, also becomes a symbol for freedom and innocence.

The activities of story-telling and singing along evoke images of family gatherings and childhood memories. As a frame, the lyrics evoke a tale that is told by an adult to children: ‘In the town where I was born / lived a man who sailed the sea’. The ‘town’ mentioned is an obvious reference to Liverpool, which is reinforced by the image of the sea, as well as that of the sailor, who is in turn telling his own stories about his voyages (‘[...] lived a man who sailed the sea / and he told us of his life / in the land of submarines’). There is, therefore, a double story-telling situation. All this contributes to the creation of a mythic past, in a similar way to what we have seen in the case of ‘Penny Lane’. Here we can again speak of restorative nostalgia. The presence of friends and neighbours (‘And our friends are all aboard / many more of them live next door’) brings to mind the working-class community — the local neighbourhood — within which people belonging to the same area, that is, sharing the same place of living, have something in common — this is what the phrase ‘our friends’ alludes to. The singing along and the musical and verbal reference to a ‘band’ (‘and the band begins to play’ in the lyrics, along with the accompanying brass instruments), besides evoking children’s singing, also reminds the listener of worker gatherings and workers’ clubs⁶. To sum up, nostalgia is directed at childhood on the one hand, and at a diminishing segment of British culture, that is, the traditional culture of the working classes, on the other. According to this, the chronotope of

the sea and of travelling is enriched by being both connected to the mythic image of Liverpool and to the working-class community's own personal 'legends'. The time aspect is thus reduced to a scope definable in terms of the human lifetime.

Myths of the rural and the urban

According to MacDonald (1998: 189), in 1966 the LP became 'the new focus of competition' among artists, which is indicated by such albums as, among others, the Rolling Stones' *Aftermath* (1966), the Who's *A Quick One* (1966) and the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds* (1966), the latter of which is considered to have been a big influence on the Beatles' aforementioned single and the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967). The careful composition of the pop album gradually became a considerable artistic purpose.

The Kinks also issued their corresponding concept album in 1968, entitled *The Kinks are the Village Green Preservation Society* (1968). Similarly to *Sgt. Pepper* (Bennett, 2000: 193-194), this album is obviously concerned with Britishness. We find a similarity in the titles as both are lengthy and provide a kind of alter-ego for the groups. In addition, the concept of the 'village green', referring to the traditional common gathering place in the middle of villages, alludes to the English countryside, as well as the myth of the rural idyll along with its associated traditional communities.

The album *The Kinks Are the Village Green Preservation Society* applies *pastiche* as a technique; Gelbart refers to this as 'a kaleidoscopic play of topoi?' (2003: 220). Partly thanks to this pastiche-like inclusion of various images, voices and (musical) styles, we find an ambivalence concerning the reflection on British 'national' values; as Gelbart states in connection with the Kinks album, the question of 'how genuinely nostalgic or how tongue-in-cheek Davies was' is 'impossible to answer' (2003: 220.). On the one hand, they reflect and build on British and working-class values and institutions, or take up remembering or childhood memories as a theme, drawing on a shared cultural basis of nostalgia; on the other hand, practically all songs on the album perform this with an ironic or at times even satiric tone.

The song bearing the same title as the album itself, 'The Village Green Preservation Society' (1968), is obviously centred around this ambiguity, as the topic is related to the British village and countryside and the presumably British obsession of 'preserving' this rural 'institution'. Irony here is evidently a structuring aspect (this particular aesthetic mode is not alien to other Kinks albums either). What is mocked is the one-sided nostalgic approach itself: the approach that takes the positive traits of any tradition as granted, along with the negative traits of everything that is *not* traditional.

The lyrics are built on the structure provided by an alternate combination of the variation of the phrase in the title ('We are the Desperate Dan Appreciation Society'; 'We are the Custard Pie Appreciation Consortium'; 'We are the Sherlock Holmes English Speaking Vernacular', and so on) and a variation of the 'God save ...' phrase, an obvious echo and mocking of the British national anthem 'God save the Queen', one of the most powerful symbols of Britishness: 'God save Donald Duck, Vaudeville and Variety'; 'God save Mrs. Mopp and good Old Mother Riley'; 'God save little shops, china cups and virginity'. The 'Green' of the final line ('God save the Village Green'), appearing before the fade-out at the end, even rhymes with the 'Queen' of the national anthem.

The list of 'items' to be 'saved' consists of a deliberate collage of mixed cultural references, including national cultural symbols and British stereotypes (custard pie, draught beer, Tudor houses, little shops, 'the George Cross and all those who were awarded them'), but not excluding other, seemingly random (popular) cultural references. The list, for instance, directly begins with Donald Duck: an obviously American icon, which allows no horizon of expectations to be formed – the parodic effect is immediate. The first verse is doubly repeated towards the end of the song where the voice sounds even more obviously mocking than previously.

This listing of items is structured around the division between *old* or *traditional* and *new* or *modern*; the highly ironic tone with which the song advocates the 'preservation' of particular things is actually mocking the unilateral critique of all things new and the cherishment of all things 'traditional'. The lines 'We are the Office Block Persecution Affinity' and 'We are the Skyscraper Condemnation Affiliate' on the one hand, with 'God save little shops, china cups and virginity' and 'God save Tudor houses, antique tables and billiards' on the other, are based on the value judgment implicit in the conservative perspective upon the process of urbanisation. This perspective identifies the urban ('office block' and the 'skyscraper') with alienation and the complete loss of community ties and the intimacy of the neighbourhood (suggested by the 'little shops'), the loss of a kind of original and inherent innocence (hinted at by 'virginity'). In other words, it embodies the 'anti-urban myth' (Holloway and Hubbard, 2001: 119): a negative image of the city and attached phenomena of the urbanised world that is socially

and culturally grounded. Besides this, the quoted lines imply the unconditional embracing of all that is antique ('Tudor houses', 'antique tables'); this perspective endows tradition in itself with value, which is what is mocked here through hyperbole, through the exaggeration of the unconditional cherishment of tradition and abhorrence of modernity.

The basis for 'Village Green' (1968) is the rural idyll, which is again defined and depicted beside the anti-urban myth. As opposed to the previous song, however, the tone of the vocal, evidently a decisive signifier in Kinks songs, suggests the lack of satire, although the voice is still more playful than serious. This playfulness is underpinned by the mock-1700s, speeded-up cembalo passage. The images associated with the city are 'the soot' (notably bearing resemblance to the 'black smoke' of 'Big Black Smoke' (1966)) and the 'noise'. These images are references to industrialisation and the accompanying urbanisation process; in opposition to them is the 'fresh air' of the country.

As Holloway and Hubbard observe, place myths are constructed in a way that one is always defined in opposition to the other so that there is an accompanying 'anti-myth' to each place myth (2001: 118-120); there is a similarity here to the underlying logic of nostalgia which defines the past against the present while attaching contrary values to them. Moreover, within this myth of the rural idyll the country (as a *place*) is associated with the past (as a *time*); the rural is always depicted as something that is gone and therefore remembered with nostalgia – the notion of the chronotope is thus clearly relevant. The emphasis on the closeness to nature in the idyllic chronotope, as described by Bakhtin, is implicit in the myth of the rural, upon which 'Village Green' draws within an especially English context.

The association between memory and the English countryside had been a long one in English culture; it had long been present in different art forms. In his discussion concerning the relationship between landscape and nature poetry within a British context, Mark Roskill emphasises the role of the English countryside in both poetry and painting, a mythologised image which becomes linked with nostalgia (1997). This association, which goes back to the Romantic tradition, renders the countryside 'an essentially unchanging expression of the national character' (Roskill, 1997: 206); the rural is endowed with positive values so that it comes to signify a retreat from the city.

Despite the playful tone, the desire for a sense of belonging is articulated in the song. The plot is a typical 'success story' of a village person's route to fame⁸. Nature as it appears in the rural landscape ('the old oak tree') is associated with innocence and a positive simplicity; while the opposite side is linked to 'fame' and the implied desire for fame, as well as 'unfaithfulness' for the secure values of the 'village green'. The nostalgic feeling is expressed in the lines 'I miss the village green / And all the simple people'. The image of the 'American tourists' contemplating the countryside ('American tourists flock to see the village green / They snap their photographs and say "Gawd darn it, / Isn't it a pretty scene?"' – note the accent that is exaggerated for a parodic effect) introduces the idea of alienation; it is against this perceived 'threat' from outside that the desire for belonging to a community stems from.

Nature and the idyllic

The Beatles' song entitled 'Mother Nature's Son' (1968) is a praise of the close and harmonic relationship between nature and the human being. The closeness to nature, the peace of the rural was again a popular topic at that time in rock music (especially in the folk rock or country rock trends that were being born at the time in Britain and America (MacDonald, 1998: 268)), but through the references to childhood memories, the theme here becomes associated with the image of Liverpool and the suburban.

Both sound and words contribute to making the song a perfect example of the idyllic chronotope. The sonic quality of the instruments, as well as the timbre of the voice, is soft, the harmonic structure suggests peacefulness, purity and simplicity. Content-wise, the words evoke the same peaceful mood; the channels of signification are harmoniously combined to produce an idyllic image: 'Sit beside a mountain stream / see her water rise. / Listen to the pretty sound of music as she flies'; 'Swaying daisies sing a lazy song beneath the sun'. It is important to note, though, that the harmony is slightly melancholic at certain points, including the closure, making the idyll somewhat ambiguous. The figure of a solitary and contemplative human being represented by the voice, who is in total unity with nature, is also involved in the idyllic chronotope; in fact, the mode of the pastoral as an interpretative framework is also applicable here.

The phrase 'Mother Nature's son', along with the female personal pronoun used for natural phenomena (stream and music), which also emphasises the image of the 'mother', endows the human—nature relationship with the

intimacy of the relationship between the mother and the child. In addition, it makes a reference to childhood, which thus joins the notions representing innocence and purity. The first line of the song ('born a poor young country boy') is another clear reference to childhood. The immediacy and detailed description of the picture proves that the observer is a child: only the child is able to perceive nature from such a small distance and can get into physical contact with it; in order to enjoy the beauties of nature in this manner, without an aesthetic distance, the adult needs to slip into the child's clothes (Tuan, 1990: 95-96). The countryside, the immediacy of nature acquires an especially positive role in an urbanised world, since its absence is most strongly felt under such circumstances (c.f. Tuan, 1990: 102). The choosing of such a topic in the middle of the Sixties therefore acquires a particular significance.

The road and memories

A later Beatles song, 'Two of Us' (1970), also evokes childhood memories, though through partly different means and by evoking different images. The music here, with its acoustic guitars and Everly Brothers-style vocals, displays an 'early-sounding simplicity' (MacDonald, 1998: 293). It is characteristic of the *Let It Be* (1970) album in general that musically it returns to the early period of the Beatles: that is, the rawer, simpler sounds before their more sophisticated, experimental period⁹. This is also a form of nostalgia: the return to musical roots, i.e. to Rock and Roll (Lipsitz [1990] cites similar examples when he argues that traditions have a significant role in pop music).

Regarding lyrical content, the song is about two friends who are on their way home, enjoying and sharing the small pleasures of life, activities usually associated with children: 'spending someone's hard earned pay'; 'Two of us sending postcards / writing letters on my wall'; 'You and me chasing paper'. The lines 'Two of us wearing rain-coats / standing solo in the sun' or 'You and me Sunday driving / not arriving on our way back home' allude to the childlike enjoyment of nature and the environment. All this suggests the feeling of freedom and the absence of care. Thus the notions of childhood and nature are here also attached to these values: they appear as a representation of an 'original state' as opposed to the 'artificial', 'civilised' adult world. The repetition of the words 'we're on our way home' and 'we're going home' highlights the importance of the *home*, which is present as a reassuring destination: the image of home is always comforting to a child. In fact, as MacDonald notes, even the working title of the song during recording was 'On Our Way Home' (1998: 293).

The refrain diverges from the rest of the song: melody and harmony convey a more elegiac tone here, and the words are accordingly more serious: 'You and I have memories / longer than the road that stretches out ahead'. In these two lines the theme of nostalgia and remembering is presented as a uniting power: the two friends are joined together by their shared past. Bakhtin describes the role of the chronotope of the road in the novel (typically the adventure novel) and the way the road as a spatial metaphor is always linked with the 'the path of life' of the individual (Bakhtin 1996: 120). Besides the image of the *past*, the *future* ('the road that stretches out ahead') is also present. *Remembering* is thus brought to an existential level: it plays a role in the process during which we define and place ourselves in the world. The primary aim of preserving the past is the building of the future.

Conclusion

The presented analyses were intended to demonstrate that certain songs by the Beatles and the Kinks are consistent in representing such themes as personal memories, remembering, childhood, children's imagination, family and friends, the neighbourhood, and working-class traditions. In some cases, these themes are presented with irony ('The Village Green Preservation Society'); in other cases, or even at the same time, they appear as the object of longing – this applies to the themes of childhood memories, family and friends in particular ('Penny Lane' and 'Yellow Submarine').

I have paid particular attention to the ways of representing places in the songs and the role of these representations. In addition to the mentioned themes, the motif of escape is also prevalently present, appearing through representations of elsewhere: a longing for distant places and times, as typically defined in the past, is articulated in 'Strawberry Fields Forever' and 'Yellow Submarine'. In addition to such depictions of elsewhere, the listed themes: personal memories, children's imaginations, childhood activities, working-class cultural elements, traditional values – are joined in images of virtual places or place myths. Within these complex images, the temporal aspect is inextricable from place, hence the relevance of the concept of the chronotope.

The described landscapes of the rural and the suburban possess characteristics and values that are especially significant within the Sixties and the tendencies of globalisation, (cultural) unification and individualisation that the decade is associated with. Such values are the sensitivity towards locality, a respect for the local community, the love of nature, a respect for the past: the personal past and that of the close, locally associated community; an appreciation of working-class roots, along with specific working-class cultural practices, a respect for the institution of the family, and, to a certain extent, national consciousness.

The connections between nostalgia and the time aspect on the one hand, and specific places and spaces on the other are traceable through identifying the specific chronotopes in the songs. The idyllic chronotope, related both to the natural environment and to the world of childhood fantasy ('Strawberry Fields Forever'), the chronotope of the road ('Two of Us'), the chronotope of the sea, associated with travelling ('Yellow Submarine'), are all associated with clearly definable values. They are, moreover, all connected through their relationship to the past: the nostalgic perspective.

The fact that the traditions to which these songs relate are rooted specifically in British, or, more precisely, English culture, has particular significance within the period. Rock and Roll and the associated pop culture is itself partly based on traditions, but these are generally perceived to be elements of American culture. The present analysis demonstrates that British pop songs of the decade may function to provide an alternate basis for identification, in which the above-mentioned traditions and confined locality-based values acquire a more significant role. By taking on the transmission of the mentioned values, the songs also prove that the mass media are indeed applicable for such purposes, and that through them a sense of security, stability and originality can be created in pop music.

Endnotes

¹ I wish to thank Zoltán Vajda, PhD at the Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Hungary, whose invaluable comments and observations guided me during the completion of the first versions of the present paper.

² I am not exploring the latter in the present paper, but the songs 'Itchycoo Park' (1967) and 'Lazy Sunday' (1968) are of particular relevance.

³ In *The Future of Nostalgia*, Svetlana Boym (2001) differentiates between 'restorative' and 'reflective' types of nostalgia (Boym, 2001: 41). Restorative nostalgia recreates the past as 'a value for the present'; it usually emphasises the image of the home. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, is less concrete; it is merely a longing for a place and a time far away, the 'lingering on ruins' (2001: 41).

⁴ Penny Lane is the name of a whole area in suburban Liverpool, as well as the name of a street. The descriptions of the lyrics, as MacDonald (1998: 196) also points out, are very specific to the actual place in Liverpool: the bank, the barber, the fire engines may all actually be found in the area.

⁵ The concept of 'local knowledge' is used in anthropology; it refers to local ways of understanding, comprising the mental frameworks and symbolic systems of a given community (c.f. Geertz, 2000).

⁶ Richard Hoggart (1957: 149-166) discusses the important role of this institution in working-class communities.

⁷ Topos in literary analysis usually refers to a recurring motif or image – something commonplace.

⁸ The song 'Starstruck' (1968) from the same album implies a similar plot.

⁹ The original title of the album, '*Get Back*' (Turner 1994: 194), clearly expressed this concept.

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