‘How Long Do You Think It’s Gonna Last?’

The Velvet Underground, The Doors, Bob Dylan and the 1960s Rock Counterculture

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Abstract

The 1960s rock counterculture is typically seen by journalists and fans in terms of overly simplistic or mythologised histories. These histories have become, to an extent, part of the cultural legacy of the 1960s and the means by which we understand that countercultural movement. However, by closely examining the primary source material of three of the period's most influential artists, this thesis uncovers the nuanced, diverse and contradictory nature of the 1960s rock counterculture.

This thesis examines key songs by The Velvet Underground, The Doors and Bob Dylan. Through close analysis of both music, lyrics and performance, I will interrogate the interplay between them as expressions of the cultural and political ideals of each artist. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how each group relates to the 1960s rock counterculture and wider 1960s counterculture. It is also a departure from the typical scholarly reliance on analysis of lyrics, especially in analyses of The Doors and Bob Dylan. Secondly, this approach will broaden the current understanding and definitions of 1960s' rock counterculture by allowing the primary source material to illustrate each artist's position within it.

By uncovering this complex history of the 1960s rock counterculture we will uncover how sociological definitions of 'counterculture' are formulated within 1960s rock music, and more closely examine the complex interplay of bands within it. This helps us to navigate the complicated history of the wider 1960s counterculture; to illustrate its nuance in 1960s rock music and move away from mythologised journalistic narratives.

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Introduction

In the introduction to the 1995 reissue of his surprise 1969 bestseller, *The Making of a Counterculture*, Theodore Roszak asserts that a more detailed focus on the music of the 1960s counterculture would have significantly enhanced his analysis of the era.[1] Roszak's observation is the starting point of this thesis. Newer, more complex ideas of 'counterculture' have encouraged a shift away from popular, mythologised images of the 1960s counterculture as a unified movement based on simple ideals of peace and love portrayed predominantly by the media.[2] They have allowed us to see the complex and contradictory nature of the counterculture in general and of the rock and folk music scenes that represent its contradictory ideals. Close analysis of the music and performances rescues rock from the 'enormous condescension of posterity', allowing us to appreciate its intellectual, political and philosophical richness, as it shaped and responded to social, political and cultural tumult.[3]

The standard histories of the 1960s tend to assert that rock was an important cultural phenomenon but end up being dismissive as to its form and content. For example Edward P. Morgan argues that the 1960s rock counterculture was cursed with 'mindless self-indulgence and destructiveness'.[4] The songs became 'forms of expression that were so grotesque that their only value was to shock'. James Miller relegates rock

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[1] Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), xl.
[2] Such as the mythologised view of Woodstock and it's ideals of peace and love.
[3] E.P Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin Publishing, 2013), 12.
[4] Edward P. Morgan, *The '60s Experience: Hard Lessons About Modern America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 212.

music to nothing more than 'being young'. According to Miller, rock is 'without an air of ingenious freshness or earnest effort, rock as a musical form is generally coarse, even puerile'.[5] Jacob Aranza's opinion also echoes this sentiment: 'the 60s[…] brought in loose morals, a devastating lack of respect for authority, and drugs…The mid-sixties to early seventies could best be described as the "if it feels good do it" decade'.[6] In the following chapters, my analysis of individual songs of The Velvet Underground, The Doors and Bob Dylan challenges such dismissive judgements; it reveals these musicians as complex, nuanced and multi-faceted artists whose music does not fit neatly into pre-established categories, forms, or genres and whose ideas are certainly countercultural, but not in any straightforward or unified way. By examining songs closely this thesis argues that rock music has a great deal to tell us about the cultural milieu of the 1960s, and more significantly about the way we have come to define 'counterculture' from a sociological viewpoint. This thesis argues that rock music can express a depth and complexity that is negated by the condescension narrative, which presents rock music as nothing more than the expression of hedonistic 'narcissism'.[7]

Whilst not only rescuing rock from the condescension narrative, close analysis of specific songs can help us understand how the music itself reflects complex sociological ideas around the term 'counterculture' and contradicts the popular view that suggests the counterculture was a unified, utopian, anti-war, communal movement against the parental powers that be.

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[5] James Miller, *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock* (London: William Heinemann, 1999), 19.
[6] Jacob Aranza, *Backward Masking Unmasked: Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed* (Los Angeles: Huntingdon House, 1983), 43.
[7] Morgan, *'60s*, *212*.

Rock music was a key cultural identifier within the wider 1960s counterculture and a form of collective identification for young people; but close analysis of rock songs and performances shows that the 1960s counterculture was contradictory, complicated and always in the process of being debated, defined and redefined by its participants. The music was one of the most important vehicles for this process.

Literature Review

Since 1969, more complex sociological definitions and analyses of counterculture have come to the fore. Charles A. Reich, for example, explored how middle-class youth breaking away from the social and cultural bonds of the parent culture challenged its authority through changing consciousness.[8] Rock music was arguably a key symptom of and channel for this changing consciousness, and its connection with mind-altering drugs is obvious during the 1960s. Mass protest is also a factor when the discussion of 'counterculture' arises, and is always present in popular culture representations of the era.[9] But Reich's emphasis on consciousness posits a more personal element to counterculture, which adds another facet to consider. I explore this in my chapter on The Doors below by reading 'Celebration of the Lizard' as documenting personal revolt against the parent culture and emphasising individual shifts in consciousness.

[8] Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (Middlesex: Allen Lane, 1971), 10.
[9] A Google search of the word 'counterculture' produces images of protest, hippies and peace symbols, illustrative of the popular understanding of the term 'counterculture' which limits appreciation of its complexity: https://www.google.com/search?q=counterculture&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjbk4_a4-DwAhUD8xQKHb4pB1IQ_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=1280&bih=638

Historians such as James Miller, and Todd Gitlin have described the social roots and ideological complexity of the oppositional groups that flourished in the 1960s.[10] The idea of these groups as *complex* moves us further toward an accurate illustration of the idea of counterculture. Morris Dickstein has given accounts of the cultural and political variety of 1960s radicalism.[11] Once again the idea of variety and complexity sets up the question: does the music of the 1960s rock counterculture account for this complexity and variety, or does it simply reinforce the mythology and simplicity of popular images of it? More recently, Andy Bennett has shown that the aims of the 1960s counterculture were splintered and contradictory rather than uniform.[12] These texts complicate the popular cultural myths of the 1960s counterculture that, as reflected in a simple Google search, persist in viewing it as one unified group devoted toward a broad utopian dream of peace and a change of consciousness through drugs and eastern spiritualism. Recognising that the very idea of 'counterculture' itself is contradictory is key to understanding the role played by 1960s rock music. The artists analysed in this thesis illustrate this.

The folk and rock genres, the predominant musical forms of the dissenting youth cultures of this era, came to represent and in many ways speak for the countercultural movements of the mid to late 1960s. Although attention to the music has increased in recent scholarship on the 1960s there is still a lack of sustained, detailed analysis of the music as a primary source.

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[10] James Miller, *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1999), 3-6.
[11] Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Basic Books Inc. 1977, pp. 248 – 255.
[12] Andy Bennett, "Reappraising Counterculture," in *Countercultures and Popular Music*, ed. Sheila Whiteley & Jebediah Sklower (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.

While Christopher Crenshaw's 'Five to One', Michael J. Kramer's *The Republic of Rock* and Sheila Whiteley's *The Space Between the Notes* represent the music countercultures of the 1960s in more critical and nuanced ways than has hitherto been the case, there remains much scope for further close analysis of 1960s music. Crenshaw highlights the shortcomings of available histories of The Doors and their relationship with the broader 1960s counterculture.[13] He seeks to remedy this, however, through use of interviews with and quotes from band members, and biographical stories. Crenshaw does not explore the countercultural aspects of The Doors or Jim Morrison through the music or the performances (aside from the New Haven incident).

Similarly, Kramer and Whiteley recognise the variety and complexity of the ideas that made up the 1960s counterculture and demonstrate the importance of these ideas with regard to rock music.[14] Whiteley rightly argues that the 1960s rock counterculture had internal antagonisms but also asserts that it contained a largely shared musical and lyrical code.[15] The approach of these writers successfully moves away from the journalistic or fan-as-critic stances, which do not examine the artists from an objectively critical viewpoint and offer a simplistic framework with which to analyse music's connection to the broader 1960s counterculture.[16] Yet few of these

[13] Christopher Crenshaw, "Five to One: Rethinking the Doors and the Sixties Counterculture," *Music and Politics* VIII, No. 1, (Winter 2014): 1 – 5.
[14] Michael J. Kramer, *The Republic of Rock* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9-10.
[15] Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between the Notes* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3-4.
[16] For example, the definitive biography of Jim Morrison refers to Morrison as a 'genius and holy fool': Jerry Hopkins and Danny Sugerman, *No One Here Gets Out* Alive (London: Plexus Publishing, 2011), xvi. Similarly, John Rocco refers to Morrison as a 'Ghost God' in *The Doors Companion* ed. John Rocco, (New York: Schirmer Books, 1997), xxvi. Likewise, Wayne MacGuire's description of the Velvet Underground's drone sound becomes exaggerated in his review of *White Light/White Heat* where he describes it as coming from

newer more critical perspectives analyse the primary source material—the songs and performances themselves—in sustained, detailed and thorough manner. This thesis attempts to do just that. As I will show, a sustained critical analysis of the primary material of the 1960s rock counterculture can reveal new and meaningful aspects that help us understand the 1960s rock counterculture better. Moreover, even when the primary source material *is* closely analysed in the existing literature, the focus is frequently on the lyrics rather than the music and performance. My methodology section below seeks to explain how and why this falls short, while the remainder of this thesis tries in a small way to redress this imbalance in my discussion of The Velvet Underground, The Doors and Bob Dylan. By paying close attention to the sonic and performative aspects of 1960s rock, the countercultural position of these artists becomes clearer but is also revealed to be more complex and contradictory than often thought. As noted above, writing on 1960s culture and rock music places 1960s rock artists within a generalised notion of the 'counterculture', but with little developed analysis as to *how* or *where exactly* they stood in relation to it.[17]

Theodore Roszak, Stuart Hall, Andy Bennett, Charles A. Reich, Simon Frith and Clarke et al, have described and analysed the 1960s counterculture and asserted the importance of 1960s rock in general terms. The young Americans involved in the 1960s counterculture '…created an alternative cultural milieu in which music, drugs, literature and lifestyle combined to

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the 'inner recesses of their souls; and their souls are connected to mother earth, their energy is created through the core of planet earth…' Wayne MacGuire, "The Boston Sound," in *The Velvet Underground Companion*, ed. Albin Zak III, (New York: Omnibus Press, 1997), 23. Though informative and useful, fan-as-critic accounts of 1960s rock are frequently marred by this tendency toward mythologisation and exaggeration.

[17] Doggett, *Riot*, 194, 197.

create a series of perceived alternatives to the dominant capitalist society inhabited by their parents and other members of the parent culture'.[18] As Frith observes, such was the power of rock music in this respect that it began to convey notions of an alternative community that the hippies believed could be experienced and realised through the music itself.[19] In *Resistance Through Rituals*, Clarke et al state that the members of the counterculture were characterised by dissent from the dominant 'parent' culture, rejecting the institutions that propagate the dominant culture, such as marriage, family, and the sexual division of labour. These were mainly middle class young people who were 'challenging the hegemonic hold of the middle class from within'.[20] Roszak goes further by stating that the youthful counterculture was opposed to new technologies invented and implanted by the parent culture. The image of the folk journeyman and the return to the roots of human experience was imperative to the folk revival of the 1960s counterculture. Using acoustic instrumentation despite the rise of electronic instrumentation and the surge in popularity of the electric guitar is key to understanding the roots of the folk counterculture. This is in part why many felt Bob Dylan sold out when he moved over to electric instrumentation, but as this thesis will show Dylan was already using facets of the 1960s rock counterculture in his song writing and style before he began playing electric instrumentation. Furthermore Roszak asserts that they rejected the notion of rational scientific

[18] Stuart Hall, "The Hippies – An American Moment," The University of Birmingham, accessed September 27th, 2019, https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP16.pdf.
[19] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock* (London: Constable, 1981), 51.
[20] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview," in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 62.

reasoning, which was criticised by emerging postmodernist academics in universities during the 1960s.[21] The changing of consciousness posited by Reich, alongside the rise of psychedelic drugs and 'tripping out' negated rational empirical reasoning and was thus used as a bulwark against the vanguard of the parent culture. Absurdist imagery abounds in songs by The Doors and Bob Dylan and across much of the music of the 1960s rock counterculture, thereby again bearing witness to the primary source of the songs themselves outlining to us one integral part of the sociological definition of counterculture.

In *The Greening of America,* Charles A. Reich posited that these changes of consciousness and experience within the youth population would create overall social change for the collective good. According to Reich, the counterculture provided a platform for youth to subvert the dominant, received ideology of capitalism and individualism and replace it with a new set of values relating to more sustainable modes of living that promote communal wellbeing in economic, social, and environmental terms.[22] However, Stuart Hall points out that the countercultural ethos was contradictory: an emphasis on individual expression and self-actualization clashed with an interest in promoting unified, organized, mass political action.[23] This tension between the communal and the collective on the one hand and the drive toward individual liberation and self-actualization on the other is central to the music of the era. Roszak's regret that he did not pay more attention to music in *The Making of a Counterculture* suggests that he

[21] Roszak, *Counterculture*, 34-35.
[22] Reich, *Greening*, 4.
[23] Stuart Hall, "Hippies,"

might have been aware of this tension and that the music was the best place to analyse it. Thus, going deep into the music provides an opportunity to explore such tensions and enrich sociological and historical analysis of the 1960s rock counterculture.

Methodology

Although my approach is to closely analyse specific examples of rock music as primary texts, I wish not to focus solely or too heavily on the music as written on the sheet or the lyrics on the page. All too often, especially with regard to Jim Morrison and Bob Dylan, much ado is made of rock music's lyrical content and little of the music itself, or the sounds and the performances which conveyed it. Dylan, and to lesser extent Morrison, tend to be studied as literary figures rather than complex musicians who used words, music and performance to communicate their ideas. As Allan F. Moore and Remy Martin argue, not enough attention is paid by commentators on rock music to the 'sounds themselves'. But Phillip Tagg adds that a sociological underpinning is integral to any musical analysis.[24] Thus the primary sources must be placed within wider contexts. By deeply analysing single songs as primary texts I seek to tease out from them their intricate meanings and their political and social implications, to understand more specifically their relationship to the countercultural tendencies of their era.[25]

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[24] Phillip Tagg, "Analysing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice," *Popular Music Vol. 2* (1982), 40.
[25] Allan F. Moore and Remy Martin, *Rock: The Primary Text – Developing a Musicology of Rock* (London: Routledge. 2019), 1. See also Theodore Gracyk, *Rhythm and Noise: An Aesthetics of Rock* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1996).

Conventional musicological methodology is problematic in analysing rock music. Academic musicology was created to analyse European classical music and thus is based on 'very different assumptions and practices [that] lead to unsupportable conclusions' when applied to rock music.[26] Traditional musicology was built not to assess individual performances but rather music as a written score. But rock music, especially within the 1960s, was comprised of much more than what could be written on the page. Some rock critics, such as Hatch and Millward, have analysed rock as a written score, but as Moore astutely points out, in this approach the aural, sonic and performance aspects of rock tend to be marginalised.[27] In rock music, performances of the same song can differ widely from concert to concert and across time, and the way the lyrics and music are presented in different performance situations and on different occasions can radically affect the meaning of a song. Therefore a strictly musicological analysis as outlined by Moore and Martin cannot serve entirely as the basis of my approach. My methodology is thus wider in scope: it takes into account the music and lyrics as written but also as *performed* in different contexts and at different times. I pay close attention to the sounds of the instruments and vocals, the differences between live and recorded versions of particular songs, and the significance of certain specific live performances in contributing to the broader meaning of songs.

For the analyst of any kind of music, the question of how much specialist and technical musical knowledge is needed arises. The idea that one needs specialist skill in analysing music is debunked by Simon Frith,

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[26] Moore and Martin, *Rock,* 5.
[27] *Ibid.*

while Theodore Gracyk points out that conventional musicology simply does not have the concepts or vocabulary to meaningfully illuminate what happens in a rock performance, live or recorded, especially its sonic and textural aspects.[28] Like Gracyk, Whiteley points toward meaning in rock music as being tied especially to the *sounds*. It is by analysing these sounds that we can tease out the nuances of the 1960s rock counterculture and see that whilst rock musicians and their audiences shared in many of the sociological aspects of 'counterculture', they also complicate that image, showing that it is contradictory and multi-faceted.[29]

In the case of Bob Dylan, many academic writers such as Christopher Ricks focus almost entirely on the lyrics as a form of written poetry, but even by considering these alongside the written music we do not get a full sense of the meanings and complexity of individual songs. Keith Negus astutely recognises that this approach neglects the power, persuasiveness and *musicality* of lyrics when they are *sung*. Lee Marshall also attests that one has to hear the words coming from the singer, not merely on the page, because 'when we read a poem, we read it in our own voice, at our own speed. With a song, we have no such control; the singer controls the pace at which we hear a song and the voice in which we hear it.'[30] This control gives the music meaning and it also varies from versions to version and performance to performance, as I outline in the chapters of this thesis. Therefore the characteristic and mood of an individual song can change and

[28] Gracyk, *Rhythm*, 1.
[29] Whiteley, *Space,* 2-3.
[30] Lee Marshall, "Dylan and the Academy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* ed. Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 103.

develop through a musician's career, or even in the space of a single tour or individual performance. Analysing one individual song (with reference to others) is not reductive because every performance brings with it a unique perspective, no matter how subtle. Lyrics and music change; a song might be recorded in multiple versions or be played acoustically or with a full band; and all of these variations can be representative of the artist responding to circumstances at that moment in time. This further complicates the view of rock musicians of the 1960s as homogenous with an era or movement. We must analyse rock music from the perspective 'that it is performed, stored and distributed in a non-written form', which makes traditional musicological methodology only a constituent part of a wider approach that takes these factors into account. [31]

In the following chapters, I focus in depth on specific, especially complex and revealing songs. But I also explore the connections between these key songs and other material in the artist's oeuvres and across 1960s rock where appropriate. This allows for a sustained evaluation of the primary source material that can shed new light on 1960s rock and its relationship to the wider 1960s counterculture. As noted above, there is a lack of close analysis of individual songs in scholarship on 1960s culture, and my approach to The Velvet Underground, The Doors and Bob Dylan could be extended to other artists of the period in order to highlight the complexity of the 1960s rock counterculture.

The Velvet Underground, The Doors and Bob Dylan have been selected as my key points of focus because they best represent the

[31] Whiteley, *Space*, 5.

contradictory elements of the 1960s rock counterculture, as highlighted by scholars such as Stuart Hall and Andy Bennett. Thus, analysis of these artists music allows us to see how nuanced, varied and wide-ranging the constituent elements of the 1960s rock counterculture could be. Whilst other artists could have been chosen, the three artists here are commonly accepted as among the most influential of the era and of all time. Whilst there are other bands that represent contradictory elements of the 1960s rock counterculture, The Doors, The Velvet Underground and Bob Dylan have a greater countercultural legacy than other bands of the movement, such as Frank Zappa, The Quicksilver Messenger Service or The Grateful Dead.[32] Whilst bands such as The Velvet Underground were not widely popular during the height of 1960s rock counterculture, their legacy and subsequent status makes them vital. The Velvet Underground are often cited as a key influence on the punk movement of the late 1970s and the garage rock revival of the early 2000s, and this enduring legacy is key to the expansion of musical movements from the 1960s and beyond to the present state of rock music.

Chapter Outline

On the surface The Velvet Underground shared characteristics with the proponents of 1960s psychedelic rock and the rock counterculture: an interest in eastern sounds and philosophies, the influence of drugs and the negation of bourgeois norms. However, close analysis of 'Heroin' (1967) shows that they are positioned musically, culturally and politically at variance with, and even in antagonism to the utopianism of the psychedelic wing of the 1960s

[32] *Rolling Stone* magazine's list of the 500 best albums ever made contains several albums by each of these artists, as does the NME's list of the best albums ever made.

rock counterculture. The Velvets drone sound was not the Indian tanpura drone of the psychedelic counterculture bands, with its connotations of spiritual exploration. Moreover, their drug of choice was the solipsistic high of heroin rather than mind-expanding LSD. And their rejection of bourgeois norms was not only nihilistic but also sadomasochistic. By analysing how the drone sound was utilised by psychedelic bands of the 1960s rock counterculture in comparison to The Velvets I seek to understand more fully where The Velvets lie on the countercultural map. The Velvets and the psychedelic bands of the 1960s employed similar musical ideas but expressed them in distinctly differing ways with very different political and philosophical implications.

The drone was a feature primarily of The Velvet Underground's debut album but it secured the legacy of the band. Songs such as 'Venus in Furs', 'Heroin', 'White Light/White Heat' and 'I'm Waiting For The Man' are built around John Cale's unique drone sound while Lou Reed's vocal delivery broke away from singing style of rich harmonies and pop-tinged melodies characteristic of psychedelic rock. These devices evoke the dark nihilistic world of the opiate addict, which was at odds with the dreamy utopianism associated with LSD. The last part of this chapter analyses the depiction of LSD and marijuana usage in psychedelic rock music in comparison to the way speed and heroin highs are expressed in The Velvets' music. This final point of comparison establishes how The Velvet Underground's music illustrates the variety and rich complexity of the 1960s rock counterculture movement. In 'Heroin', the group celebrate obliterating the ego in order to repudiate the world's problems, which was at odds with the utopian desire

for change through mind expansion and psychedelic trips evident in iconic counterculture drug songs such as 'White Rabbit' (1967) by Jefferson Airplane. Whilst The Velvets were similar to other bands such as Jefferson Airplane in that both sought to subvert the dominant culture, as posited by Reich, they did so whilst highlighting the tensions between individualism and communal liberation as posited by Stuart Hall.

The Doors similarly occupy a complex position with regard to the utopian form of counterculture. As I show in chapter two, The Doors dwelt *within* the chaos of revolutionary fervour and embraced the violence, disorder and destruction it entailed as ends rather than as means to a new, liberated society. In this chapter, I analyse how The Doors' 'Celebration of the Lizard' (1968) shares the characteristics of the subgenres of 'journey' and 'apocalyptic journey' songs commonly found within 1960s rock music. Thus, this particular song can serve as a basis for teasing out the nuances of The Doors' countercultural positioning. My analysis shows that the way The Doors wrote and performed their journey songs differed from much of the 1960s rock counterculture movement. The journeys represented in canonical 1960s rock counterculture songs such as The Beatles' 'Lucy in The Sky with Diamonds' (1967) are usually utopian and were primarily influenced by the 'trips' taken on LSD. By contrast, 'Celebration' by The Doors ends with an imminent apocalyptic confrontation with the old order, with no guarantee of victory, utopia or even of individual transcendence. Musicians of the folk counterculture also depicted apocalyptic journeys, such as the one taken in Bob Dylan's 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' (1963), but did so in order to stave off apocalypse and incite societal and political amelioration. By

contrast, The Doors' protagonists in 'Celebration' embrace apocalypse and seek to push it further.

As noted above, my approach is to treat individual songs as evolving performances rather than fixed or stable texts. There are several iterations of 'Celebration' and I analyse three: the live version from New York on the *Absolutely Live* album (1970), the previously unreleased full studio version which appeared on *Legacy: The Absolute Best* (2003), and one section of the studio recording which appeared on 1968's *Waiting for the Sun*, entitled 'Not to Touch the Earth'. Analysing different versions allows me to tease out unique distinctions that offer helpful insight into the artistic and political vision of The Doors. I illustrate the differences between 1960s rock counterculture songs that imagined that music could change the world for the better, and The Doors countercultural stance that took pleasure in the chaotic process of revolution itself without necessarily envisaging what would come after. Reich's supposition that the 1960s counterculture was moving toward communal good is contradicted by The Doors, who dwell within the chaos of revolution instead, and do not take victory for granted.

In the final chapter on Bob Dylan, I argue that the mythologisation of his electric turn in 1965 is unhelpful to gaining a nuanced understanding of his relationship to the counterculture of the 1960s. Closer song analysis reveals that Dylan's shift from folk to rock can't be reduced to a simple change of instrumentation. My analysis of the acoustic live performances of 'Visions of Johanna' (1966) in chapter three shows that Dylan represents the complex and contradictory nature of the 1960s counterculture because of his negation of several of its core principles, such as utopian idealism and the

importance of the community over the individual. By analysing the live versions of 'Visions' from the world tour in 1966, as well as the studio version on *Blonde on Blonde* (1966), this chapter explores Dylan's unique counterculture positioning between the folk and rock movements. Although writers focus on Dylan's move to electric rock 'n' roll in 1965 to emphasise his disillusionment with the folk counterculture, I argue that the case is more complex. This stylistic shift did not place Dylan firmly into the 1960s rock counterculture but showed that he rejected the communal aspects of social and cultural opposition shared by both the folk and rock countercultures, and therefore that he did not fit neatly into either. 'Visions' illustrates Dylan's move away from folk protest music and toward more a individualistic vision. Whilst it is often stated that this meant he was moving away from the political and toward the personal, I argue that for Dylan, the personal *was* the political. This aligns him with the 1960s rock counterculture, though not entirely, as 'Visions' shows that Dylan rejects the counterculture's moral certainty and tendency to fabricate simplistic answers to complex questions.

This is further communicated in the fluidity and ambiguity of Dylan's live performances of 'Visions', as well as in the lyrics. By closely analysing his performance I illustrate how Dylan's writing did away with concrete assertions in favour of ambiguity. Dylan's embrace of ambiguity was a rejection of bourgeois norms and both influenced and critiqued the ideals of the emerging rock counterculture. By embracing the idealism and communalism of the folk movement but later moving away from it, Dylan's position became unique. He began to write songs that expressed complex sensibilities rather than clear programmes to ameliorate the world. Through

analysing ‘Visions’, this change in Dylan’s writing style becomes evident and thus by close analysis we can more clearly understand the inner movements of countercultural figures such as Dylan and position them more accurately, illustrating Hall’s argument about the inherent tensions in the counterculture. Dylan’s music expressed this tension *before* he went electric, and ‘Visions’ is a clear representation of an individual who shifted uneasily between the different and varied ideals of the 1960s rock and folk countercultures.

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‘And I Really Don’t Care Anymore’:

‘Heroin’ and the Solipsistic Revolt of The Velvet Underground

Part of the on-going influence of The Velvet Underground is how contradictory they were both culturally and musically to the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture, which dominated 1960s counterculture rock. These differences illustrate the entangled nature of what it meant to be part of the ‘counterculture’, and how the sociological definitions become themselves entangled around the artistic output of bands. The well-known 1960s rock counterculture bands were often idealistic and sang about love (The Beatles – ‘All You Need is Love’), the Vietnam war (Creedance Clearwater Revival – ‘Fortunate Son’), the search for equality (Barry MacGuire – ‘Eve of Destruction’) and the personal effects of Marijuana and/or LSD (Jefferson Airplane – ‘White Rabbit’). The Velvets, on the other hand, sang about violent sexual fantasy (‘Venus in Furs’), opiates (‘Heroin’) and transvestite orgies gone wrong (‘Sister Ray’). Rather than singing about injustice or visions of utopia they sang personal songs, often involving low-life characters from the streets of New York City such as the meeting of drug taker and dealer in Harlem in ‘I’m Waiting For The Man’, the degenerate sexual slave of Severin in ‘Venus in Furs’, or the down-and-out homeless girl from ‘Run Run Run’. The psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture became the most popular and influential part of the musical movement, which makes The Velvet Undergrounds rebellion

of psychedelia all the more important when detailing the complexity of 1960s rock counterculture.

Many bands within the psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture focused on inciting change, whereas The Velvets wanted to tell stories from the street, often drawing on themes of sin, salvation, transcendence, masochism and purity. It was The Velvets pessimistic outlook that made them so influential to the punk movement of the 1970s.[1] Singing about young girls wanting to sell their soul for drugs was at odds with the psychedelic sect of rock counterculture bands, who often wanted to ameliorate or transform the world through their movement and music, as expressed by Bob Dylan in his 1964 protest anthem 'The Times They Are A-Changin'. Dylan (whilst a part of the anti-war folk counterculture of the early 1960s) sang for change, identifying the established order of parental and institutional authority as a barrier for change to occur. The Velvets influenced punk music partly because of the denial of utopian visions. This represented a schism away from the hippie ideal that the world could be ameliorated through mass political movement, art and literature.[2] This distinction is vital as it helped make them into one of the most culturally and artistically influential bands of all time.

Despite their influence on punk, the distinctions between themselves and the psychedelic section of the 1960s rock counterculture are under analysed. Of the three artists analysed in this thesis, The Velvets differences

[1] Ellen Willis, "Velvet Underground," in The *Velvet Underground Companion*, ed. Albin Zak III (New York: Omnibus Press, 1997), 74.
[2] *Ibid.*

are rarely analysed in the context of their specific sound, song-writing arrangements, recording practices, live performances or instrumentation.

Some of the differences between the 1960s rock counterculture and The Velvet Underground are more obvious than others. Until the release of their debut album *The Velvet Underground & Nico* (1967), subjects such as bondage, sex and intravenous drug use were rarely, if ever, written as song lyrics. Psychedelic rock bands similarly used a drone sound, but it was different in origin and musical character. This drone can be heard in Beatles songs such as 'Tomorrow Never Knows' (1966), 'Love You To' (1966) and 'Within You Without You' (1967). Theirs was the drone of the Indian tanpura whilst The Velvet's drone was the industrial growl of LaMonte Young and The Dream Syndicate.[3] It also encompassed the array of influences that Young used to create his drone. Writing about The Velvet's drone describes Young's influence, but goes no further.[4] I therefore will discuss the numerous influences on and distinctions between this drone and the Indian drone of other 1960s rock counterculture bands in greater detail. Jeff Schwartz analysis states that the drone sound heard in 'Sister Ray' was the influence of LaMonte Young, without further detail. Ignacio Julia simply states that Cale had a desire to use what he had learned with Young and bring it into The Velvets.[5] Heralded as a comprehensive guide to the history of The Velvets, *Uptight: The Velvet Underground Story* offers a single paragraph

[3] The Dream Syndicate was a band founded by LaMonte Young and played his unique variety of drone music live, mainly around the mid-late 1960s.
[4] Jeff Schwartz, "Sister Ray: Some Pleasures of a Musical Text," in *The Velvet Underground Companion,* 97.
[5] Ignacio Julia, "Feedback: The Legend of the Velvet Underground, the Fully Revised Version (1986 – 1996)," in *The Velvet Underground Companion*, 181.

quote by John Cale discussing the influence of Young.[6] Furthering this analysis will demonstrate not only musical differences between themselves and the 1960s rock counterculture but philosophical, ideological and political differences also. This in turn will deepen our understanding of The Velvets and how their music identified and critiqued the utopianism of the mainstream 1960s rock counterculture.

'Heroin', taken from the debut album *The Velvet Underground & Nico*, provides key examples of the contradictions within the 1960s rock counterculture. Although it is only one song from one album, it uses many devices that appear on many Velvet Underground records, including their most influential songs 'I'm Waiting for the Man' (1967), 'Venus in Furs' (1967) and 'Sister Ray' (1968). 'Heroin' in its brash, stark and experimental style, represents many facets of the band's revolt against psychedelic rock counterculture of the 1960s. Art and music was integral in representing the culture of the 1960s and therefore analysis of its songs is important in considering artistic, cultural and political movements.[7]

In order to convey how the facets of 'Heroin' (and therefore The Velvet Underground in general) are varied to the sounds, lyrics and influences of the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture bands, I will begin by analysing the drone sound. The differences between the drone that The Velvets used and the Indian drone of the psychedelic rock counterculture provides many subtle differences about the influences of each. An investigation into the different drug cultures of LSD/marijuana and

[6] Victor Bockris and Gerard Malanga, *Uptight: The Velvet Underground Story* (Norfolk: Thetford Press Ltd, 1983), 13.
[7] Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," *Modern Language Notes* Vol. 91, No. 6 (1976): 1478.

heroin will illuminate not only the background of The Velvet Underground, but also how the specific influences of these drugs led to differences in music and lyrics of 1960s rock. Here is where the main lyrical analysis will take place as this highlights understated but vital discrepancies in music and culture between the Velvets and the counterculture bands. 'Ego Death' is an important subject for bands singing about the effect of drugs, especially LSD. I argue that the idea of ego death takes on a very different significance when approached through the LSD and marijuana culture of the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture artists on the one hand and the heroin culture of The Velvets on the other. This represents the 'splintered' nature of the 1960s rock counterculture and, that whilst sharing a lyrical and music code, they subtly differ from one another.[8]

'As Broad as a House': The Drone Sound

Musically, 'Heroin' uses tension as a focal point; this is achieved largely by the group's innovative use of the drone sound. Other bands of the psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture utilised the drone, but The Velvets drone was different. The drone not only provides conflict with Reed's treble-laden guitar and staggered vocal delivery but also adds to the feeling of anxiety and dread. Once tension is heightened and the song reaches its crescendo, there is an apocalyptic feeling. Cale's long drone becomes an outburst of viola screeching violently whilst Maureen Tucker's drums gallop forward in pulsating rhythm. The intensity builds

[8] Andy Bennett, "Reappriasing Counterculture," in *Countercultures and Popular Music*, ed. Sheila Whiteley & Jebediah Sklower (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.

the longer the drone is held, which culminates in an improvised climax of disarray. Tucker's drums sound like a heartbeat slowly gaining tempo, replicating the visceral experience of heroin – the music of the song is meant to replicate coming up on heroin and eventually, psychologically/physically succumbing to it.

Through the juxtaposition of Lou Reed's staggered guitar and vocal and John Cale's elongated viola drone, tension is built throughout the entirety of the song toward the crescendo. Cale's viola underpins the whole song. The long slow drone adds a visceral effect to the two chords that Reed plays continuously throughout (E and D). The one-note drone not only adds intensity but also conflicts with Reed's deadpan vocal delivery and staggered guitar.

The drone sound was integral to the Velvet Underground's approach. Psychedelic bands of the 1960s rock counterculture took influences from eastern music, specifically Indian music that used the tanpura. The tanpura is a four-stringed instrument that creates a drone sound by playing certain harmonics that buzz. It is used mainly as a background drone so that other instruments can play louder. The 'West Coast style born in San Francisco was characterized by distorted, hyper-amplified sound, and new forms, lyric content, and phrase-shaping's, since the concept of mind-expansion through LSD, acid, and other hallucinogenics implied musical as well as drug experimentation'. Within the wider 1960s counterculture on the west coast, both mind-expanding drugs and Indian culture were popularised; David Reck states that the two were intrinsically linked, creating a synthesis of mythical

and religious Indian culture with psychedelic drugs.[9] Nowhere is this synthesis more apparent than in The Beatles 'Tomorrow Never Knows' (1966). 'Tomorrow Never Knows' is heralded as one of the first major 1960s releases that utilised Indian instrumentation in order to link the burgeoning psychedelic scene (in music, literature, drugs) with Indian transcendental religious culture. John Lennon used Timothy Leary's and Richard Alpert's *The Psychedelic Experience* (1964) as a way of learning about Tibetan religious culture and transcendence. He used lines and teachings from the book in the song 'Tomorrow Never Knows' to show his newfound affinity with this culture.[10] Conversely, there is little evidence to suggest The Velvets were inspired LSD culture.

Indian music and culture were appropriated into 1960s psychedelic rock because of the similarities between the transcendental states prominent in Eastern spirituality and the effects of psychedelic drugs. The drone in Indian music was used as a tool of transcendence and had religious connotations. The use of the drone in Indian music is often transcendental. This mystical aspect was another reason that the wider counterculture used it within their art. Meditation and Yoga had become popularised in the 1960s. The transcendental states achieved by these practices are similar to the effects of LSD. For example, the notion of ego-death, in which one's sense of self is dissolved to reveal an inner connection between oneself and the universe can be revealed through both LSD and/or meditation practice.[11] In

[9] David Reck, "The Neon Electric Saraswati," in *Contributions to Asian Studies* Vol. 12, No. 1 (1978): 94.
[10] Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (London: Pimlico, 1998), 164.
[11] *Ibid,* 165.

some meditation practices a mantra can be used in order to achieve these transcendental states. Mantras are repeated chants and sound like drones. The drone works in the same way as a mantra works during meditation by propelling the mind into an altered state of reality. Indian gurus such as Maharishi Mahesh Yogi were enjoying heightened popularity, exposed by the media glare when The Beatles visited Rishikesh to take part in one of his meditation courses.[12] An interest in Buddhism fed into the 1960s rock counterculture from Beat culture, for example in the works of Jack Kerouac. George Harrison had begun taking Sitar lessons from Ravi Shankar, a notable Indian Sitar prodigy, which influenced his 'Indian Trilogy', which featured 'Love You To' (1966), 'Within You Without You' (1967), 'The Inner Light' (1968). Shankar even played a set at Woodstock and Monterey Pop Festivals, which shows how this music and Indian culture were utilised and idolised by the 1960s rock counterculture.

By contrast, The Velvet Underground were influenced not by Eastern spirituality and Indian music, but by LaMonte Young and the 'Theatre of Eternal Music'. This is an important point of departure between The Velvets use of the drone and the Indian influenced drone of the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture. There is more evidence to suggest a direct influence from Young, as opposed to cultural influence from eastern or Indian music, especially in the instrumentation used: Cale uses an electric viola, a western instrument which he had played with Young's avant-garde group. As Cale's drone was played through an electric amplifier on guitar strings, he was able to produce a more bass-driven sound than the acoustic

[12] Reck, "The Neon Electric Saraswati,", 9.

tanpura. The bass meant that the song growled with a mechanical urgency, in opposition to the slow whir of the tanpura. The shared code of the 1960s rock counterculture is prevalent, and yet when closely analyse we get a distinct picture of how individual bands within the 1960s rock counterculture are contradictory. This sound gives The Velvets a harsh urban growl and exemplifies the New York City culture they personified. A greater influence for Young than eastern culture was the natural world around him. He was exposed to this world whilst growing up in the small town of Bern, Idaho:

> the humming harmonics of the step-down transformer at the local power plant; train whistles across the river; lathes and drill presses; wind, insects, water, trees. The telephone poles in Bern produced a continuous chord from which, much later, he recalled the four pitches he named the 'dream chord', basing many of his mature works on it.[13]

Although here there are influences from the natural world, there are, more interestingly, urban influences. The sound of the psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture was linked to a natural, acoustic sound and generally felt more closely linked to nature that could be uncovered through meditation or LSD. The prevailing attitude of the wider 1960s counterculture was to find something meaningful outside of the suburban or city life that their parents had been born into, which is why the sound of transcendental drones, along

[13] Keith Potter, *Four Musical Minimalists: La Monte Young, Terry Riley, Steve Reich, Philip Glass* (New York: Cambridge University Press. 2000), 23.

with the practice of meditation and Buddhist non-materialist teachings became so prevalent. What is interesting is how Young's drone was influenced by the urban landscape built by 'capitalist' industry.

This also highlights an interesting distinction between The Velvets and the psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture: The Velvets were influenced by the city of New York and by the more industrial sounding drone of LaMonte Young as it more aptly presents the busy industrial cityscape. John Cale himself labelled his drone as a 'jet engine' sound, which also more aptly shows its thicker and heavier tone than the Indian style. It points toward a mechanical sound, as opposed to the natural tanpura sound. [14] By electrifying their drone sound The Velvets were able to create a new type of drone that utilised amplification, distortion and feedback.

In fan-as-critic style, Wayne MacGuire described this use of feedback as 'a suspended mystical ecstasy in which the spirit is transformed into a negative mirror of itself, in which streams of energy travel into and out of the spirit simultaneously', The Velvets feedback created a raw, mechanical energy, similar to the way Jimi Hendrix used it, although theirs was the heavy feedback caused by electric viola, an energy and sound unmatched by the electric guitar. [15] This portrays chaos and deterioration that will ultimately 'expose the illusion of order and harmony as a farce'.[16] It also has greater attack; it's a harsh and violent sound of erratic nature, thereby representing the heroin-induced frame of mind.

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[14] Bockris and Malanga, *Uptight*, 13.
[15] Wayne MacGuire, "The Boston Sound," in The *Velvet Underground Companion*, 23.
[16] Bernando Attias, "Authenticity and Artifice in Rock and Roll: And I Guess That I Just Don't Care," *Rock Music Studies*. Vol. 3, No. 2 (2016): 138.

The Indian drone of the psychedelic bands of the 1960s rock counterculture bands primarily used both tanpura and sitar, and therefore created a thinner acoustic sound that could not utilise electronic instruments or amplification. Cale points out an interesting divergence between his drone and the Indian drone: his used a 'totally different tuning system' and he believes the Indian drone to be more scientific, whereas Cale and Young would spend hours perfecting their own unique style of drone in the rehearsal room.[17] He was unique for putting an electric guitar pickup in his viola which created the thicker, more sustained drone that allowed more amplified frequencies to be belted out whilst playing live or in the studio. Not only does the presence of the viola itself separate The Velvets from other 1960s rock counterculture bands, but also the influence from figures such as LaMonte Young and Tony Conrad (an early member of LaMonte Young's Theatre of Eternal Music) further propelled them away from the mainstream elements of the 1960s rock counterculture sound. The tanpura and sitar on the other hand, are both primarily acoustic instruments. This also meant that Cale could add the amplifiers natural distortion to the viola sound, which creates growl and extra harmonics.

Furthermore, Young took influences from serialism in music and also from European composers such as Bartok and Debussy.[18] The variety of Young's influences on The Velvets thus creates a key distinction from the drone of Indian-inspired psychedelic elements of the 1960s rock counterculture. Despite taking some influence from Oriental styles, Young's sound includes other musical elements that were key in how Cale and Reed

[17] Bockris and Malanga, *Uptight*, 13.
[18] Potter, "Four Musical Minimalists," 28.

formed the basis of their own drone. [19] It is thus important to highlight these distinct influences in order to get a clearer picture as to how The Velvets make the idea of a simplistic 1960s rock counterculture appear much more complex.

'Things Aren't Quite the Same': Heroin vs. LSD Culture

Despite the attention given to heroin by The Velvets, both in this song and 'I'm Waiting for the Man' (1967), heroin use was less in the 1960s compared to LSD or marijuana. This difference therefore presents another point of departure between The Velvets and the 1960s rock counterculture bands, including the psychedelic rock counterculture bands. This difference occurred because members of the psychedelic form of the 1960s rock counterculture saw psychedelic drugs as consciousness expanding, rather than dulling, though a small movement in garage rock also wrote songs about the dangers in LSD and it's effects on the mind.[20] Heroin, on the other hand, obliterates the senses and reduces consciousness into solipsistic euphoria.

Despite heroin being long synonymous in the culture of jazz, the rock music culture of the 1960s, especially on the west coast, was attempting to push boundaries in all directions, especially with consciousness. It is interesting to note how fundamental LSD became for the 1960s

[19] Jim Condon, "Angus Maclise and the Origin of the Velvet Underground," in *The Velvet Underground Companion*, 32.
[20] Ann Johnson and Mike Stax, "From Psychotic to Psychedelic: The Garage Contribution to Psychedelia," *Popular Music and Society* Vol 29, No. 4, (October 2006): 418 – 420.

counterculture in general and how The Velvet Underground's use of heroin widens the mental space of the artists within the 1960s rock counterculture.[21]

By the 1960s lyrical content reflected the change in society toward LSD and marijuana usage.[22] Songs such as The Byrd's 'Eight Miles High' (1966) and Jefferson Airplane's 'White Rabbit' (1967) describe the transcendence of the psychedelic experience. The evocations of drug-highs in songs that dwell on the psychedelic experience differ from The Velvet Underground's account of an opiate high. Not only are the presentations, mixes and recordings of 'Eight Miles High' and 'White Rabbit' different to The Velvets, their depiction of ego death and deliberate ambiguity on the subject of drugs was different. The Velvets call their drug anthem 'Heroin' whereas few songs written about LSD mention the drug by name.[23]

Despite this, 'Heroin' and 'White Rabbit' share some similarities in how they evoke the drug experience. They both use tension to build to a climax. This is to evoke the tension inherent in coming up on drugs. The main verses on 'White Rabbit' go back and forth between F# and G chords. This was influenced by Spanish Bolero and builds tension by going up only one note, coming back down and repeating. [24] This tension is released to a small extent, as in 'Heroin', when it reaches the climax of the first chorus

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[21] Anthony Ashbolt, "Go Ask Alice: Remembering the Summer of Love Forty Years On," *Australasian Journal of American Studies* Vol. 26, No. 2 (2007): 40.
[22] John Markerts, "Sing a Song of Drug Abuse: Four Decades of Drug Lyrics in Popular Music – From the Sixties Through the Nineties," *Sociological Inquiry* Vol.71, No. 2, (April 2001): 207.
[23] 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' (1967) by The Beatles is often considered to be about LSD given the initials in the words of the title, though this has never been concretely proven. If it is true then it raises an interesting dichotomy between the artists. Whilst The Beatles cover up their drug-induced lyricism in coded titles, The Velvet Underground assert their drug of choice with diminutive discretion.
[24] John Covach and Andrew Flory, "What's That Sound: An Introduction to Rock and its History," W.W Norton & Company, accessed February 19th, 2019, https://www.wwnorton.com/college/music/rockhistory/outlines/ch07.htm

and then drops back down in tempo, when it reaches the first bridge, as Grace Slick sings: 'When the men on the chessboard get up and tell you where to go/and you just had some kind of mushroom and your mind is moving low'. The chords here get higher and provide a certain satisfying finish to the verse but then, like 'Heroin', come back down for another verse in order to build tension further. By the end of both songs they reach their highest point. In 'White Rabbit' Grace Slick and the band as a whole elevate their deliveries for the final line 'feed your head'.

An interesting difference is in the overall presentation of each song as an experience of each drug. Many examples of LSD songs have polished production values, pop-infused hooks and will rarely mention the drug itself by name. 'Heroin', on the other hand, does the opposite. The production of *The Velvet Underground and Nico* is stark and rough, allowing feedback into the mix and allowing guitars to distort. In comparison both 'White Rabbit' and 'Eight Miles High' are more professionally recorded, with less feedback, hiss or recording spill heard.[25] This provides an interesting contrast in how the drugs were influencing each song. Heroin does not enhance colour, nor does it produce feelings of community or realisations about God. It is much more nihilistic and solipsistic. The production replicates the world of the junkie, allowing for all the feedback and discordant notes to be heard, everything bare and nothing taken away.

'Eight Miles High' in comparison has dream-like guitars that sparkle in the mix (mainly due to McGuinn's 12 string Rickenbacker guitar). Reed would often play guitar through a Silvertone 1484 amplifier around this time,

which were sold as low budget amps in the Sears catalogue, rather than the professional amplifiers made by Fender or Vox. Whilst The Velvets did also use Vox amps, the Silvertone gave a rugged sound to Lou Reed's guitar that also boosted his low end into an overdrive growl. The amp has a lot of low-end, even when played with a high treble sound as Reed does on 'Heroin'. The breakup of the distortion is also unique; given the cheaper parts used for this Sears catalogue amplifier the distortion has more of a thick roar to it than the Fender or Vox amps which are more controlled. The way different drugs inspired different kinds of sound. From the LSD-pop in the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture or the grittier, more discordant heroin-inspired sound that expanded the definition of the 1960s rock counterculture. These songs shed light on the differing attitudes The Velvets took to the better-known elements of 1960s drug culture and how they saw drugs in relation to their art.

The sonic differences described above are also reflected in the attitude towards drugs in the lyrics of 'Heroin'. Lyrically 'White Rabbit' and 'Heroin' contrast with one another. Reed's description of how the drug makes him think and feel reveals a nihilistic solipsism; most of the lines contain references to his experience, his plans for the present or future and how he feels physically. On the other hand 'White Rabbit' is in the second person. Grace Slick wanted to allow the listener to put themselves in the narrators shoes, or the shoes of a drug user, and be led along on this fantasy tale (made of references to *Alice in Wonderland*, a popular text amongst the 1960s wider counterculture for its trippy passages):

One pill makes you larger
and one pill makes you small.

And the ones that mother gives you
don't do anything at all.

Here, the evocate use of "you" means the listener become protagonist. 'Heroin' however, is all told from the first person. The only time the word "you" appears is in the lines:

You can't help me no, not you guys,
All you sweet girls with all your pretty talk,
You can all go take a walk

The only use of the word "you" in 'Heroin' is to effectively tell anyone who wants to help the narrator to leave them alone. There is no communal or universal aspect to this song. The listener can interpret 'White Rabbit' evoking a drug-like effect and providing to how psychedelic drugs affect the user's experience and perceptions. Lyrically, Slick focuses on aspects of trip-like events, describing them unfolding:

When logic and proportion have fallen sloppy dead
and the white knight is talking backwards
and the red Queen's off with her head

The song takes the perspective of the seer who is traversing this landscape

viewing absurd events unfolding. It shows the listener the transformative effects of LSD on logic, reason and conventional spatio-temporal coordinates. It is telling the listener to not hold sacred the very fabric of reality, as it too is not as fixed as the previous generation believe. Western rationality and empiricism are challenged, which was one reason for the political upheaval of the wider 1960s counterculture. According to Clarke et al, this is an essential facet of the definition of counterculture.[26] 'White Rabbit' expresses the freedom, by which a transcendence of consciousness through LSD use can expose one to. 'Heroin' on the other hand, focuses on the paradox of euphoria and impending death. Not the ego death of the psychedelic rock song, but the potential end of the narrator's own life. The euphoria has overtaken all of his fears, which includes arguably one of the most visceral of human fears: death. The images used in 'White Rabbit' reflect the visualisations and concepts of an acid trip, the epistemological meltdown of normality, whereas the imagery in 'Heroin' is used to reflect how the user feels internally. It is about the way the drug makes the narrator feel, particularly how invincible he feels against the world. It also makes him nonchalantly ready for death. This contrasts starkly with the depiction of ego death in songs of the psychedelic rock counterculture, a part of the 1960s rock counterculture, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

'Heroin's ending sounds like one of two scenarios: a mind so high that it has lost all connection with reality, or a mind so far gone that it completely accepts reality as it is, even if that reality is death:

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[26] John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts, "Subcultures, Cultures and Class: A Theoretical Overview," in *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, ed. Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 62.

and thank God that I'm good as dead

And thank your God that I'm not aware

this is different from the general psychedelic high. Awareness is everything in the psychedelic high, rather than the negation of it. In 'White Rabbit' there are descriptions of what the narrator can see around them and all events unfolding rapidly. Another example of this shift in consciousness is in The Beatles 'Tomorrow Never Knows'. The listener is told to 'listen to the colour of [their] dreams' and describes existence as a 'game'. The importance of this shift in consciousness is unrivalled, it encompasses the true nature of reality:

Yet you may see the meaning of within

It is being, it is being

the meaning found within one's own consciousness is being itself. This invitational aspect is once again heard in 'Eight Miles High':

Nowhere is there warmth to be found

Among those afraid of losing their ground

The truth is to be found only by those willing and daring enough to take the first step of this journey, which will ultimately lead to the truth: that

everything you believed to be fixed is actually malleable and dependent on your consciousness as the sociological definition of 'counterculture' points toward the questioning of inherent middle class values from within.[27] 'White Rabbit', 'Tomorrow Never Knows' and 'Eight Miles High' reveal a reality as if one's eyes had been opened for the first time. These three songs also hold knowledge and truth to be essential, given that they can be found through different possibilities, separate from what they already know. Each song stresses the importance of transcendence of one's education, which is why 'White Rabbit's ultimate crescendo ends with the line 'feed your head!' This means it is important to educate oneself and to allow the transcendence of reality is vital. Whilst Reed wants to shut out the world and become unaware, it is a solipsistic denial of education because the drugs euphoria makes the expansion of consciousness a superfluous endeavour. The Velvets and the bands of the psychedelic form of 1960s counterculture reveal the wide range of what is deemed 'counterculture'. They each include several important facets of the sociological definitions of 'counterculture', and yet there are important and interesting distinctions between them. These distinctions are found at the core of the countercultural artistic output, within the lyrics and music.

The music in 'Heroin' represents the effects of the drug. The increase of tempo creates tension and the feeling of drug-induced rushing. It doesn't take long once injecting heroin for it to reach the user's brain and nervous system but Reed dissects this moment in a seven-minute song. Reed's vocal performance is so visceral that he even lets out a self-satisfied chuckle at

[27] Clarke et al, "Subcultures," 62.

4:45. This is obviously an intimate vocal performance that bears its emotions at the fore, letting out a smug know-it-all laugh, mimicking the self-assurance of a man in the throes of euphoria. This reflects the solipsistic nature of the lyrics, it is grounded in an individualism at odds with the psychedelic ideals of this form of 1960s rock counterculture and negates the necessity to ameliorate or care about the world. He is satisfied completely with his high and even contented in the face of his own mortality. This creates a further complex image of 'counterculture' with regard to The Velvets. Whilst they and the other bands have a shared musical code, and run counter to the received normative ideals of 1960s society and culture, they also do not wish to ameliorate anything.[28] They are comparable to The Doors whereby destruction of the status quo is more important than it's replacement.

Reed's lyrics and delivery also build drug-induced tension against the long drone of the viola. Each verse line gets longer toward the end of the song, which with the increase of tempo builds further tension. With increased tempo Reed's delivery becomes a frantic burst. Although it's obvious that 'Heroin' provides a visceral description of an individual in the throes of an opiate high, it also describes the drug-induced self-confidence in the face of the woes of the world:

> Because when the smack begins to flow
> I really don't care anymore
> About all the Jim-Jims in this town

[28] Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Beyond The Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3-4.

And all the politicians making crazy sounds
And everybody putting everybody else down
And all the dead bodies piled up in mounds

Despite the backdrop in the 1960s of on-going war and social upheaval, Reed writes about his personal, direct experience of a feeling that obliterates these problems. Whilst not necessarily judging this as nihilist or apathetic, it points towards the importance Reed placed on the experience of the individual, especially toward something as transcendent as the drug experience. Despite the moral implications, there is something interesting about his description of strength in the face of a doomed reality that he feels through heroin. The lyrics are not a dissection of the specific bodily feeling that heroin provides; rather, Reed focuses on the mental aspect and how this feeling relates to the outside world. There is also something apocalyptic that complements the musical crescendo. Reed faces the rushed inevitability of death with a deadpan vocal expression (‘Heroin, be the death of me’) and (‘and then I'm better off than dead’). Reed feels strength in the face of impending doom, a doom that has been building throughout the song through use of Cale’s viola and that explodes toward the end in a screech of noise, feedback and crashing drums. The band musically expresses the height of euphoria as well as the lowly state of impending death. There is an inherent contradiction between expressing these two states in one musical piece: how can impending death, amongst all the dread heightened by Cale’s drone, also give rise to euphoria? The notion of death in ’Heroin’ is important as it is epitomised differently to 1960s psychedelic songs of ego death. Nick

Bromell describes the latter in these terms:

> Submerged in the pluralism of the fluid world, no longer presuming to stand above it and no longer troubled by the seeming 'unreality' of the social construction that has fixed this world in place, the user of psychedelics experiences nearness as a sensual delight, a loving touch…you at last shrug off the burden of human consciousness that seems to obtrude between you and the universe.[29]

This action of shrugging off is true in 'Heroin'. But in psychedelic ideals there is a necessity in this. It reveals truths that are powerful and that are applied to normal reality in order to see things how they really are. Reed, on the other hand, uses heroin as a simple means of escape. It transcends the normal world, but not in the same way as LSD. It blocks it out; he shuts his eyes and gives himself to the slumber of the opiate nod, whilst the LSD user feels more powerful, more of a connection between his mind and the world. With LSD one transcends normality and is wiser. In 'White Rabbit' there's a confident tone in the way that psychedelic experience defines the generational divide. LSD allows the user to see further than the previous generation's pharmaceutical drugs, which dulled consciousness rather than expanded:

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[29] Nick Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 70.

One pill makes you larger

and one pill makes you small

and the ones that mother gives you

Don't do anything at all

Slick here identifies that the characters mother has pills that do not work. These might be normal pills related to health, however in the context of the song, one can assume this refers to the drugs of the mother's generation. It is outlining how the previous generation, both their drugs and their culture, have little to offer, but in the new counterculture you can glean useful lessons from the act of indulging in the psychedelic. This fits with Clarke et al's definition of 'counterculture' that refers to a group in society that want to undermine the normative aspects of American society.[30] LSD became more prominent than heroin, and according to Nick Bromell, provided more important social and philosophical insights, psychedelics offered 'a way not just to escape, which suggests flight to unreality, but to return home to the way the world really is'. [31] By contrast, heroin gives him a bulwark against the evils of the previous generation so that he can overcome it as an individual, though not in order to change reality or help those around him. The self here is given no answers but the loss of ego contains a euphoria that blocks the world's problems out. Reed no longer gives credence to 'all the dead bodies piled up in mounds'. Heroin gives the character freedom outside

[30] Clarke et al, "Subcultures," 62.
[31] Bromell, *Tomorrow*, 71-72.

of politics and war. This gives rise to another fundamental dichotomy between the aims of the anti-war rock and folk countercultures of the 1960s and the lack of empathy toward politics and war shown in ‘Heroin’. Once again highlighting the splintered characteristic of the wide-ranging and nuanced 1960s rock counterculture, and wider 1960s counterculture.

Although it would be naïve to label all 1960s rock counterculture bands as ‘anti-war’, it is reasonable to suggest that demonstrating and singing against the war was a large part of the movement. For example, ‘Fixin To Die Rag’ by Country Joe and the Fish (1970), ‘Fortunate Son’ by Creedance Clearwater Revival (1969), ‘Volunteers’ by Jefferson Airplane (1969) amongst many more. Jimi Hendrix played a version of the Star Spangled Banner at Woodstock in which each verse was intersected by sounds of bombs, gunfire and screaming; all made using his electric guitar. This was a public stand against the Vietnam War. Conversely, The Velvets never released an anti-war song or wrote lyrics concerning the Vietnam War. This was clearly at odds with the mainstream direction of the 1960s rock counterculture and the aims of its followers. Not only did The Velvets not sing about war, but also the lyrics in ‘Heroin’ show how the power of the drug blocked out the need to care about such things. The mental change caused by LSD, however, shifted the mentality of users toward being conscientious of war, and questions of power and freedom. As suggested by Bromell, LSD created the desire to ask questions about the stability and inevitability of the world that this generation inherited, which thus gave rise to anti-war sentiments amongst the wider rock and folk countercultures of the 1960s. ‘Heroin’ did not seek to answer or ask any prevalent questions

about big issues in society; it simply described how the drug made the user actively unconcerned. This encapsulates the tensions between individualism and communal good as posited by Hall.[32]

It is crucial to see how the music in 1960s rock counterculture is analysed as it helps us to more comprehensively analyse the wider culture of the 1960s. The 1960s saw the rise of rock music becoming a part of higher culture and act as a mirror for society; therefore it is vital to define the boundaries where these cultural groups were aligned. Despite the literature on The Velvets briefly explaining how they were darker and different from the psychedelic section of the 1960s rock counterculture, it is rare to find in-depth analysis of how specifically they differed. It appears to be taken for granted that the band was part of a specific form of counterculture and is thus rarely explored in any great complexity. The literature on The Velvets going forth does not need another explanation of their influence and affinity with LaMonte Young, it needs, as I have endeavoured to provide, further specific analysis of how his influence fed into the artistic and musical creation of The Velvets, and thus how this representation of culture helps us to identify the wide-ranging complexities of the 1960s rock counterculture.

[32] Hall, "Hippies."

2

‘Is Everybody In?’

Journeys into Chaos and Apocalypse in The Doors ‘Celebration of the Lizard’

Lettin’ people push you around!

How long do you think it’s gonna last?

How long are you gonna let em push you around?

What are you gonna do about it?

- Jim Morrison live at the Dinner Key Auditorium in Miami, March 1, 1969

These infamous words uttered by Jim Morrison to a crowd of fans captured The Doors tumultuous relationship with the wider 1960s rock counterculture. Morrison, now overweight and adorned by a thick beard, yells at the complacency of the crowd and their lack of opposition to the police presence inside the Dinner Key Auditorium on that March evening in 1969. He uses the opportunity to berate the crowd and whip up a frenzy of anti-establishment fervour whilst critiquing the very legitimacy of their revolutionary ideals. As Morrison was led off-stage and into police custody, he showed that he had lost faith in the revolutionary aspect of the wider 1960s counterculture as his audience failed to follow his lead. The leather-

clad shamanic pied piper cannot lead the children as far along his journey as he wishes them to go.

The depiction of this event in the 1991 Oliver Stone film *The Doors* lent credence to the view that Morrison at this point had all but given up on revolution. According to the film, Morrison's political idealism gave way to drink and debauchery in a nihilistic stupor. Greil Marcus asserts that Morrison was merely looking for 'some final rule to break' by acting like a 'confused little boy'.[1] But, contrary to this conventional wisdom, by 1969 it appears that Morrison's revolutionary fervour was heightening rather than diminishing. This deepening radicalism was itself the cause of Morrison's disillusionment with and frustration at how far individuals were willing to take the countercultural revolution. Morrison, as is evidenced on that March night in Miami, wanted to take it even further, as is indicated by the lyrics and music The Doors were writing around 1968-70. Songs such as 'Unknown Soldier' from 1968's *Waiting for the Sun* criticised the violence and death caused by the Vietnam War and chimed with the wider countercultural anti-war cause.[2] Moreover, Morrison's Miami tirade began during 'Five to One', their most explicit call to forceful confrontation, also from that album. Lines such as 'they got the guns but we got the numbers/gonna win yeah we're takin' over!' point toward a radical form of political and social revolt, as well as revolt against war in Vietnam.

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[1] Greil Marcus, *The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 49.
[2] Danny Sugerman and Jerry Hopkins, *No One Here Gets Out Alive* (Glasgow: Warner Books, 2011), 183.

What exploded in 1968 was 'the product of pressures that had been building up for almost a decade'.[3] During this period (1968-70) social unrest gave way to violent clashes, a worsening of the Vietnam War, rising tension between racial/civil rights groups and the burgeoning conflict between left and right on the political spectrum. The 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago, assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, America's heightening involvement in Vietnam and riots in Watts, Detroit, Newark and Washington D.C. turned the wider 1960s countercultural revolution toward violence and away from peace and love. Peter Doggett argues that 'if 1968 signified anything, it was a sense of revolutionary potential, which crackled through the West like electronic static, and ensured that this year was not the climax of the struggle, but merely the prelude'.[4]

It was also in 1968 that the band would play the live epic 'Celebration of the Lizard'. 'Celebration' is an apocalyptic journey song that encapsulates what The Doors felt about the world and the anticipation of change and revolution. It is an important song, a centrepiece of The Doors live show from 1968 onwards, but it is significantly under-analysed in commentary on the band, which I will later outline. There are several live and studio versions such as the *Absolutely Live* and *Live in New York* versions (recorded in 1969 and 1970), the studio-recorded take of the full piece which was not released until 2007, and the short section of the overall piece, 'Not to Touch the Earth', that appeared on *Waiting for the Sun*, released in July 1968. Its placement on the album makes it stand out; sitting

[3] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 326.
[4] Peter Doggett. *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of the '60s Counter-Culture* (Chatham: Cannongate Books, 2008), 133.

between two seemingly innocent love songs only emphasises its dark sound. 'Celebration' was planned to take up an entire side of *Waiting for the Sun*. It is more a performance piece than a song. This was probably one reason for its failure to become an entire album side after a recorded version was created in 1968.[5]

Within the literature on The Doors 'Celebration of the Lizard' is under-analysed. Greil Marcus's *The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years* gives entire chapters to songs such as 'When the Music's Over', 'The End' and 'The Unknown Solider' but not to 'Celebration'.[6] The best-selling biography of Jim Morrison only devotes two small paragraphs to the piece.[7] *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary*, a compendium of writings about the band from 1967 – 1997, contains only two fleeting mentions of the piece, without any analysis or discussion.[8] This chapter will closely analyse 'Celebration of the Lizard' in order not only to make a case for its importance in The Doors oeuvre, but also to show how 'Celebration' illustrates that The Doors and Jim Morrison's countercultural fervour was deepening at this point in their career toward violent and chaotic ends.

'Celebration of the Lizard' encapsulates how, by 1968, The Doors found themselves spokespeople for not only the 1960s rock counterculture but for 1960s countercultural ideals in general, and yet more radicalised than

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[5] Richard Goldstein, "The Shaman As Superstar," *New York Magazine* Vol. 1, No. 18, August 1968.
[6] Greil Marcus, *The Doors: A Lifetime of Listening to Five Mean Years*, 59-65, 171-183, 91-103.
[7] Sugerman and Hopkins, *No One Here Gets Out Alive*, 191.
[8] Goldstein, "Shaman,", James Riordan and Jerry Prochnicky, "Shamanism: From Break on Through: The Life of Jim Morrison," in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary,* ed. John Rocco (New York: Schirmir Books, 1997), 11, 40.

the majority of its contingent. The wider 1960s counterculture began to splinter into different forms in the late 1960s and became a 'multifaceted complex of different, overlapping structures, bound only by philosophies that challenged normative attitudes'.[9] The Doors, particularly Jim Morrison, wanted to take the revolution and its violent spirit to destroy the prevailing order; the band themselves 'articulated a unique political vision that supported personal politics and mass resistance while remaining critical of the main currents of countercultural thought'.[10] Whilst Jefferson Airplane felt it necessary to articulate a positive, utopian vision of a post-revolutionary world, The Doors focus was on the *process* of revolution, not its aftermath: their utopia is a negative one which dwells on the transformative, destructive condition of revolt and revolution. The Airplane's 1968 hit 'Crown of Creation' advocated the takedown of the current order: 'I've seen their ways too often for my liking'; 'they cannot tolerate our minds!' But it also called for the building of something optimistically different: 'New worlds to gain!' The Doors idea of countercultural revolution took pleasure in the dark, chaotic, violent process of destruction itself and placed the tearing down of the established order above describing utopian ideas about what would replace it.[11] For Morrison especially, the strain between himself and the people in the crowd that night in Miami came from what he saw as their reluctance to take these violent revolutionary principles as far as he thought they needed to go. But it was precisely this idea of upsetting the status quo

[9] Christopher Crenshaw, "Five To One: Rethinking the Doors and the Sixties Counterculture," *Music & Politics* Vol. 8, No. 1, (Winter 2014): 3.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] Mikal Gilmore, "The Legacy of Jim Morrison and the Doors," *Rolling Stone Magazine,* accessed April 4, 1991, https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/the-legacy-of-jim-morrison-and-the-doors-173068/.

and engaging in violent action that Morrison felt was more important than envisioning the utopia that would arise once the capitalist powers were overthrown.

Darkness and disorder were the places The Doors and Morrison inhabited lyrically and musically and 'Celebration of the Lizard' captures both the 1960s counterculture structure of antagonism as well as the descent into chaos, sex and violence that Morrison placed at the centre of their revolt. Morrison delighted in the way this generation appeared to be giving itself license to take the revolution as far as it could go. [12] Mikal Gilmore concisely demonstrates how Morrison's idea of counterculture was at once representative of the wider 1960s counterculture in its desire to take things are far as they could go, but also at odds with it, in his desire for fervent destruction. The Miami incident highlights that Morrison was willing to go not just further than his audience but deeper into the territory of disorder than even some of the more radical elements of the wider 1960s counterculture. However, Gilmore, like many commentators on The Doors, does not explore this through close analysis of The Doors music and lyrics. He argues that Miami was unrepresentative of Morrison's countercultural idealism and was in fact a disastrous ego-trip by a drunkard. Nevertheless, violence and chaos are central to songs such as 'Celebration of the Lizard' and present in The Doors songs from the beginning of their career, as evidenced by 'When the Music's Over' (1968), 'The End' (1967) and 'Five to One' (1968). Therefore, rather than dismissing these qualities, it is important to analyse how they feature in the group's music and performances in order to help us

[12] *Ibid*.

understand the relationship between The Doors, the wider 1960s counterculture and more specifically compared to the rock counterculture of the 1960s.

The first section of this chapter will highlight how writers, such as Mikal Gilmore, fail to identify or explore how journeys form the basis of many Doors songs. 'Celebration' is, like 'The End', a journey song. It raises the question: why did the journey provide the precise artistic geography on which Morrison and The Doors could best express themselves? [13] By comparing 'Celebration' with other key journey songs of the psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture, such as 'Lucy in The Sky with Diamonds' and 'White Rabbit', my analysis reveals how it illustrates The Doors political and philosophical differences from other bands of the 1960s rock counterculture and highlights their tensions with the wider 1960s counterculture. These other celebrated LSD-inspired songs of the 1960s rock counterculture take their sense of journey from the LSD-induced drug trip. The psychedelic journeys taken whilst tripping had a profound effect on the consciousness of young people during the 1960s and these experiences were shared through the medium of music. Changing of consciousness is key to Reich's definition of counterculture, and what it means to change consciousness in order to incite change society more widely. Musicians used technology to mimic in sound the journeys they would take whilst tripping on LSD.[14] But 'Celebration of the Lizard' offers a very different account of the trip in comparison to songs such as The Beatles' 'Lucy in the Sky with

[13] 'The End, 'Moonlight Drive', 'The Crystal Ship', 'LA Woman' and 'Riders on the Storm'.
[14] Michael Hicks, *Sixties Rock: Garage, Psychedelic & Other Satisfactions* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 58-74.

Diamonds' (1967), disseminating The Doors distinctively chaotic, violent and sexualised idea of revolution.

Following the section on journey songs as a subgenre, the final section of the chapter will focus on the category of the apocalyptic journey song in order to further tease out the complex relationship between The Doors and the 1960s rock counterculture. Through a comparison of 'Crown of Creation' and 'We Can Be Together' by Jefferson Airplane with 'Celebration', I will illustrate how The Doors represented a distinct conception of revolution. While Jefferson Airplane's songs represented an optimistic form of revolution that described the new world they wished to replace the old, The Doors attempted to push revolution further into chaotic upheaval. It also represents the inherent contradictory nature of the 1960s counterculture, as mass political upheaval clashed with the need for individual self-expression, as outlined by Hall.[15] I will then compare 'Celebration' with Bob Dylan's apocalyptic journey song, 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' (1964) in order to explore the differences between folk-protest and psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture versions of this subgenre, and how these all further complicate our illustration of the 1960s rock counterculture.

'C'mon Baby, Run With Me': The Journey Song

The journey taken in 'Celebration' is split into seven different sections: 'Lions in the Street', 'Wake Up!' 'A Little Game', 'The Hill Dwellers', 'Not

[15] Stuart Hall, "The Hippies – An American Moment," The University of Birmingham, accessed September 27th, 2019, https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/college-artslaw/history/cccs/stencilled-occasional-papers/1to8and11to24and38to48/SOP16.pdf.

To Touch the Earth', 'Names of the Kingdom', and 'The Palace of Exile'. The protagonist of 'Celebration' embarks on a journey and takes a female character, though they seem to be chased by the very 'chaos and disorder' they are trying to run away from. In section one the main protagonist, whose mother is 'rotting in the summer ground' heads south to leave the chaos and disorder, then wakes up in a hotel with a woman beside him. He then encounters a snake that is in the room with the two characters. In part two Morrison sings of a 'little game' called 'go insane'. He exhorts the listener (or is it his girl companion?) to 'release control' as they're 'breaking through'. In the next part the imagery becomes serene: there is a 'labyrinth of streams', and 'the quiet unearthly presence of gentle hill dwellers'. This is juxtaposed with violence when Morrison screams news of a slaughter. This prompts the characters to flee. The next section, 'Not to Touch the Earth' tells of the characters running from the violence and chaos but experiencing more along the way, with the promise of a big warm mansion at the end of their journey, though it is never revealed that they make it. The narrator warns of chaos and disorder with allusions to a 'minister's daughter', 'snakes' and 'outlaws'. The final section tells how far and wide across America he has travelled. He asks his followers, the 'children of night', 'who among you will run with the hunt?' and finally reaches the 'town of my birth' as if his life or journey has come full circle or reached its end point. Similarly to that March night in Miami, he is asking his followers if they are ready for this violent revolution. The narrator has announced himself the 'Lizard King', proclaiming 'I can do anything'. He ends this final section with the line 'I want to be ready'. The language here is militaristic with

overtones of embattlement: the Lizard King and his followers are preparing for a violent confrontation. I will analyse how this confrontational ending bolsters the vehemence of Morrison's lyricism and illustrates the revolutionary aspect of The Doors music.

The journey is a key motif in the oeuvre of The Doors. The journey is a recurrent device that was important for stating their ideological, cultural and philosophical beliefs. Tony Magistrale recognises that Morrison's journeys are important psychologically.[16] However, Magistrale does not link this either to specific lyrical analysis, or to the wider context of Morrison's wider countercultural philosophy. Whilst it is true that Morrison's journeys represented inward thinking, I do not believe Magistrale goes far enough into how inward journeys manifest themselves outwardly. Morrison advocated personal revolution as a precondition of communal revolution. For communal revolution to occur, individuals had to change their own mind and spirit. This again speaks to Hall's observation that the wider 1960s counterculture had contrary aims, both individual and communal.[17] The journey, especially the one taken in 'Celebration', evokes sexual, political and personal aspects. By representing a character in a journey asking another to 'come with me', Morrison is using the journey to invite others to follow or accompany him. He is not, as Magistrale asserts, simply on an isolated, purely personal soul-searching expedition.

Both literally and metaphorically, the protagonists are going downward. This is another device that builds tension through the full

[16] Tony Magistrale, "Wild Child: Jim Morrison's Poetic Journeys," *Journal of Popular Culture* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Winter 1992): 135.
[17] Hall, "Hippies."

versions. The full versions of 'Celebration' on *Live at New York* and *Legacy* begin with the death of a mother, which leads the main protagonist to detach themselves from this old dying world, in order to move away toward another. The protagonist goes through a transformation in the section entitled 'Go Insane'. He breaks away from the old dying world by this transformative act, which brings about further chaos and disorder. By the time 'Not to Touch the Earth' begins, the protagonist is amidst that same chaos and disorder that he and his companion were seeking to move away from, only now they are a part of it. During this section the song calls for the seizure of property from the rich, the mansion which is 'warm at the top of hill'. This exhibits revolutionary and rebellious qualities through a lyric that identifies with the left-wing aspect of counterculture of the 1960s. This represents how Morrison shared some relation to the main ideals of the 1960s rock counterculture, but as previously shown, takes a unique position within it.

Unresolved tension is at odds with the normal rock device of releasing tension, providing a sense of closure and satisfaction for the listener, but it also allows us to see what the journey meant to The Doors in the wider context of 1960s rock counterculture revolution. Journeys taken in both 'Not to Touch the Earth' and 'Celebration' do not give any easy answers to the chaos and violence that the protagonists experience. Richard Goldstein describes violence as a 'major motif' in The Doors oeuvre and once again we must infer that Morrison saw it as integral to his philosophy.[18] On the one hand Grace Slick's assertion that one must 'Feed your head' meant that becoming enlightened in all aspects of reality – including through

[18] Richard Goldstein, "The Shaman as Superstar," in *The Doors Companion: Four Decades of Commentary on The Doors,* 9.

the use of psychedelic drugs - is vitally important for her generation, especially as a vanguard against the capitalist system. This fits with Clarke et al's theory of taking down of the middle class from within, which they saw as integral to the definition of the 1960s counterculture. On the other hand, Morrison offers no explicit instructions, guidance or advice to his listener. The protagonist of 'Celebration' seems at one with violence and chaos and is leading his female companion into undefined and uncertain territory:

> Dead president's corpse in the driver's car
>
> The engine runs on glue and tar
>
> Come on along, we're not going very far
>
> To the East to meet the Czar
>
> Run with me

Morrison finds freedom in the anarchic world along this journey and musically this is reflected by unresolved tension. This is representative of Morrison's view that the psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture, of which Jefferson Airplane were key spokespersons, had too many cheap catchphrases to be taken seriously.[19] 'Celebration' keeps the listener on the journey; rather than give teachings or catchphrases, it stays within the dark and absurd world.

[19] Crenshaw, "Five To One," 3.

This unresolved tension is illustrative of The Doors darker form of 1960s countercultural rock. By contrast, many psychedelic songs in the 1960s rock counterculture contained elements of fairy-tale or childhood stories, such as allusions to *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll. 'White Rabbit' is the most overt example of this influence but it can also be seen most predominantly as a characteristic strand of several British counterculture bands. Early Pink Floyd songs on the album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967) provide several illustrations of fairy-tale imagery with childish playfulness. Child-like wonder and imagination gave the British psychedelic rock of the 1960s an innocent and playful sound, divergent from the solemn broodiness of The Doors. One of the albums that most connected and resonated with these images and sounds of psychedelia within the 1960s rock counterculture was *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967). 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds' is described by Mark Prendergast as one of three seminal tracks from Sgt Pepper that evokes childlike psychedelia.[20]

The journey in 'Lucy in the Sky' is innocent and colourful in comparison to 'Celebration'. 'Lucy in the Sky's psychedelic images are the absurdist, brightly coloured child-like images that people report experiencing on LSD trips: the protagonist invites the listener on a journey. The world the song describes is benevolent in nature: 'everyone smiles as you drift past the flowers that grow so incredibly high'. It is positive and gives a sense that everyone is in this journey together. By contrast, the world of 'Celebration' contains little benevolence and is overwhelmingly dark and chaotic in nature. This difference is key in distinguishing between that tendency of psychedelic

[20] Mark Prendergast, *The Ambient Century: From Mahler to Moby – The Evolution of Sound in the Electronic Age* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2001), 193-4.

songs of the 1960s rock counterculture that used music as a way of celebrating the positivity of LSD and the feeling of community and optimism it inspired and a counter-tendency represented by The Doors that used music to explore the destructive and disturbing aspects of self and social transformation made possible by LSD. [21]

Both 'Lucy in the Sky' and both versions of 'Celebration' compel the listener, audience and other protagonists to embark on a journey. In 'Lucy' the second verse affirms the necessity to 'follow her down to a bridge by the fountain where rocking horse people eat marshmallow pies'. Images of 'rocking horse people' and 'marshmallow skies' evoke the dream world that was indicative of the LSD trip as a hallucinatory experience. Conversely, the protagonist in 'Celebration' asks the listener to 'run with me', but the context is what sets it apart from the psychedelic journey in 'Lucy'. In the live version of 'Celebration' from the *Live in New York* album, the protagonist and follower are journeying through a world of violence and danger, from the 'outlaws who live by the side of the lake' to the 'dead presidents corpse in the driver's car'. The dark and violent imagery is a stark contrast to the childish 'marshmallow skies' in The Beatles dreamscape. Therein lies the fundamental difference in the bands representations of journeys in the context of the complex 1960s rock counterculture philosophies.

The safety and tranquillity of 'Lucy in the Sky' distinguishes it from 'Celebration', both the live and studio versions, although in the 'Not to Touch the Earth' section there are numerous allusions to a mansion where

[21] Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (London: Random House, 1998), 213.

the inside is warm, a haven the protagonists are moving toward. However, the violence in the line 'Burn! Burn! Burn!' at the end of the section illustrates endangerment rather than safety. 'Lucy in the Sky' is quaint in the way its eccentricity comes full circle as the 'girl with kaleidoscope eyes' is seen both at the beginning and end of the journey. The Doors music and lyrics tread a path deeper into chaos; much like in their live shows around the time they played 'Celebration'. Jim Morrison was becoming more erratic and the inadequacies he saw within the wider 1960s counterculture came to the fore that night in Miami in 1968.

This comparison of The Doors and The Beatles highlights a difference between the 1960s rock counterculture in the US and UK during this period. The UK form of 1960s rock counterculture remains largely childlike, whilst the American has an element of cynicism and embattlement. The violence against hippies on Sunset strip and the police riots at the National Convention in Chicago in which anti-Vietnam war protestors were savagely beaten sparked this embattled spirit.[22] The Doors violence was not just a way of reflecting these events but a state of being itself. Morrison spoke about 'permanent revolution', and this perhaps explains why the protagonists of 'Celebration' never reach safety but rather a final position of impending confrontation. [23] The darker character of 'Celebration' was both an anticipation of coming upset in society as well as reflection of the turmoil of 1968 in particular. The Beatles, on the other hand, reflected an innocent form of 1960s rock counterculture whose self-expression was child-like.

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[22] James Miller, *Democracy Is In the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 310.
[23] Crenshaw, 'Five to One,' 11.

Whilst both bands are deemed a part of the 1960s rock counterculture, it is clear how differently their music reflected their distinct immediate surroundings. Whilst both can be defined as being counterculture in terms of changing consciousness and rebelling against the status quo, close analysis highlights subtle differences which also allow us to view the splintered nature of counterculture, especially within the 1960s rock counterculture.

The journey past accepted dogma is another point where the 1960s rock counterculture and The Doors were divergent. Where does society go if transcending these limitations is key to transforming society? Part of the solution is analysing the music and lyrics to explore how they formed views on endings and more specifically how apocalypse is represented. After all, these journey/apocalypse songs created the 'image of disaster which is supposed to come prior to the revelation of a spiritual future'.[24]

'Night Arrives With Her Purple Legion': Apocalypse and Endings

The 'apocalyptic journey song' emerged in the 1960s rock counterculture and is also a subgenre of 1960s rock. These songs find apt reflections of society and politics and evidence of how artists either foresaw or reflected on the climax and ensuing crisis of the 1960s rock countercultural ideals. These are expressed in the ferocious, disordered worlds of songs such as 'Crown of

[24] Yasue Kuawhara, "Apocalypse Now! Jim Morrison's Vision of America," in *The Doors Companion*: *Four Decades of Commentary*, 99.

Creation' by Jefferson Airplane, 'Revolution' by The Beatles, 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall' by Bob Dylan and both 'The End' and 'Celebration of the Lizard' by The Doors. These songs illustrate the belief that the current order of society was about to end and give way to cataclysmic change, though not without struggle. Music of the 1960s rock counterculture can be characterised by a reflection of the political and social instability of the era. Songs, or pieces of art generally, are 'elaborate mechanisms for defining social relationships, sustaining social values, and strengthening social values' and therefore we see reflections of society, or in the case of the 1960s rock counterculture, the burgeoning rejection of normative social values.[25] Art that portrays apocalypse and explores the significance of endings, therefore, can be seen as a reflection of social and cultural disorder.

The way endings were portrayed in songs of the 1960s rock counterculture highlights this. In 1968, the same year that The Doors began to play 'Celebration', Jefferson Airplane released the commercially successful *Crown of Creation* album. The title track from the album embodies the 1960s rock counterculture ethos of destruction and rebirth but with an emphasis on utopian ideals. The line 'I've seen their ways too often for my liking' reflects The Doors anti-establishment sentiments, however the line 'new worlds to gain' subtly differs. Songs such as 'Crown of Creation' elicit a desire to ameliorate society and to break through the chaos and confusion in preparation for a utopian world. Jefferson Airplane were no strangers to violence in their songs, such as in 'We Can Be Together' (1969). But these violent calls to action were used in order to gain 'new worlds'.

[25] Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," *Comparative Literature* Vol. 9, No. 6, (December 1976): 1478.

The Doors, on the other hand, dwell in the interminability of chaos; they were 'making music for a ravenous and murderous time'.[26] As Gilmore here states, The Doors and Morrison were more interested in the schism with and destruction of the old order, rather than the creation of something new. Whilst the character in 'Celebration' turns his/her back on chaos and disorder, it is never stated that there is some better world to be gained. Apocalyptic journey songs thus reflect the subtle differences between The Doors and bands such as Jefferson Airplane. 'Celebration' takes its protagonists through an apocalyptic landscape, not to a point of rest or utopian imagining of another, better world, but to a higher point of apocalyptic confrontation, with the 'children of the night' preparing to take over the city.

Both The Doors and 1960s rock counterculture bands such as Jefferson Airplane were interested in rebelling against and replacing the old order but subtly differed in their vision. For The Doors, apocalypse and endings appear in songs such as 'The End', 'When the Music's Over' and 'Rock is Dead' and were therefore important motifs. The March night at the Dinner Key Auditorium highlights that for Morrison the violence and change had not yet gone as far as he sought.

In order to enhance the shock value of the live version of 'Celebration' and shake the audience from slumber and toward revolutionary ideals, Morrison channelled Antonin Artaud's 'Theatre of Cruelty'. Within the literature on The Doors there are numerous allusions to Artaud's influence on Morrison, though rarely are we given any specific examples or

[26] Gilmore, "The Legacy of Jim Morrison and the Doors."

analyses.[27] 'Celebration of the Lizard' is one of the most Artaudian pieces The Doors ever played live. The purpose of theatre according to Artaud was to '…wake us up. Nerves and Heart' in order to experience 'immediate violent action that inspires us with a fiery magnetism of its images and acts upon us like spiritual therapeutics whose touch can never be forgotten'. [28] This can be seen when Morrison shrieks 'Wake up! You can't remember where it was!' at the beginning of the second section on the *Live at New York* version at 1:15. This roaring call comes after ten seconds of silence: its intention is to shock the audience, to wake them up to the reality of the world and alert them to the upcoming journey in 'Celebration of the Lizard'. The intensity is amplified by discordant organ notes and drums that elevate Morrison's scream. Morrison uses Artaud in order to promote this vision of chaotic revolution, leading the audience through an apocalyptic landscape and away from their restful complacency.

In the rest of the 'Wake Up' piece in the *Live at New York version*, the instruments are used in order to create sounds of confusion and violence, a reflection of the burgeoning social and political crises of the late 1960s. There are several discordant sounds ranging quickly in volume from Ray Manzerek's organ whilst Robbie Krieger bends a long fuzzy guitar note at 0:17. It all adds to confusion and feels like an avant-garde theatre piece more than a song. Artaud remarked 'I would like to write a book which would drive men mad, which would be like an open door leading them where they

[27] Wallace Fowlie, *Rimbaud and Jim Morrison: The Rebel as Poet* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 86, 91, 97.
[28] Nathan Gorelick, "Life in Excess: Insurrection and Expenditure in Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty," *Discourse* Vol. 33, No. 2. (2011): 263.

would never have consented to go, in short, a door that opens onto reality'.[29] Here the connection between Artaud and 'Celebration of the Lizard' are clear. Morrison begins the next piece entitled 'A Little Game':

> Once I had a little game,
>
> I liked to crawl back in my brain
>
> I think you know the game I mean,
>
> I mean the game called "go insane"

Both Artaud and Morrison here are interested in evoking madness amongst their audience and for Morrison the lines suggest the inherent absurdity of both the psychedelic trip and the apocalyptic journey. Both Morrison and Artaud sought to use the live setting in order to incite madness, confusion and to illuminate the minds of the audience. Thus it makes sense that a full version of 'Celebration' was never realised as a recorded piece in the studio, other than 'Not to Touch the Earth', as the Artaudian aspects only worked live. For The Doors 'Celebration' was a piece that had a tangible function and required the immediate presence of an audience in order to work. It was not just a song, but a provocation to revolt and to embrace chaos, as evidenced in the line in the call to arms of the final verse 'who among you will run with the hunt?'

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[29] Antonin Artaud quoted in R. Bruce Edler, *A Body of Vision: Representations of the Body in Recent Film and Poetry* (Canada: Wilfred Laurier Press, 1997), 152.

Another apocalyptic journey song that ends with an incitement to change and liberation was Bob Dylan's 'A Hard Rains a-Gonna Fall' (1964). 'Hard Rain' is the story of an innocent 'blue-eyed son' who returns from a long journey to tell of the disparate images and injustices he has seen throughout the American landscape. Subgenres in the1960s rock counterculture such as pop, psychedelic, folk and avant-garde are well established, but the apocalyptic journey is a trope that transcends these. Emerging from the folk counterculture, 'Hard Rain' carried different political and cultural implications to Morrison and The Doors apocalyptic songs. Dylan's song was representative of the folk movement as a whole in the early 1960s and lyrically optimized the stand against oppression. The protagonist's journey through an apocalyptic and harrowing landscape ends with him declaring that he'll use what he has witnessed, as well as his gift for singing, to speak out about injustice:

> And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it
> And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it
> Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'
> But I'll know my song well before I start singin'

The power of the folk artist lay in his or her ability to analyse the ills of society, call out to a community of like-minded concerned citizens, and use music to incite change and help the oppressed. The folk community believed in the power of rational analysis to identify these ills and to use language in order to not only communicate but to persuade people to act in order to

rectify these problems. The innocent 'blue-eyed son' is affected by what he sees to the extent that he must use this rational language to communicate to many people. By contrast, the protagonists in 'Celebration' are not, like Dylan's narrator, horrified witnesses to and reporters on apocalyptic violence; they take part in the chaos and violence, and at the end of the song seek to push it further. This reflects the idea that the counterculture wanted to subvert the received ideology of capitalist society.[30] Although 'Celebration' begins with the protagonists fleeing the chaos and disorder of the old world, the world of decaying normative middle-class values, they ultimately embrace violence and destruction. The ending to both the *Live at New York* and *Legacy* versions ends with a preparation for violent confrontation. This confrontation is heard in other Doors songs such as in the Oedipal section of 'The End' (1967) in which protagonist kills his father and sleeps with his mother, ending the section with the words 'Kill, Kill, Kill!'. Similarly 'Celebration' (in the full pieces on *Live at New York* and *Legacy*) begins with the rotting corpse of a mother, representative of the old world that was dying out to make way for the new. Morrison's lyrics dwell in violent realms, he saw violence as an integral part of the process of change, whereas the protagonist in 'Hard Rain' sees his moral duty as the horrified documentation of injustices and believes that this is sufficient to change.

Dylan's song is based on the idea that the apocalyptic world it describes can be ameliorated through the commitment of the folk-protest movement to fight injustice. The journey more generally was important to Dylan and others due to the influence of the Beat generation. *On the Road* by

[30] Clarke et al, "Subcultures," 62.

Jack Kerouac was hugely influential and exhibited the spiritual significance of journeys:

> for the twentieth century wanderers of *On the Road*, their wild highway journeys must eventually come to a dead end, in one or the other ocean. The Beat solution was to turn around and do it again – to seek fulfilment in a perpetual if purposeless motion. For all his love of travelling, Dylan refused to accept this from an early age. So when he comes to the sea at the end of the highway, he confronts it.[31]

For Dylan, the concept of a journey turns apocalyptic because society has changed, especially since the publication of *On the Road* and the emergence of the Beat movement. The 'hard rain' represents cleansing water that will wash the nation and purify it of these injustices.

However, the two descriptions of apocalypse in 'Celebration' and 'Hard Rain' have vital differences in how they end. Dylan endeavours not only to get to the core of the apocalyptic injustices and chaos of the present world, but also to reflect it for everybody to become aware, to 'reflect it from the mountain so that all souls can see it'. The protagonist of 'Hard Rain' desires the largest audience possible and therefore sees it as part of his duty as a singer to show the masses that the world is in danger, that society is frayed and that injustice is everywhere. On the other hand, 'Celebration'

[31] John Gibbens, *The Nightingale's Code: A Poetic Study of Bob Dylan* (London: Touched Press, 2001), 98.

ends in an embattled manner, with a call not just to be witness to injustice but also to partake in a possibly violent overthrow of the established order:

> Brothers and sisters of the pale forest
>
> Children of night
>
> Who among you will run with the hunt?
>
> Now night arrives with her purple legion
>
> Retire now to your tents and your dreams
>
> Tomorrow we enter the town of my birth
>
> I want to be ready

Both the recorded versions of ‘Celebration’ and ‘Hard Rain’ feature a call outward for change. But for Morrison, this call is the same call he roared out at the Dinner key Auditorium on that March night in 1968. He is asking his followers who might be ready to take up arms and do battle with the powers that be. He does not infer the utopian idealism or detached bearing-witness to injustice that Dylan’s message does. Whilst Morrison’s call to arms indicates the coming of violence in the line ‘run with the hunt’, alongside military imagery in a ‘purple legion’, Dylan places more importance on song and language as vessels to communicate when he sings ‘but I’ll know my song well before I start singin’. This is a key difference between the ways The Doors and Bob Dylan used apocalypse songs: the importance is placed on their utility, though each is different. For Morrison it

is the battle and preparation for overthrowing the established order that is important; for Dylan and the folk counterculture it is the ameliorating the apocalyptic injustice of the established order that is important. It is significant that 'Celebration' does not end at the end of the journey, but rather *on* the journey. It was Morrison's 'dark fascination with chaos and apocalypse' that holds the story from ending.[32] The protagonist in 'Hard Rain' has seen the apocalyptic world and will thus endeavour to show it to whomever he can, whilst in 'Celebration' the protagonists are still in that world of chaos and violence. The Doors dwelt within this darkened world: the chaos and confusion was the revolution, not the coming of utopia. Unlike Dylan, The Doors were not interested in using their music to reflect, from great heights, the apocalyptic mess the world is in. Whilst Dylan and the folk counterculture take solace in the 'hard rain' that will clear away the wrongdoings as they sing their songs for justice, 'Celebration of the Lizard' revels in apocalypse and celebrates rebellion. Thus once again illustrating the various complexities and differing character of 1960s countercultures that close analysis of music and lyrics uncovers.

The Doors music conveyed the chaos of this apocalypse. In the 'Not to Touch the Earth' section, after each line of 'Run with me!' the guitar delivers a cascading riff. Morrison uses his vocal delivery to build excitement as by the next line his delivery becomes more urgent. This also provides a platform to build on for the ending of the song's intense discordant climax. The riff repeats every time Morrison sings 'run with me' and mimics a descent into chaos. Starting with higher notes and gradually

[32] Magistrale, "Wild Child," 135.

getting lower portrays the effect of going down or being in descent either into a physical or mental place. This is then followed by a period of silence in which Morrison screams, 'Run!' It mimics the falling off an edge.

'Celebration' is just one example that illustrates the philosophical and ideological complexities of the 1960s rock counterculture. Despite the mythologizing Hollywood narrative of Oliver Stone's *The Doors,* the film does succeed in capturing the bands commitment to a violent and combative form of revolution. The Doors interest in permanent revolution was, however, in line with the more apocalyptic form of revolution that germinated from the violent clashes in 1968. Whilst connected to the apocalyptic forms of revolt in the 1960s rock counterculture, The Doors embraced and dramatized in their performances a more violent form of revolution than most followers of the wider 1960s counterculture were willing to commit to. That is why at the Dinner Key Auditorium in March 1968, Morrison asked the crowd: 'how long do you think it's gonna last?' Morrison was aware of the gulf between his own level of commitment and that of the audience, and sincerely questioned the wider countercultural revolution and his own place within it. This once again is an expression of the 'splintered' nature of the wider 1960s counterculture, as well as the shared musical code. It also represents the contradictory nature of the wider 1960s counterculture, the nuance of which is uncovered through a deep analysis of individual songs within the music of the 1960s rock counterculture.

3

The Only Thing That's Real is Inside You:

The Politics of the Personal in 'Visions of Johanna'

The mid-1960s was a pivotal era for the 1960s folk and rock countercultures. The 1960s folk counterculture was driven by a generation in search of reform in the post-war period. There was an attempt by the movement to bring old folk songs back into the lives of those disaffected with bourgeois, capitalist ideals. This ignited a 'quasi resurrection of the "people's singer"' and a left-wing political ideology. Robert Cantwell accepts the connection between the folk revival and utopian, left-leaning ideology that emphasised the common good; but, for him, it was more about morality than ideology. Cantwell expresses that 'we were good, and wanted to be'.[1] The folk revival was in search of purity in its morals and in exploring the forgotten legacy of old folk ideals. Bob Dylan became the figurehead of this movement from as early as 1962. Despite some key differences, the 1960s rock counterculture that emerged in the mid-1960s took the 1960s folk countercultures notion of the good community in a more culturally oppositional and confrontational direction. Dylan was central to both movements (indeed, he was the key figure in the transmutation of folk oppositionality into rock oppositionality of the 1960s) but also was uneasy within both countercultural movements—especially with the aspect of utopian visions of community. This correlates

[1] Robert Cantwell, *When We Were Good: The Folk Revival* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 22.

with the splintered and contradictory nature of the countercultures, which occurs throughout these nuanced and wide-ranging movements of the 1960s.[2]

The 1960s folk counterculture was a reaction and revolt against the standing social order and came to represent a political form of dissent. The political idealism of the 1960s folk counterculture fed into the 1960s rock counterculture that in many ways emerged from it. Both rock and folk countercultures of the 1960s shared the ideal of the 'Garden of Eden image of man'.[3] But the two movements differed significantly in their political vision, their strategies for realising that vision, and their aesthetic approach. Acoustic performer Woodie Guthrie exemplified the working-class travelling musician. Acoustic instrumentation harkened back to rural folk practices uncorrupted by the forces of capitalist modernisation, commercialism and technology. The power of the folk artist lay in their ability to analyse the ills of society, call out to a community of like-minded concerned citizens, and use music to incite change and help the oppressed. The folk community believed in the power of rational analysis to recognise these ills and the use of language in order to communicate and encourage people to act in order to fix these problems. However, in the middle of the decade, the folk community began to be displaced as the pre-eminent musical counterculture in the United States by what soon was to be called rock music.

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[2] Andy Bennett, "Reappraising Counterculture," in *Countercultures and Popular Music*, ed. Sheila Whiteley & Jebediah Sklower (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.
[3] Jens Lund and R. Serge Denisoff, "The Folk Music Revival and the Counter Culture: Contributions and Contradictions," *The Journal of American Folklore* Vol. 84, No. 334 (1971): 394.

A key moment came in 1965 when Bob Dylan played the Newport Folk Festival wielding an electric guitar. Dylan was the messiah of the folk counterculture by 1965 and was viewed as the musical leader of the folk movement.[4] Dylan was viewed as 'the purist of the pure…the darling of America's intellectual left'.[5] However, this notorious concert transformed him into a traitor in the hearts and minds of many followers of the 1960s folk counterculture. Dylan's turn to electric music and away from acoustic folk is well documented and discussed widely.[6] Whilst most writers dwell on the seismic shift from playing acoustic to electric music, few explore how Dylan's solo acoustic music had already begun to illustrate this change, not only stylistically but also politically.

By 1966 Bob Dylan's writing methodology no longer used traditional folk materials as sources. He was influenced by different genres which he fused into his three revolutionary albums of 1965-66, *Bringing It All Back Home*, *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde on Blonde*. Dylan continued to use the blues as a template, as in 'Outlaw Blues' and 'Maggie's Farm' on *Bringing it All Back* Home (1965) but also added country, gospel, soul, rhythm and blues and rock 'n' roll to the blues and ballad traditions.[7] While his stylistic change during the mid-1960s is much written about, this often focuses on the shift to electric instrumentation. I argue that the solo acoustic version of 'Visions of Johanna' played live at the Royal Albert Hall, London,

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[4] Grail Marcus, *Invisible Republic: Bob Dylan's Basement Tapes* (London: Picador, 1998), 26.
[5] James Miller, *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock* (London: William Heinemann, 1999), 218.
[6] Miller, *Almost Grown*, Marcus, *Invisible Republic*, Andrea Cossu, *It Ain't Me Babe: Bob Dylan and the Performance of Authenticity* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishing, 2012), Mike Marqusee, *Wicked Messenger: Bob Dylan and the 1960s* (London: Seven Stories Press, 2005), Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On*, Elijah Wald, *Dylan Goes Electric!* (New York: Harper Collins, 2015).
[7] Keith Negus, *Bob Dylan* (London: Equinox, 2008), 36.

on May 17th1966, illustrates the break with the folk-protest aesthetic and ethos, even though it's a solo acoustic performance and doesn't therefore fit with the 'Dylan goes electric' mythology. 'Visions' does not use traditional folk materials as its basis and is illustrative of a new song writing methodology that isn't based in one clearly identifiable genre. Furthermore, it also shows Dylan's complex and contradictory relationship to the emerging rock counterculture to which Dylan's mid-1960s oeuvre contributed significantly. 'Visions' illustrates Dylan's development of a new kind of sensibility that was closer in spirit to the cultural radicalism of the 1960s rock counterculture than the communal idealism of the folk-protest movement. It was marked by a rejection of bourgeois norms, his refusal of easy solutions to social problems, and his emphasis on the necessity for individuals to go through a terrifying and thoroughgoing process of desolation in order to strip themselves of social norms and rationalist assumptions. This fits with the contradictory definition of 'counterculture' as outlined by Hall and Whiteley.[8]

This new sensibility is exemplified specifically in the live acoustic version of 'Visions' because of the fluidity that Dylan was able to put into the performance of the song. The fluidity of the performance adds to the radical nature of the sensibility expressed in the song, therefore my analysis of the song will include a close examination of the music as well as the lyrics—something that is sadly rare in writing on Dylan's songs. The songs themes of love, longing and the ideal show a mutation in his concerns from

[8] Hall, "*Hippies,"* and Sheila Whiteley*, The Space Between the Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture (*London: Routledge, 1992), 3-4.

the public politics of the 1960s folk counterculture to a more personal, private politics and a rejection of moral clarity in his new vision. This new vision feeds into the 1960s rock counterculture in its rejection of bourgeois norms, its acceptance of radical uncertainty and the fluidity of reality, and its emphasis on the need for individuals to construct their own morality and conscience. But it also unsettles it: the scepticism about community and the questioning of norms is so searching that it leaves no firm ground to stand on and therefore leaves Dylan in a unique countercultural position in relation to both the rock and folk countercultures of the 1960s. A close analysis of 'Visions' will deepen our understanding of this radical fluidity in Dylan's songs of this period, and of Dylan's shifting countercultural identity.

Writers on Dylan often focus on the electric instrumentation of this period to illustrate Dylan's important role in the creation of the 1960s rock counterculture. However, by separating himself lyrically from the social and political dissidence of the era, Dylan also worked at a departure to what would become the 1960s rock counterculture, which during the mid- and late-1960s was often steeped in left-wing idealism and utopianism. Dylan's influence and role became less clear-cut, especially as the psychedelic rock counterculture of the 1960s took on the folk culture's notion of community and regeneration, illustrated in Jefferson Airplane's 'Get Together' and Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young/Joni Mitchell's 'Woodstock'. By contrast, Dylan's work of this period sees radical uncertainty everywhere, to the extent that he finds it impossible to imagine communities beyond his songs narrators and their idealised lovers. Although the psychedelic wing of the 1960s rock counterculture and the folk protest movement began to overlap

by 1967 in their political ideals, Dylan's vision was more complex and he was personally distant from the communal aspect. The simplistic argument that Dylan's electric instrumentation is evidence enough of his moving from folk to help create the 1960s rock counterculture does not illustrate the entire complexity.

Many in Dylan's folk audience rejected the songs of this period because they moved from the political toward the personal. This is true to some extent as the songs generally weren't denouncing specific social injustices like 'The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll' or attempting to incite change through song, as in 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall'. Dylan shifted toward a different form of countercultural stance in which the personal was also political. A concern with the complexities of deep networks of interpersonal relationships replaced the utopian political idealism that he had shared with the 1960s folk counterculture in his early years. 'Visions' displays how Dylan created lyrically nuanced songs that encapsulated the manoeuvring, power plays and fragile idealism in love and relationships. 'Visions' displays Dylan's use of a network of dream-like images to explore complicated interpersonal relationships and to articulate a sense of longing for the ideal. This change was indebted to figures such as Homer, Robert Graves and Joseph Campbell. Dylan was inspired by the mythic quest of the hero. Specific to 'Visions' was the idea of the Muse, or 'union with a Goddess – a woman certainly inspired by Dylan's new bride Sara, but also a composite of Persephone, Eurydice, and others'.[9] In Dylan's folk-protest

[9] Graley Herren, "Mythic Quest in Bob Dylan's Blonde on Blonde," *Rock Music Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 2, (2018): 125.

material the ideal was to ameliorate the problems of society, now the ideal becomes a matter of elusive personal desire.

However, this personalised notion of the ideal remains subtly political as it is attached to a vision in which the moral and ethical certainties of the folk-protest community dissolve into something not yet fully formed and more ambiguous, but also far-reaching in its rejection of normative, bourgeois, rationalist modes of thought and behaviour. Certain songs of Dylan's electric period, such as 'Maggie's Farm' and 'Subterranean Homesick Blues', told the listener to drop out of the beliefs and behaviour instilled in them by bourgeois society, and as such they still contain the programmatic political utility of the folk era. 'Gates of Eden', 'Like a Rolling Stone' and 'Desolation Row' reflect personal liberation, achieved through an inner journey that allows the narrator to see through the terrifying and absurd ugliness of society, and to seek truth. These songs have a distinctly personal program to follow and therefore could be seen as negating the communal ideals of the 1960s folk counterculture. Yet the critique of bourgeois norms is political. A song such as 'Visions' reflects a sensibility rather than a program. As many of the songs of the burgeoning 1960s rock counterculture were programmatic themselves, 'Visions' does not fit neatly into either the folk-protest or 1960s rock counterculture category.[10] 'Visions' gives no answers to the problems of love, rejection, society's ills or personal liberation. The negative figure of Johanna (she is an ideal who fails to materialise) tortures the narrator but perhaps provides him with a newfound

[10] For example, songs such as 'Crown of Creation' (1968), 'White Rabbit' (1967) by Jefferson Airplane and 'Tomorrow Never Knows' (1966) by the Beatles illustrate a program of action for thinking your way out of the bourgois world and rejecting the culture that tries to program you to buy into it.

creative outlet ('the harmonica plays the skeleton keys in the rain'). Rather than definitive answers the narrator receives consolation and a creative release as justification for their negation. 'Visions' shows the new sensibility that would become important for the 1960s rock counterculture: radical distrust of inherited notions, ideas and modes of behaviour. It also shows that Dylan's sensibility is so far-reaching that it's not easily contained in the political/behavioural anti-establishment stance that came to define the 1960s rock counterculture.

The new sensibility expressed in 'Visions' is characterised by fluidity and permeability. This is evident during the live versions. This fluid ambiguity is characteristic of Dylan's emerging countercultural stance and differentiates that stance from the moral certainties and belief in rational communication of the folk-protest community he left behind. But it is also what makes Dylan both inspirational and problematic for the 1960s rock counterculture. Analysing and comparing both live and studio takes of 'Visions' uncovers useful information and yet only Clinton Heylin's *Revolution in the Air* displays how important a songs history and development are for its overall meaning. 'Visions' perfectly encapsulates how fluid and ambiguous Dylan's songs became, providing few easy answers to the complexity of individual relationships and what one holds as the ideal. Dylan weaves his own personal experiences with mythical representation, creating a complex illustration of his artistic pursuit. [11] The ambiguity of the song's landscape, setting, characters and narrator make it a challenge to interpret. Moreover, the music in the live version also exhibits a

[11] Herren, "Mythic Quest," 125.

fluidity because Dylan was not shackled by other players in a band, which gives further meaning to certain parts of the song, representative of his move away from the folk movement and toward his own fluid style.

'Infinity Goes Up On Trial': 'Visions of Johanna' Song Narrative and History

The 1966 world tour was the first Dylan had played backed by an electric band. The tour was rife with audience turmoil as fans reacted to Dylan's apparently abrupt and shocking change of style and direction, including one audience member labelling Dylan as 'Judas'.[12] On his Paris date Dylan provocatively raised an American flag as a backdrop to the show, which was taken as a statement of support for the Vietnam War. This shows how willing Dylan was to challenge and even alienate elements of his established audience who saw him as a politicised folk performer, and how easy he found it to move away from the general ideals held by the folk-protest community of the 1960s. By the 1966 tour Dylan had begun to distance himself from the broadly left-wing folk movement, and did so vocally. An argument with left-wing folkie Phil Ochs, in which Dylan dismissed Ochs as 'not a songwriter' but a 'journalist', evidenced his newfound disregard for the folk culture. Ochs lectured Dylan about his social responsibilities to which Dylan replied that politics, and everything Ochs was writing, was 'bullshit…the only thing that's real is inside you'. Dylan was rejecting what he saw as simplistic ideas about politics for a more ambiguous notion of the

[12] Documented on D.A Pennebaker's 1967 documentary of the tour entitled *Don't Look Back*.

political being tied to the deeply personal and subjective. [13] While important members of the folk movement were becoming further radicalised—such as Joan Baez who refused to pay her taxes in order to protest military spending by the government—Dylan was moving in a different direction.[14]

Dylan suffered a motorcycle accident after the 1966 world tour and did not tour or record again for several years. Therefore this tour is seen as one of the most important of his entire career. The release of *Blonde on Blonde* in June 1966 marked the final instalment in a trio of albums considered the creative highpoint of his career during the 1960s. Since 1964 Dylan had been moving away from the folk protest movement, and so the presence of 'Visions' on the final album he made during this tumultuous era makes it a crucial statement, marking his move into an altogether different countercultural position. Whilst moving away from the folk protest movement, Dylan's rejection of bourgeois norms, embrace of abstraction and the politicisation of the personal made him into a cornerstone for the burgeoning 1960s rock counterculture but concurrently antagonistic to it. The sensibilities expressed in 'Visions' give us first-hand evidence of this cultural and musical shift. Therefore it is important to pay close analytical attention to the song.

'Visions' opens in an apartment at night featuring two characters, the narrator and Louise. Words such as 'night' and 'quiet' set up a tranquil scene, though the allusion to the 'tricks', which the night plays on people when they are 'trying to be so quiet', adds a sense of unease. When Dylan

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[13] Bob Dylan quoted in Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of the '60s Counterculture* (Chatham: Canongate, 2008), 63.
[14] *Ibid.*

then states ‘we all do our best to deny it’ he is saying that we do not want to accept our helpless situation, and we do not want to accept that we are all connected somehow. Louise holding a ‘hand full of rain’ suggests that she is holding her head in her hands, crying, ‘tempting you to defy’ these limitations of connectedness and helplessness.

The narrator/protagonist sings of a woman named Louise and her ‘lover, so entwined’. He is battling against the visions of Johanna, the representative of the ideal, the Muse, who constantly intrudes into his consciousness as he observes the scene around him. This ambiguity about the status of the song’s narrator—is he a detached observer or is he a participant, the ‘lover’ involved with Louise? This intensifies the fluidity of form and narrative that ‘Visions’ takes to a new level in comparison to other Dylan songs. The song’s focus flitters the room the narrator/protagonist occupies to a range of other characters, relationships and settings, including the ‘ladies on the D train’, the ‘night-watchman’ and the museum.

The first vignette concerns the women in the empty lot playing ‘blind man’s bluff with the keychain’; focus then switches to the ‘all-night girls whispering of escapades out on the D train’. The key chain belongs to the night watchman who also appears in this vignette, and from whom ‘the ladies’ have taken the symbols of authority, leaving him the ‘blind man’. He asks himself ‘is it me or them who is really insane?’ The theme of ambiguity, fluidity and confusion is therefore deepened as the night watchman loses his authority and no one knows who has control or who is sane. The key motif reappears in the form of the ‘skeleton keys’ at the end of the song. These devices provide access to something previously locked away, which is

consistent with the song's theme of gaining that which is unattainable—Johanna herself. Later, the narrator finds musical expression in the very elusiveness of Johanna: this is the 'skeleton key' that unlocks what was previously off limits.

The scene then goes back to the room with a less than idyllic image of Louise who is 'alright, she's just near'. All her presence does is exacerbate the narrator's longing for Johanna: 'she makes it all too concise and clear that Johanna's not here'. The ideal is what is important but is markedly absent. The longing for Johanna becomes so strong and overwhelming that it consumes the narrator completely, swallowing him whole: 'these visions of Johanna have now taken my place'.

The next section describes someone else: 'Little Boy Lost', a William Blake reference. The boy 'takes himself so seriously/He brags of his misery/and likes to live dangerously'. This is presumably the person who is now or has recently been with Johanna and reminds the narrator of a 'farewell kiss' he shared with her, pain for the protagonist, which makes his longing even more severe: 'these visions of Johanna kept me up past the dawn'. This current or ex-partner of Johanna joins those in the loft on this New York night, making the image of her even more prevalent in the mind of the protagonist and sharpening his jealousy:

> He's sure got a lot of gall
>
> To be so useless and all
>
> Muttering small-talk at the wall

While I'm in the hall

At 4:30 of the *Live at the Royal Albert Hall* version, the narrative again ventures outside. The boundaries are unclear as we flitter between the room and the outside. Fluidity of space and time lends an urban/drug ambience to the song, as the scene shifts locations, such as a city nightscape where the night watchmen and the all-night girls are located; the claustrophobic room occupied by the protagonist, Louise, her lover, and Little Boy Lost, the current or ex-lover of Johanna; and a sequence of more abstract locations that appear in the final half of the song, beginning at this point where we go 'Inside the museums [where] infinity goes up on trial'.[15]

Dylan is asking the listener to look at those products of civilisations that thought they would live forever ('infinity') and were once revered but now lay dormant and dead. The museum is a monument to the dead ideals and artworks of the past. In the next line Dylan mentions the 'Mona Lisa' and later 'Madonna', idealised women whose images fill museums and galleries. But perhaps these ideals are not as sacred as once thought. Dylan sings that 'Mona Lisa must have had the highway blues, you can tell by the way she smiles', thus demythologising this image made sacred by bourgeois society. By the end of the song the narrator's own 'Madonna still has not showed', illustrating even that his own mythic ideal, his Muse is denied. In the museum itself, Dylan tells us, 'voices echo: "this is what salvation must be like after a while!"' The 'voices' refer to people inside the museums. They are discussing the futility of the ideal as it is reduced to respectable

[15] Gray, *Song and Dance Man III*, 33.

artefacts. There is a clear importance placed upon art and creativity and the possible futility (but necessity) of creative endeavour. Dylan is criticising the tendency of bourgeois society to tame art by secluding it from the messiness of real life. Separate from real-life, in 'salvation' this art ends up being lifeless. According to Graley Herren one reason *Blonde on Blonde* resonates with listeners is precisely because Dylan was able to thread real-life with mythological ideas and archetypes, which speak to listeners on a deeper subconscious level but also on a personal level.[16]

Dylan then goes back to using dreamlike language. The 'peddler' then speaks to the 'countesses pretending to care for him'; he is pessimistic about people's motives and intentions. The peddler (a petty street merchant) and the countess (an aristocrat) are separated by a gulf of social class but are somehow intimately involved. The notion of the 'peddler' suggests drugs, as if he's a pusher supplying the countess as well as Louise, who 'waits for him'. If we buy Heylin's view that the setting is based on the Chelsea Hotel, then this druggy, bohemian ambience might reflect Dylan's impressions of that world, with its connections to the Warhol scene full of upper-class dropouts (such as Edie Sedgwick, with whom Dylan was romantically involved) and seedy street hustlers all living a sexually free and drug-addled artistic life.

The narrator has now given up on Johanna, his 'Madonna who still has not showed'. The 'empty cage' is the room the narrator inhabits, which now 'erodes' as he admits that Johanna will not appear. In this same verse the narrator states that the 'fiddler, he now steps to the road'. This is a new

[16] Herren, "Mythic Quest," 125-6.

guise that the narrator undertakes, a performer with a musical instrument as he accepts that Johanna will not be appearing in person. The very absence of Johanna compels the narrator/fiddler to deal with the visions he can't get out of his mind by making art: we're told that the visions remain but are accompanied by harmonicas playing the 'skeleton keys' of the night. The line evokes the ambiguous sense of 'key' as a musical term, and a skeleton key, which gives access to locked doors. This occurs next to the 'fish truck that loads': people are working again, it is now daytime; the narrator has spent all night dreaming of Johanna and now leaves. Finally, his 'conscience explodes', potentially into nothingness but also into unlocked creativity. The following line about the harmonicas evokes the sound of music, suggesting that he has turned his frustrated longing for the ideal into music. But it is still only the visions that remain, rather than his elusive muse.

Overall the theme of the ideal is central. Michael Gray states that the song is actually about obtaining the ideal in song.[17] However, where Gray only states that 'Visions' is about obtaining the ideal in a creative capacity, I argue it goes beyond this. Dylan creates a complex narrative of personal desire, denial and relationships in a druggy, dream-like world that he juxtaposes with the ideals of art and past civilisations and shows the individual struggle to be as deeply important and complex as the communal, social struggle. Once again this highlights the contradictory nature of the 1960s counterculture outlined by Bennett.[18] 'Visions' is about a countercultural sensibility rather than a program for action, it gives no easy

[17] Gray, *Song and Dance Man III*, 489.
[18] Andy Bennett, "Reappraising Counterculture," in *Countercultures and Popular Music*, ed. Sheila Whiteley & Jebediah Sklower (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.

answers and deals with the intensely personal struggles and the elusiveness of the ideal, in creativity or in love.

'So Hard To Get On': Bob Dylan's Distinctive Countercultural Position

'Visions' moves away from explicit engagement with the social and political themes of the 1960s. Dylan also stood at a distance from the burgeoning 1960s rock counterculture that during the mid-1960s. Dylan's new position didn't lend itself to any pre-existing form of counterculture in totality. It split with the 1960s folk counterculture and whilst influencing what would become the 1960s rock counterculture, he did not fit neatly: 'The new music would be less concerned with strained relationships between social groups…and more aware of the everyday concerns of individuals coming to terms with their society, their culture and their own drug-enhanced consciousness'.[19] This is a countercultural form, which influenced the 1960s rock counterculture in its rejection of bourgeois norms, but was different from the psychedelic form of 1960s rock counterculture that was attempting to implement a cultural and political shift on a mass level through the force of its music.

One notable difference is how Dylan stopped attempting to answer the questions posed by social injustice and war. Commenting on his songs from the mid-1960s, Peter Doggett remarks that 'a society capable of creating the Vietnam War and the Ku Klux Klan was indeed as comic and mutant as Dylan's verse suggested. But nowhere did Dylan offer a solution

[19] Robert B. Gremore, "The Social Roots of Imagination: Language and Structure in Bob Dylan's 'Baby Blue'," *American Studies* Vol. 21, No. 2 (1980): 102.

to either problem, or even acknowledge their existence as anything more than another level of black comedy'.[20] The objective of fixing the ills of society remained a concern of the folk-protest community and would be an important feature of the 1960s rock counterculture that Dylan's example did so much to inspire. Songs such as 'Volunteers' and 'Crown of Creation' by Jefferson Airplane illustrate how the 1960s rock counterculture would desire the destruction of the prevailing capitalist order in search of a new utopian future. Yet 'Visions' illustrates vividly how Dylan leaves this utopianism behind during the mid-1960s.

'Visions' is less programmatic than songs of the emerging 1960s rock counterculture. Although he influenced the movement by rejecting inherited bourgeois values in songs such as 'Maggie's Farm', 'Visions' is a rejection of any program of social transformation or amelioration; it is a song of new sensibilities rather than programs. Here, struggles in individual life are key and, according to Brian Lloyd, given equal status with social and political questions. For Dylan, political upheaval was no more important than the upheaval of love or spirituality or longing as he was able to 'speak in a tongue native to his historical moment about the things that frustrate human desire'.[21] Dylan's split with the folk counterculture is often told through the guise of his turn to electric instrumentation. But an acoustic performance such as 'Visions of Johanna' illustrates the new direction just as clearly.

[20] Doggett, *Riot*, 63-64.
[21] Brian Lloyd, "The Form is the Message: Bob Dylan and the 1960s," *Rock Music Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2014): 71.

'A Love Song Can Be Political Too' [22]: The Political Becomes Personal

Writers on Dylan portray this stylistic shift as a move from the political to the personal; however the personal, for Dylan, was also political.[23] A concern with deep networks of interpersonal relationships replaced the utopian political idealism of the folk-protest movement. These new songs 'questioned the common assumptions of true love and the male-female relationship…this was years before any of us understood that love and politics weren't opposites – that there was such a thing as sexual politics'.[24] Whilst there are countercultural songs within the 1960s rock counterculture that deal with love by bands such as The Beatles or Jefferson Airplane, Dylan's weren't simplistic love stories and love was not seen as something easily navigable or unambiguously liberating, as in David Crosby's hymn to polyamory 'Triad', recorded by Jefferson Airplane for their *Crown of Creation* album. Dylan's lucidity illustrated the nuance and complexity of such relationships, as exemplified in 'Visions'. He showed, even in his folk period, how politics and power were imbued within personal relationships, such as 'Ballad in Plain D' (1964), 'To Ramona' (1964), and 'It Aint Me Babe' (1964).

What is absent from 1960s countercultural celebrations of love, sex and community, is the manoeuvring of relationships in 'Visions' that creates a game of political intrigue. The inclusion of a third and possibly a fourth

[22] Bob Dylan quoted in Doggett, *Riot*, 26.
[23] Gremore, "The Social Roots of Imagination,", 102, Basu, "Natural Innocent Love,", 48, Dalton, *Who Is That Man,* 109, Lund and Denisoff, "The Folk Music Revival and the Counterculture,", 398.
[24] Michael Gray, *The Bob Dylan Encyclopaedia* (London: Continuum, 2008), 4.

person in the narrator's relationship with the women in the song creates a compelling ménage-a-trois, in which patterns of desire become endlessly complex. Throughout the song there are numerous allusions to 'Johanna', the ideal who is not present. The woman who *is* present in the room with the narrator is Louise. Louise's lover might be the narrator himself or another man whom the narrator is observing 'entwined' with Louise. The ambiguous and shifting identities of the characters in the song underline how Dylan does not allow relationships either the simplicity of monogamy nor the capacity to bring straightforward forms of sexual and emotional satisfaction. When the idealised love object ultimately eludes the narrator/protagonist, his 'conscience explodes', indicating that in this instance love brings not reassurance and a sense of belonging but disintegration of the ego. Dylan also sings about ego disintegration in 'Mr. Tambourine Man' (1965). However, the mood of 'Mr Tambourine Man' is serene whereas in 'Visions' it is anxious, almost apocalyptic. As we have seen, ego death was a recurring theme in songs of the psychedelic form of the 1960s rock counterculture, as drugs like LSD became widely used as a tool of transcendence. However, in 'Visions' the ego death described by Dylan is painful and confusing rather than exhilarating, and is caused by chaotic, uncontrollable desire rather than by the conscious ingestion of psychedelic drugs.

Whilst Dylan's folk-protest songs were based on an optimistic vision for politics or society, his concerns in 'Visions' are rooted in relationships and personal desire. However, relationships are politicised because power and struggles over ownership are involved, even as the song (and the narrator too) moves to a position where they have to accept that you can't possess

your object of desire. In ‘Visions’ the relationships Dylan depicts are power relations, for example, the struggle over the night watchman’s key, the Countess and the peddler involved in transaction, and the peddler’s idea that everyone is a ‘parasite’. The narrator shows us that the struggle with desire is a struggle you can’t and probably shouldn’t hope to win.

This fits into a theme in Dylan’s songs around the mid-1960s: negative utopias. Songs such as ‘Gates of Eden’ and ‘Desolation Row’ systematically reject normative ideas of society without giving a programme for their replacement. In ‘Gates’ the narrator is with his lover, a like-minded intellectual and romantic companion with whom the narrator can share and celebrate his sense of radical detachment from bourgeois norms. In ‘Desolation Row’ there is an interlocutor that invites the narrator to join him, on condition that he becomes as ‘desolate’ as the narrator. However, this is explicitly denied to the narrator of ‘Visions’ and he is denied consolation. ‘Visions’ goes further in the tragedy of longing, but also provides some solace in that the narrator seems to find purpose to his plight in creative output.

However, there is a parallel in ‘Visions’ between the frustration of personal desire and the failure of political desires: both burden the individual. Dylan compares the greatest ideals of the past with the narrator’s own ideal of the present. The protagonist here questions the great art and civilisations of the world as if their ideals are not as important as his. He strengthens his own form of the ideal by juxtaposing it with the great cultural icons and works of art of the past. These icons are now confined to museums. This is Dylan’s attempt at pulling the history and art of such

civilisations down to earth. No matter how great these ideals or dreams, even the greatest visions become artefacts. Even Mona Lisa, one of the most revered paintings in Western civilisation, can face the negative experiences of reality. Dylan juxtaposes the idealised figure with mundane reality. This clash between the ideal and the real concurrently happens to the narrator of 'Visions' as he has to accept that he will not possess the mythic Johanna, that he's surrounded by a tawdry reality in which people are struggling for power and pleasure, but that he at least has the 'Visions' that arise out of his alienation.

Dylan's use of the word 'even' is important. Crucially in the *Blonde on Blonde* version Dylan omits the word 'even'. Its presence in the live version makes the point more succinct because 'even' is a way of demythologising of the Mona Lisa in order to question the very notion of the ideal, how fragile it is and how it is used to conceal a complex and mundane reality, the 'highway blues'. The narrator's own ideal is different, but equally serves to illustrate the gulf between the object of desire and the real world we inhabit: Johanna makes it 'all seem so cruel'. Dylan is no longer singing about what he feels needs fixing about the world, but simply what captures his heart and imagination, thus exemplifying that a love song can indeed be 'political'.

Whilst it is too simplistic to argue that Dylan went entirely from the political to the personal, it is true that his songs turned inward. Keith Negus argues:

> Dylan has an externalizing voice, which he uses for the outward expression of an inner sensation. This is a voice he adopts to convey a mood of internal anxiety, confusion, or an emotional dilemma. The melodies often appear to arc – to rise and fall – suddenly or gradually; the singing voice tenses, reaches out and up towards the higher pitches and then relaxes and returns inward. Vocal melodies that use rising pitches have come to be associated with a more active and outgoing identity, whereas falling pitches are indicative of more inward or introspective qualities. [25]

Negus comments on the music of Dylan's songs, analysis often ignored by writers on Dylan. The live version of 'Visions' illustrates Negus's point, especially within the final two lines of each verse where Dylan noticeably arcs his melody. In these two lines that mention Johanna he sings the first line climbing up in pitch: 'the *ghost* of electricity *howls* in the *bones* of her *face*'. The italics represent Dylan's higher pitch. In the live version Dylan can accentuate the rise and fall by differentiating the attack. He allows the guitar to reduce in volume, playing on two or three strings at most, fostering sensitivity and intimacy when the arc is descending. He only adds one louder rhythmic hit at 1:36.

'To Play Tricks': Fluidity and Ambiguity

[25] Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 124-5.

Dylan's music became noticeably more fluid and permeable during the mid-1960s at the time when he first wrote and played 'Johanna'. There was a concern with the fragility of personal coherence and a searching critique of normative values. Dylan's solo performances allowed more freedom and fluidity in his playing style, differing from the more rhythmically composed full-band versions. Brian Lloyd argues that in this new direction, Dylan breaks through two cumulating factors of his practice:

> 1. Breaking through the established forms of music and song writing e.g. folk and rock.
> 2. Breaking through the established political constraints (liberal/left wing) as an intellectual reorientation. These breakthroughs provided a platform for a more honest account of his personal life, both political and love-oriented.[26]

Lloyd concludes that Dylan was blurring the lines between genre and subject matter, and that this period in Dylan's career is important because he was breaking down pre-established barriers. Rather than going electric, Dylan was subtly changing his music to portray ambiguity in characters, motives, situations and feelings. Dylan felt that rationality had failed and absurdity was everywhere. The ambiguity was political. It was a sensibility that expressed confusion and yearning rather than the simplified answers that folk-protest music provided. 'Visions' rejects the more nuanced oppositional stance developed in his more programmatic political songs of this period

[26] Lloyd, "The Form is the Message," 71.

such as ‘Maggie’s Farm’. This fluidity is best exemplified in the differences between the live version of ‘Johanna’ and the electric album version from *Blonde on Blonde* (1966). The musical and vocal fluidity of the live version further contrasts with the rigidity of the recorded band version.

Dylan’s vocal delivery is fluid. In the solo acoustic performance, Dylan is more fluid than when playing with the band. When playing with The Hawks on the *Blonde on Blonde* version there is a synced and slower rhythm to the music and therefore the vocal timing is constrained. The line ‘just Louise and her lover so entwined’ lasts roughly eleven seconds on the *Blonde on Blonde* version and six seconds on the *Live at The Royal Albert Hall* version. Dylan has control of the tempo, and thus control of the fluidity of ‘Visions’. On the *Blonde on Blonde*, when Dylan sings, ‘in this room the heat pipes just cough/but there’s nothing, really nothing to turn off’, he rushes to fit within the rigid beat. On the other hand, the same line on the live version is allowed to meander at a staggered pace. The contrast between live concert and recorded studio versions is imperative to understanding the songs, especially in terms of Dylan’s use of sound.

How and when these songs were written and performed matters to their significance and meaning. Yet this analysis is underdeveloped in the literature. Lee Marshall and Keith Negus have written about the need for more musical analysis of Dylan, which would improve our understanding of Dylan’s transition during the mid-1960s. The fluidity in different versions of one song greatly affects its meanings, but isn’t visible if the literary qualities of Dylan’s lyrics are made the focus of analysis:

> The intimacy and sense of longing generated by 'Visions of Johanna' is not merely the result of the instruments, however; it is also created by Dylan's singing, and the fact that song lyrics are mediated by a performance is something regularly overlooked by those taking a literary approach to Dylan's work. When we read a poem, we read it in our own voice, at our own speed. With a song, we have no such control; the singer controls the pace at which we hear a song and the voice in which we hear it. [27]

Michael Gray focuses on Dylan's use of language, describing the 'click' of the night watchman's flashlight as a minute detail we might find in the writing of Charles Dickens. However, Gray makes no reference to the context of Dylan's musical or personal life, nor to the way the music carries the language and shapes its meaning and impact.[28] This literary approach is best exemplified by Christopher Ricks in *Dylan's Visions of Sin* (2003) and by John Gibbens in *The Nightingale's Code* (2001) which both do little to link the lyrical content of the songs to the life or career of Dylan and omit musical analysis completely. Negus criticises this approach because none of it 'is too bothered about the power, persuasiveness and *musicality* of the lyrics, although Ricks is acutely attuned to the rhythms, timing and sounds of

[27] Lee Marshall, "Dylan and the Academy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bob Dylan* ed. Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 103.
[28] Gray, *Song and Dance Man III*, 154-155.

the words as both ordinary speech and poetry. An alternative to literary criticism is to hear the words as autobiography'.[29]

The literary approach neglects the music and performance and overlooks the qualities of fluidity and ambiguity that define the characters and vignettes in 'Visions'. Is the narrator himself the 'lover' entwined with Louise? If so, he is battling against the visions of Johanna, the representative of the ideal. However, it is always unclear whose perspective the song is sung from, thus creating a fluidity of form and narrative that 'Visions' takes to a new level in comparison to other Dylan songs. Mike Marqusee notes how Dylan moves this fluidity in a new direction:

> 'Visions' covers a vast terrain: sex, drugs, politics, aesthetics, and philosophy. It's a song of great intimacy and epic scope. It explores a world of heightened definition and intensified indefiniteness – brilliance and murk…as the song builds, the internal rhymes seethe, the lyric flows and ebbs over the melody, adding to the incantatory, phantasmagorical effect…if the artist wanted us to know he would have left more clues'.[30]

The 'vast terrain' covered by 'Visions' is one of many reasons why analysing its various versions is key to understanding Dylan's own vision in 1966, as well as his separation from the folk counterculture, and contradictory movement toward the 1960s rock counterculture.

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[29] Negus, *Bob Dylan*, 104.
[30] Marqusee, *Wicked Messenger*, 207.

Ambiguity and fluidity is also achieved by eroding the barriers of space: 'as you get further into the song the room evaporates, it's an unsubstantial space'.[31] The journey, a motif in 'Hard Rain', appears again. The protagonist leaves the loft and moves around the city before returning. Later, as we go 'inside the museums' and once again back to the loft, the borders between worlds are eroded. At the time of composition, Dylan was watching a lot of European art cinema, which is an influence on this fluid world.

Dylan used abstract images to transcend the mundane language of the establishment.[32] Gone are the heroes and villains of his earlier folk protest songs, along with the more direct sense of right and wrong. His use of language was a device co-opted by the burgeoning 1960s rock counterculture and specifically the psychedelic form of rock counterculture coming out of San Francisco and London. David Dalton believes the abstract imagery and transcendence of the mundane in 'Visions' was drug-induced. There are verses where the language becomes absurdist to the extent that it sounds like drug-trip imagery:

> See the primitive wallflower freeze
> when the jelly-faced women all sneeze
> Hear the one with the moustache say
> Jeez, I can't find my knees

[31] David Dalton, *Who Is That Man: In Search of the Real Bob Dylan* (London: Omnibus Press, 2012), 156.
[32] Lloyd, "The Form is the Message," 72.

It is reminiscent of the drug language of LSD inspired songs, such as 'White Rabbit' by Jefferson Airplane. As in 'Visions', the absurdist language that transcends reality is heightened as the song climaxes. The images subvert normative definitions of reality to act in defiance of it. As drug culture became more a part of music culture, there was a shift from the bourgeois view of reality instilled upon them by their parents.[33] Yet even before the explosion of psychedelia in 1967, Dylan's work was already subverting reality in his lyricism and 'Visions' best exemplifies his defiance of bourgeois norms. The subversion of reality through LSD was often, but not always, affirmative: another reality was available and there was a plan for how to get there. Thus 'White Rabbit' ends with the instruction to 'feed your head', The Doors exhort listeners to 'break on through to the other side', or The Beatles reassure us in 'Tomorrow Never Knows' that the state of ego death is productive and liberating, bringing love and knowledge. But in 'Visions' the subversion of reality (or the rejection of bourgeois definitions of time, space and normative relationships) isn't so reassuring: the narrator is alone and uncertain and the song is intensely personal and individual, whereas those other aforementioned songs of the 1960s rock counterculture all explicitly address a community of like-minded listeners—they exhort the listener to follow certain clear instructions concerning how to free themselves. This sense of fluidity and language of absurdity was co-opted by the psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture movement, showing how far Dylan had moved away from the folk counterculture even in the

[33] Nick Bromell, *Tomorrow Never Knows: Rock and Psychedelics in the 1960s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 70.

acoustic music he played before the 1960s rock counterculture was fully formed.

'Visions' resists the faith in liberation and community that was present even in 1960s rock counterculture songs. Although Dylan influenced ideals of individual liberation and rejection of bourgeois norms and categories, he couldn't or wouldn't offer a more affirmative social and collective vision to compensate for the rejection of old certainties. A mythologised festival such as Woodstock drew on Dylan's countercultural image to sell itself to the youth culture. The promoters chose Woodstock as the festival's location precisely because of Dylan's connection to the town.[34] But the festival's association with programmatic ideals of peace, love and music was at odds with the sensibility Dylan had developed between 1965 and 1966. Dylan was not a part of Woodstock either physically or, for him, culturally or intellectually; instead, he remained within his own distinct countercultural position.

[34] Andrew Kopkind, "Woodstock Nation," in *The Age of Rock 2: Sights and Sounds of the American Cultural Revolution,* ed. Jonathan Eisen (New York: Vintage, 1970), 313.

Conclusion

The dismissive tone toward rock music taken by historians such as James Miller and Jacob Aranza calls into question the utility of closely analysing the music as a way of understanding the 1960s counterculture. The idea that rock music is 'coarse, even puerile' and speaks to nothing more than just 'being young' devalues an artistic and cultural phenomenon that was central to, and according to Morris Dickstein even definitive of, the 1960s: 'Though changes in the other arts *reveal* the sixties and expose its sensibility, rock *was* the culture of the sixties in a unique and special way', Dickstein argues.[1] This negative view repudiates both Dickstein's and Roszak's idea that musical analysis is in fact important to a proper understanding the era. A similarly sceptical tone also occurs within the work of writers who we might expect to be more sympathetic to the music and the culture that surrounded it. Rock historian Peter Doggett acknowledges rock's importance but is dismissive of its effectiveness and integrity as a political and ideological vehicle. He is especially critical of the militant turn taken by both the counterculture and rock music after 1968 when the movement fell victim to a 'mirage of revolution' that was 'fuelled by borrowed rhetoric and second-hand emotions'.[2]

However, by taking a critical approach more in line with Sheila Whiteley and Christopher Crenshaw, this thesis has attempts to rescue rock

[1] James Miller, *Almost Grown: The Rise of Rock* (London: William Heinemann, 1999), 19, Jacob Aranza, *Backward Masking Unmasked: Backward Satanic Messages of Rock and Roll Exposed* (Los Angeles: Huntingdon House, 1983), 43 and Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden*, 183.
[2] Peter Doggett, *There's a Riot Going On: Revolutionaries, Rock Stars and the Rise and Fall of the '60s Counter-Culture* (Chatham: Cannongate Books, 2008), 2.

from this kind of condescension by paying deeper analytical attention to individual songs and performances than is usually the case in writing on musical and cultural histories of the 1960s.[3] This approach allows us to further our appreciation of rock music's political, ideological and philosophical depth and complexity. Although Doggett's view is that the wider 1960s counterculture became cheapened toward the end of the decade, he nonetheless maintains that 'leading rock musicians were more closely aligned to the temperature of the counter-culture' than the journalists.[4] Thus, if we wish to take seriously Theodore Roszak's and Morris Dickstein's argument that understanding rock music is the key to understanding the counterculture and the 1960s, we must at least question the idea that rock music is an adolescent form of rebellion unworthy of sustained close analysis. We must rescue rock from the declension narratives put forward even by sympathetic by writers such as Doggett and Gitlin, that suggest that the musical and political movements of the 1960s counterculture descended into empty self-indulgence and posturing.[5]

A sustained analysis of 'Heroin' by The Velvet Underground draws attention to the connections and tensions between The Velvets and the popular psychedelic form of the 1960s rock counterculture, particularly in their use of the drone sound. Although the drone was not heard on the later Velvet Underground albums, it is a sound that is distinctly their own on their first two albums, made with the participation of John Cale. The group's other sonic and

[3] Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between The Notes: Rock and the Counter-Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), 3-4 and Christopher Crenshaw, "Five to One: Rethinking the Doors and the Sixties Counterculture," *Music and Politics* VIII, No. 1, Winter 2014, 1-3.
[4] Doggett, *Riot*, 194.
[5] Gitlin, *Rage*, 381 – 383.

cultural aspects, such as Lou Reed's vocal style, ostrich guitar tuning and proclivity for heroin, allow us to identify the position of The Velvet Underground within the complex milieu of the 1960s rock counterculture, as one defined by a vision that inherently had more in common with the later punk movement of the 1970s than it did with the archetypal bands of the 1960s rock and psychedelic countercultures. The Velvets elevated the heroin high over the LSD trip, solipsism over commitment to the community, and nihilism over utopian visions of social and political change. My analysis of the music and lyrics of a single song, 'Heroin', shows how they expressed what Stuart Hall called the 'splintered' nature of the 1960s rock counterculture.[6] Extending this type of analysis to other songs of The Velvets oeuvre would help us further uncover their specific and unique position within the 1960s rock counterculture.

The Doors also had their problems with the cheap catchphrases of the psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture, but their differences go even deeper. The myth-making histories of both Jim Morrison and The Doors have made it difficult to clearly understand their position with regard to the 1960s counterculture.[7] However, my analysis of 'Celebration of the Lizard', a neglected piece compared to singles such as 'Light My Fire' or 'Break On Through' and epics such as 'The End' or 'When the Music's Over', uncovers the widening gulf between Jim Morrison himself, his band, and the psychedelic sect of the 1960s rock counterculture. Many artists and bands that shared a rebellious stance against the status quo of the 1960s produced songs

[6] Andy Bennett, "Reappraising Counterculture," in *Countercultures and Popular Music*, ed. Sheila Whiteley & Jebediah Sklower (New York: Routledge, 2016), 20.
[7] For example, Danny Sugarman's Jim Morrison biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive*.

that described journeys and apocalyptic journeys. But the distinctive qualities within The Doors apocalyptic journey songs show how they pushed their deep countercultural commitments further at a period when conventional wisdom has it that Morrison's revolutionary fire was waning and disillusion was setting in. Gitlin argues that in 1968 'the contending forces laboured under a cloud of impending doom, or salvation, or both'.[8] 'Celebration' reveals that The Doors countercultural vision dwelt within the chaos and extremes of violence, rather than in the utopian desire for positive social change that was expressed in many well-known songs of the 1960s rock counterculture, and defined a large proportion of it.

'Celebration', therefore, reflects The Doors as representative of the splintered counterculture. Because they were willing to go further in the destructive element, they ran contrary to the politically non-violent aspects of the 1960s counterculture. Through sustained analysis of the music and lyrics we also see Jim Morrison's penchant for describing the process by which changing consciousness can occur in individuals, as outlined by Charles A. Reich, as he takes the listener on an apocalyptic journey ending with a call to violent revolution. Other rock radicals sooner or later renounced revolutionary stances. In 1971 John Sinclair, manager of the MC5 and founder of the White Panther Party, reflected critically on the more 'destructive' elements of the counterculture.[9] In 1968 John Lennon was ambivalent about 'destruction' in the two versions of The Beatles 'Revolution': 'When you talk about destruction/Don't you know that you can count me out/in'. And in 1970 he

[8] Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 286-7.
[9] John Sinclair, *Guitar Army: Rock and Revolution with MC5 and The White Panther Party* (Port Townsend: Process Publishing, 2007), 37.

told *Rolling Stone* that the main achievement of the 1960s revolution was that 'a lot of people have got long hair, that's all'.[10] But 'Ceremony' shows the seriousness of The Doors commitment to the vision of radical transformation.

Bob Dylan's schism with the folk community was instrumental in his influence on the 1960s rock counterculture and was part of a process in which he created a countercultural position that was distinctly his own. Whilst the predominant narrative in rock history focuses on Dylan's shift to electric instrumentation, deep investigation of a single song of the era exposes noteworthy developments in Dylan's music and lyrics that demonstrate the complex nature of his relation to the 1960s rock counterculture. My analysis of 'Visions of Johanna' illustrates and supports Sheila Whiteley's argument that the wider 1960s counterculture had internal antagonisms but also contained a largely shared musical and lyrical code.[11] Through sustained analysis we see that Dylan's musical development in his shift from folk to rock style contains subtleties and nuances that are too often neglected by the 'going electric' myth of 1965-66. Reich's assertion that the wider 1960s counterculture can be defined by changing consciousness is evident within Dylan's shift toward personal stories that encompassed a politicisation of the self and of personal relationships. By studying the musical and performance aspects of the live acoustic version of 'Visions', we can see this change occur independently of the dramatic shift to electric, rock 'n' roll instrumentation, and therefore we also begin to see the splintered nature of counterculture expressed through Dylan's acoustic guitar.

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[10] Jan Wenner, *Lennon Remembers* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), 12.
[11] Whiteley, *Space,* 3.

There is much more to uncover about these artists through sustained and close analysis of their lyrics, music and performances. Furthermore, this approach can be applied to other musicians of 1960s rock in order to reveal nuances in their own relationships with the counterculture movements and within the 1960s counterculture more broadly. By placing importance not just on lyrical analysis but on the interplay of music, lyrics and performance, there is scope to understand the works of artists more closely, without having to refer to the technical jargon of musicologists. This approach has the potential to provide new dimensions to existing histories of 1960s rock, and help us get beyond the simplifications, mythologisation and scornful dismissals produced by so much of the writing on 1960s rock music. Moving forward we need to recognise rock as a 'crucial cultural practice'[12] by analysing the music first and developing the sociological analyses alongside that. My analysis of Bob Dylan's live performances of 'Visions of Johanna' wherein the music is seen to be developing in complex relation to a counterculture sensibility before his oft-mythologised 'going electric', is an example of this. This kind of analysis can help counter the mythologisation and simplification that rock music as a cultural phenomenon has been subjected to. As rock music studies develop further within academia, our methodologies must explore in detail the lyrical, performative and sonic aspects of the music so as to better understand the artist's relation to the societies and social movements they are part of. If we stress only the lyrical aspects, for example, we will fail fully to understand the role played by artists within movements of every generation or genre of rock, be it 1960s rock, 1970s punk, 1980s post-punk, 1970-80s heavy metal, 1990s

[12] Simon Frith, *Sound Effects: Youth, Leisure and the Politics of Rock 'n' Roll* (London: Constable, 1983), 4.

grunge, or the indie rock revival of the early 2000s. Wider analyses can help us understand further musical genres and movements without being reductive.

In 2016 Bob Dylan was named Nobel Prize winner in the field of literature. Whilst once again negating the performative and sonic aspects of Dylan's work, the award nonetheless engaged with the complicated history of the 1960s counterculture and the art created within its contradictory framework. The Nobel award is in line with the on-going trend within academia to take rock music more seriously in the attempt to further understand the social and cultural movements of the 1960s and their legacy. In Tulsa Oklahoma this year in 2021 the Bob Dylan Centre is to open to the public, dedicated to the 'study and appreciation of Bob Dylan and his worldwide cultural significance'.[13] There is now more than ever the realisation that close study of the music of the 1960s counterculture can offset some of the mythologisations or simplified versions of the era prevalent in popular culture. But as I have argued in this thesis, we must focus on the musical, sonic and performance aspects of particular songs at particular moments if this is to be successful.

[13] "Bob Dylan Centre Homepage.", accessed April 30th 2021, https://www.bobdylancenter.com/.

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