

'Twist and shout': Illusion and disillusion in the 1960s and 1970s

People try to put us down (Talkin' 'bout my generation)
 Just because we get around (Talkin' 'bout my generation)
 Things they do look awful c-c-cold (Talkin' 'bout my generation)
 I hope I die before I get old (Talkin' 'bout my generation)

The Who 'My Generation'

IN THE LATE 1950s the popularity of singers such as Elvis, Buddy Holly and Eddy Cochran gave rise to talk of another American invasion that threatened English popular culture, and to fears that home-grown popular music was little more than a pale reflection. In fact, within a decade it was 'the Brits' invading America. The incentive to do-it-yourself music-making from skiffle and rock 'n' roll, and the discovery of rhythm and blues and country and western music, were building blocks in the development of a new (and commercially highly successful) sound, but which, for all its distinctiveness, also owed something to older traditions. For many contemporary commentators, the beat bands not only challenged older forms of popular music but also embodied in performance and lyrics, attitudes and ideas that were fundamentally at odds with the 'Establishment.' Popular images of 'Swinging London' comprise bright young things, confident, successful and affluent enough to support their extravagantly stylish life-style in defiance of the values of

an older generation. In examining these claims, the focus in this chapter is deliberately narrow: Liverpool and the Beatles, and London, and the Who and the Kinks.¹

Liverpool: from the Quarrymen to the Beatles

Liverpool was a much-divided city – along class, gender, ethnic and religious lines – and beset with economic problems that manifested themselves particularly in above-average youth unemployment in the post-war years. Being a member of a band could be a source of income and even an escape from a life of limited opportunities. It also offered a chance to create a new identity, which, perhaps, went beyond harsh social divisions and prejudices.² The scale and diversity of popular musical provision in 1950s Liverpool was striking. Its position as a major port, as well as its proximity to Ireland, brought a wide range of people and their cultures. Consequently, there were many active musical communities, sometimes separate but often overlapping; sometimes exclusive but often feeding off each other.

American music, in various guises, was a long-standing part of the city's cultural mix. It was greatly strengthened, during and after the second world war, by the presence of the large American base at Burtonwood, the entertainers brought over for the GIs and the broadcasts from AFN (the American Forces Network). Swing music was immensely popular during and immediately after the war. There was also a following for country music, particularly associated with Jimmy Rodgers, dating back to the 1930s. This was strengthened by the films of the 'singing cowboy,' Gene Autrey (including *The Sagebrush Troubadour*, *Red River Valley* and *Comin' Round the Mountains*) and by the airtime given to Hank Williams. 1950s Liverpool was 'the Nashville of the North.' There were a variety of clubs, as well as Burtonwood, at which country groups, such as the Dusty Road Ramblers or the Ranchers, played.³ A local country-style singer Ronnie Wycherley, later better known as Billy Fury openly acknowledged his debt to American country music. Local awareness of American popular music was broadened by the trad jazz revival and, particularly, the emergence of skiffle. Skiffle was less exclusive than jazz and was to be heard in inner-city youth clubs and suburban dance

halls.⁴ There were also 'Doo Wop' influences and rhythm and blues groups, such as the Roadrunners. The growth of a largely informal network of performers, audiences, and venues provided a supportive framework within which rock 'n' roll and the Mersey sound grew.

There were also other important musical influences. The city had a substantial Irish community and, although sectarianism was a serious and ongoing problem, its cultural influences were felt widely. Similarly, Liverpool had a well-established African Caribbean community, concentrated in Toxteth, which again exerted a musical influence beyond Liverpool.⁸ Lord Woodbine was a well-known and influential Trinidadian calypso singer. External stimuli were also important, notably Lonnie Donegan's appearance at the Liverpool Empire (November 1956) and Buddy Holly's at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (March 1958), but the key element was the proliferation of grass-roots bands, numbering as many as 250 in the early 1960s. It was an environment in which a more distinctive and original musical style could arise. The 'beat boom' did not suddenly materialise. Its roots were firmly in the late-1950s and early-1960s, the latter years easily dismissed as musically barren.

The Beatles loom large over any account of popular music and popular culture in and after the 1960s. Here the focus will be on their musical evolution from their origins as a skiffle group, the Quarrymen, to their early years as the Beatles. In the earliest days, like many other groups, they were essentially a Lonnie Donegan cover band. Increasingly, especially after Paul McCartney joined, they became more of a rock 'n' roll band, covering American hits. Among major influences, the Crickets and the Everly Brothers were at the forefront, though their repertoire also included Fat's Domino's 'Ain't That A Shame.'⁵ During their residencies in Hamburg, particularly, at the Star Club, they became more than simply a cover band. The influence of rhythm and blues in their repertoire was clear, with songs such as 'Roll Over Beethoven' and 'Sweet Little Sixteen,' but they were learning and experimenting with a new musical genre.⁶ Although one of a number of similar Liverpool groups, and for much of the time not the most highly regarded, the Beatles developed a more distinctive

style and sound. They also started writing their own material, mainly through the Lennon/McCartney partnership. The breakthrough came in 1962/3. After the failure of 'My Bonnie,'⁷ 'Love Me Do,' released in November 1962, was a modest chart success.⁸ Aided by an appearance on 'Thank Your Lucky Stars,' their next single, 'Please, Please Me,' released in January 1963, narrowly failed to make number 1 in the hit parade but achieved sufficient recognition to get the Beatles a place on tour as support, initially for Helen Shapiro, later Tommy Roe and Chris Montez and finally Roy Orbison. This was followed by three number 1 hits, 'From Me to You,' 'She Loves You' and 'I Want to Hold Your Hand.' Their position was consolidated by two very successful LPs (*With the Beatles* and *Please, Please Me*), released in the same year. Success was based on a distinctive amalgam of Motown ('Chains' and 'You've Really Got a Hold on Me'), rhythm and blues ('Roll Over Beethoven' and 'Money') and their own compositions, which were, initially, mainly optimistic, here-and-now, love songs, such as 'I Saw Her Standing There,' 'Do You Want to Know A Secret,' 'All My Loving' and 'I Wanna Be Your Man.'⁹ The outcome was a novel and exciting sound, and a confident performance style, which if not iconoclastic, cocked a largely good-natured snook at authority.¹⁰ Their distinctiveness caught the attention of Maureen Cleave, one of the first London-based journalists to pick up on their emergence. 'The darlings of Merseyside,' as she described them, 'know exactly what they can get away with ... They stand there bursting with confidence and professional polish.'¹¹

An important element in their emergence onto a national stage was BBC Radio. Between January 1963 and December 1964, they appeared on *Saturday Club* on ten occasions, the first just after the release of 'Please, Please Me.' Equally important, for the Beatles, the BBC and its audience, was *Pop Go the Beatles*, a series of sixteen programmes broadcast in the summer of 1963.¹² To have a programme in their own right, albeit introduced with an excruciating version of 'Pop Goes the Weasel,' was clearly important and it gave them a vehicle for their songs. Additionally, and importantly in the development of popular music on the BBC, it provided them with an opportunity to offer covers of American music still relatively uncommon on

air. This included rock 'n' roll numbers ('That's Alright Mama,' 'Lucille' and 'Long Tall Sally') and a variety of rhythm and blues numbers ('Memphis Tennessee' and 'I Got to Find My Baby') and soul songs ('You've Really Got a Hold on Me' and 'Soldier of Love'). There were also guest appearances from a range of artists, including well-known pop singers, such as Johnny Kidd and Brian Poole, as well as Cyril Davies' Rhythm and Blues Stars and the Graham Bond Quartet, but also the middle-of-the-road Bachelors. The combination of radio and television appearances and chart successes brought about the transformation from local, Liverpool group to national and international stars.

This transformation was reflected in their repertoire. The album *Beatles For Sale*, released in December 1964 includes songs by Buddy Holly ('Words of Love'), Chuck Berry ('Rock and Roll Music') and Carl Perkins ('Honey Don't' and 'Everybody's Trying to Be My Baby') and was described by Lennon as their 'country and western LP.' This was clearly not the case with *A Hard Day's Night*, (1964), which foregrounded the Lennon/McCartney song-writing partnership as did *Rubber Soul* (1965), *Revolver* (1966) and particularly the concept album, *Sergeant Pepper* (1967). The musical inspirations were diverse: Motown ('You Won't See Me' and 'Got to Get You into My Life'), Greek and Indian music ('Girl,' 'Within You, Without You' and 'I Want to Tell You') but also music hall ('Your Mother Should Know,' 'When I'm Sixty Four' and 'Good Day Sunshine').

Though less diverse than their musical influences, several themes are explored in their lyrics. Unsurprisingly, many are songs about love but they are more reflective and less brashly confident than their first hits ('And I Love Her' and 'Michelle').¹³ 'You've Got to Hide Your Love Away' captures a sense of loss but combined with a masculine fear of being laughed at, that is reminiscent of the Everly Brothers' 'Cathy's Clown,' 'I'll Cry Instead,' another song about lost love, also reflects a fear of being ridiculed but with scarcely hidden anger, including a threat to break hearts. Others, even more reflective, deal with loneliness. 'The Fool on the Hill' is alone but is in fact a wise 'innocent,' whereas 'Nowhere Man' is isolated 'in his nowhere land making all his nowhere plans.'

Disturbingly, the listener is asked 'isn't he a bit like you and me?' Equally, bleak is the landscape of 'Eleanor Rigby' full of 'all those lonely people.' But while the question is asked – 'where do they all come from?' – no answer is given. Similarly, 'She's Leaving Home' is about parental lack of comprehension, rather than an explanation of actions.

Also pertinent is the sense of place and an accompanying sense of loss. As early as 1963, in 'There Is a Place' the unnamed location is a way of escaping the world 'when I feel low, when I feel blue.' 'In My Life,' is a more explicit and sorrowful reflection on the past, 'the 'people and things that went before,' which 'I'll often stop and think about.' Places have 'changed, some forever, not for the better [and] some have gone' while 'lovers and friends, I still recall, some are dead, some are living.' 'Magical Mystery Tour' is predicated on remembrances of a day-trip to Blackpool, while 'Penny Lane' and 'Strawberry Fields Forever' reference memories from childhood, though the latter is not straightforward in that 'nothing is real' and 'living is easy with eyes closed/Misunderstanding all you see.' As well as people and places disappearing, there is also a sense of the passing of an older social order. In certain songs there appears to be a harking after a patriarchal order, with man the provider and woman the homemaker ('Hard Day's Night' and 'When I Get Home.') In the former, the male singer 'work[s] all day to get the money,' in the latter he has 'a girl who's waiting home for me.' In others, a more matriarchal world of love with stronger, supportive women ('She's A Woman' and 'Another Girl') Thus, for all their innovativeness in musical terms, there was in their lyrics – in part at least – a conservatism about a disappearing Liverpool, even before they left it in summer 1963, though their social observations did not go beyond a sense of something being wrong and/or lost. Unlike both the Who and the Kinks, there was no attempt to bring together in an album a sustained and coherent commentary on society.

Although by far and away the most successful Liverpool group, the Beatles were not alone in popularising the Mersey sound. Freddie and the Dreamers, ('I Like It' and 'How Do You Do It?') and The Searchers ('When You Walk in the Room') had once been more popular than the Beatles on Merseyside.¹⁴ Nowhere was the sense of local identity stronger than in the

songs of Gerry and the Pacemakers. 'Ferry Across the Mersey,' affectionately praised Liverpool ('the place I love and here I'll stay') and 'You'll Never Walk Alone,' which, despite being an American show tune (from *Carousel*), became an anthem for Liverpool FC and then for the city following the Hillsborough tragedy.

At the time, the Beatles were seen as the embodiment of a break with the past. Some historians have made similar claims. Simonelli talks of 'the original golden age of British rock and roll ... ushered in by the Beatles.'¹⁵ Others have sought to debunk what they see as a myth. Sandbrook dismisses the idea of the 1960s as a turning point, while Fowler dismisses the Beatles as little more than family entertainment.¹⁶ While justifiably reacting against the mythologizing of the Beatles, both judgments are problematic. It would be folly to deny the Beatles' roots in earlier music, especially in the distinctive milieu of post-war Liverpool, but there was something more than evolution to their music in 1962/3, let alone in 1964/7. Their music was evolving, syncretic and distinctive and proved hugely successful, and not only in Britain. It also provided a model for others and, as such, was a significant addition to the range of popular music. Similarly, to deny that the Beatles were at the cutting edge of youth culture seems perverse, even though they incorporated older elements into their music.¹⁷ But they were prepared to modify their appearance and tone down their stage act. They also followed the path to the London Palladium and the Royal Command Performance in 1963, even if they did ask (some) audience members to 'rattle their jewellery.' They may have been a more consensual band than the Rolling Stones, but they were more than family entertainment¹⁸

London: The Who and the Kinks

Liverpool dominated coverage of popular music in the early and mid-60s, but the beat boom manifested itself across the country, not least in London. Despite toppling the Beatles from number one in the charts, the Dave Clark Five, at the forefront of the so-called 'Tottenham Sound,' lacked originality. Clarke was hardly the most innovative drummer of his day, and 'Glad

All Over' was not notable for its musical or lyrical qualities. Of greater interest, are the Who and the Kinks.

The roots of the Who are to be found in the trad jazz revival and skiffle but, like several other bands, they were influenced by rhythm and blues and Motown. Initially closely associated with London, they extended their geographical appeal, and soon became (along with the Small Faces), the face and music of the Mod subculture. Pete Townshend in particular stressed the cultural and political significance of popular music, seeking 'to defy post-war depression ... articulating the joy and rage of a generation struggling for life and freedom.'¹⁹ There was a sense of opportunity – 'I could go anyway ... I could live anyhow ... I could go anywhere' – and optimism, as 'Never gonna lose, the way I choose.' Increasingly as this optimism waned, their act sought to 'communicate aggression and frustration.'²⁰ In 'I Can't Explain' there are 'funny dreams, again and again,' while the things you've said have got me real mad' but, repeated constantly, is the refrain, 'I can't explain.' Best remembered for the line 'I hope I die before I get old,' 'My Generation' was more about frustration as 'people try to put us d-down.' It was a generalised sense of grievance rather than a clearly articulated critique, and yet, Townshend was clear. Popular music 'clicks your social conscience – makes you think about life.'²¹

Townshend's attempt to 'think about life' in a more sustained manner led to *Tommy*, hailed as the first rock opera, which first appeared as an album in 1969. *Tommy* is at times vague, at others difficult to comprehend, and at others absurd. Yet, not least because of its spectacle and songs, such as 'Pinball Wizard' it was very successful. It owed much to the musical ambitions of Kit Lambert, the personal difficulties besetting Townshend and, as a result, the new age mysticism of Meher Baba.* Townshend stressed the importance of 'the play between self and illusory self' and there are several scenes, notably involving the Acid Queen, which relate to Townshend's particular problems. However, the significance of other incidences – the cruelty of 'Cousin Kevin' and the abusive Uncle Ernie in 'Fiddle About' – is less obvious in terms of Townshend's life, let alone wider societal concerns.²²

* Dismissed as Ali Baba, by fellow band member, Roger Daltrey.

In contrast, *Quadrophenia* is firmly focussed on the Mod experience of the mid-1960s, albeit from the distinctive perspective of 1972/3 when the album was produced. Townshend's intention was 'to provide narratives and analyses of youth culture.'²³ *Quadrophenia* is a tale of frustration and failure. Jimmy, the central character, is at odds with his parents and their values but, for all yearning for something better, and for all the promise seemingly held out by the Mod lifestyle, Jimmy's journey to self-discovery ends in failure. The picture Townshend paints has familiar scenes of Mods in Brighton but bears little relation to the affluent image of Carnaby Street and 'Swinging London.' 'Dirty Jobs' talks of 'the man who looks after the pigs' and 'the man who drives a local bus.' Jimmy is an unglamorous dustman. Life is monotonous and unsatisfying. 'Every year is the same and I feel it again. I'm a loser, no chance to win,' according to 'I'm One,' and 'loneliness starts sinking in.' The world of 'The Helpless Dancer' is threatening. Work is merely a means to an end – maintaining a Mod lifestyle, though even here there is a sense of doubt. 'I got to move with the fashion,' Jimmy sings in 'Cut My Hair;' and fashion includes 'Zoot suit, white jacket with side vents five inches long' but although he's 'dressed right ... [he] just can't explain why that uncertain feeling is still here in my brain.'²⁴ Moving to Brighton is not the fulfilment of his hopes. While the beach might remain for Jimmy 'a place where a man can feel he's the only soul in the world that's real,' the reality is something very different, as Ace Face, the eponymous 'Bell Boy' makes clear. 'Some nights I still sleep on the beach/Remember when stars were in reach' but 'then I wander in early to work/Spend days licking boots for my perks.' The clearest statement of failure comes, however, in the track 'I've Had Enough.'²⁵

I've had enough of dancehalls
 I've had enough of pills
 I've had enough of street fights
 I've seen my share of kills
 I'm finished with the fashions
 And acting like I'm tough
 I'm bored with hate and passion
 I've had enough of trying to love.

The album's accompanying photo-essay, featuring working-class youths from Battersea reinforces the sense of failure to break out from a world characterised by 'dirty jobs,' low pay and deeply entrenched inequalities.²⁶ Townshend, who often commented on the strong links with fans, said he had created a working-class hero with whom they could identify. In this light, the undoubted success of *Quadrophenia* reflects the failure of the Mod dream, rather than the success of 'Swinging London.'

The Kinks also emerged from a musical mix of skiffle, rock n roll, rhythm and blues, and music hall.²⁷ Their first commercial record was the Chuck Berry number, 'Long Tall Sally,' and their first hit single, the blues-derived 'You Really Got Me.'²⁸ They enjoyed considerable chart success in the mid-1960s with songs of varying degrees of social commentary from the music-hall style parody, 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion,' the critique of smug prosperity in 'A Well Respected Man' and 'Mr Pleasant,' to the bleak realism of 'Dead End Street.' They sought more sustained social commentary, notably in the three albums, (*The Kinks Are*) *The Village Green Preservation Society*, (1968), *Arthur, or The Decline and Fall of the British Empire*, (1969) and *Muswell Hill Hillbillies*, 1971. To a greater degree than The Who or the Beatles, they offered a wide-ranging critique of 1960s Britain, which exposed the *absence* of fundamental change in the supposedly 'revolutionary decade of the '60s, as a result of persistent social and economic inequalities. Increasingly the 1960s, and particularly its emphasis on classlessness, was seen as a fraud. As with the Who, there was a sense of having been cheated.

Although seen, particularly by American audiences, as quintessentially English, their Englishness was elusive, even contradictory, not least because of the technique and tone of their 'story-telling,' including multiple voices and the use of irony and ambivalence, if not ambiguity.²⁹

The Kinks, particularly the Davies brothers, were firmly rooted in London working-class life, as it adjusted to post-war modernization, including, in their case, relocation from central London to Muswell Hill. Musically, it was a pub-based, piano-centred culture; politically it was linked to the Labour party.³⁰ Their songs commented on the world that grew out of post-war social reform. Although 'Not Like Everybody Else,' the Kinks did not simply revolt against an older generation.

Like the Who, they provided a critique of an over-sold, 'You've Never Had It So Good,' 'Swinging London' view of the country in the 1960s. Theirs was the perspective, not of the successful art college student, but of the 11+ failure factory worker. For Dave Davies, the Kinks' success owed much to being able 'to communicate the struggle of the working man [*sic*] trying to survive in a greedy and purely materialistic society,'³¹

The harsh realities of working-class life are recurring themes in their songs. The inhabitants of 'Dead End Street' are 'strictly second class.' The squalor of their accommodation in a 'two-roomed apartment on the second floor' with 'a crack up in the ceiling and the kitchen sink ... leaking,' is matched by their sparse diet, 'a Sunday joint of bread and honey' and the threat of 'the rent collector ... trying to get in.' A similar bleakness pervades the later 'Scrapheap City.' Counterpoised against working-class poverty is middle-class/suburban prosperity, in which material advantage is undermined by the hypocrisies with which it is riddled. The eponymous 'Well Respected Man,' seems 'oh so good, oh so fine ... oh so healthy in his body and his mind' as he's 'doing the best things so conservatively.' Beneath the veneer of respectability 'his father pulls the maid,' his mother 'passes looks ... at every suave young man,' while he 'adores the girl next door' and is 'dying to get at her.' The owner of a 'House in the Country' is 'oh so smug ... [but] he's socially dead.'³²

There is an ambivalence about the Kinks' attitude to both past and present. Their flamboyant, at times Beau Brummel appearance, set them apart from the staid young men who dressed like their fathers, and had more in common with the image of the Who. The world of their 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion,' was 'built 'round discotheques and parties.' The 'pleasure seeking individual ... flits from shop to shop.' His clothes are 'never square,' for one week he is in 'polka dots, the next week ... in stripes.' However, he is also 'fickle,' 'a butterfly,' seeking 'flattery' as much as fashion. Vanity, 'he thinks he is a flower to be looked at,' becomes ridiculous when he pulls his frilly nylon panties right up tight,' while still believing that he is a 'dedicated follower of fashion.' There is also a real sense of the loss of the past, real or imaginary. In 'Where Have All the Good Times Gone,' Ray Davies pleads 'let it be like

yesterday, please let me have happy days.' In 'Autumn Almanac,' he extols the virtues of an older working-class tradition of 'my football on a Saturday, roast beef on Sunday ... and Blackpool for my holidays,' even though the Davies would more likely have gone to Ramsgate or Margate. Particularly in the commercially unsuccessful, *The Village Green Preservation Society*, Ray Davies evokes a nostalgic image of rural England that has brought comparison's with Orwell's conservative patriotism. The past is viewed (literally) in affectionate terms in 'Picture Book,' and 'The Last of the Steam Powered Trains' celebrates not simply a fast-disappearing mode of transport, but also a fast-disappearing way of life. The eponymous 'Village Green Protection Society' preserve 'the old ways from being abused' and, along the way stand up for 'strawberry jam ... draught beer,' and oppose the modern monstrosities of the 'office block and skyscraper.' At the same time as asking God to save 'Vaudeville and Variety,' Donald Duck is included in the list of worthies. Disconcertingly, the Preservation Society is also 'protecting the new ways for me and for you.'³³

This ambivalence towards the past is even more apparent in *Arthur, or The Rise and Fall of the British Empire*, which grew out of a request from Granada Television for a 'rock opera.' The television production never materialised but a twelve-track album did. Although Arthur is the central character, the story is spread over three generations and the multiple voices undermine the notion of a central, authoritative perspective.³⁴ The opening track, also released with modest success as a single, 'Victoria,' combines praise, (Arthur is 'free' and 'life was clean' in the land of his birth), with direct criticism ('sex was bad and obscene and the rich were so mean') and satire ('From the West to the East [of the Empire], From the rich to the poor, Victoria loved them all.) Churchillian sacrifice, again in the name of freedom, is invoked but, as the final song, 'Arthur,' makes clear, for all his ambition and hard work, Arthur 'all the way was overtaken by the people who make the big decisions' as 'the world's gone and passed [him] by.' To make matters worse, the alternatives (emigration as represented by his son) and suburbia (as represented by his grandson) are flawed. And yet, ambivalent again, 'Shangri-la' is more than a satire on suburbia. There is, however muted, a celebration of the small

pleasures of this escape from poverty, more Arnold Bennett than George Orwell, in which 'you're in your place ... and know where you are.' More importantly, 'you need not worry, you need not care,' even if 'you can't go anywhere.'

Muswell Hillbillies provides the most sustained and coherent critique of contemporary England. The opening track, 'Twentieth Century Man,' sets the scene. 'This is the age of machinery, a mechanical nightmare,' that has erased 'the green pleasant fields of Jerusalem.' Davies sings of being 'a paranoid schizoid product of the twentieth century,' a theme taken up in the unambiguously titled second track: 'Acute Schizophrenia Blues.' It is also a world of insecurity and inequality ('Slum Kids' and the later 'Demolition') in which the little man (and woman) has lost out. Davies rails against urban improvement in a manner reminiscent of Clare's earlier condemnation of enclosure. For both, the little guy lost out in the name of progress. There are also echoes of Orwell's *1984*. 'Uncle Son,' echoing 'Arthur,' is 'just a workin' man' following 'simple rules' and with 'simple plans,' but he is told what to do by politicians, generals, preachers and even trade unionists. In more than one song 'civil servants and people dressed in grey' are the villains of the piece.³⁵ Several songs emphasise either the pressure of work ('Alcohol' and the later 'Have Another Drink') or its tedium ('Oklahoma USA' and 'Scrapheap City'). The alternatives offer little hope of improvement. 'Work is a bore' for the girl in the factory but 'in her dreams she's far away in Oklahoma USA.' The dreamy 'Holiday' seems to offer the opportunity to leave behind insecurity, sedatives and sleeping pills but it is a flawed arcadia, 'the sea's an open sewer ... [and] I'm breathing through my mouth so I don't have to sniff the air.' There appears to be some consolation in older culture. 'Give me William Shakespeare ... I'll take Rembrandt, Titian, Da Vinci and Gainsborough,' but in the present there is little more than Granny's 'Cuppa Tea' and a sense of defiance. In the final track, 'Muswell Hillbilly,' Davies faces the move to the 'identical little boxes of Muswell Hill with his 'photographs and memories' and a determination that they're never gonna kill my cockney pride.'

In fact, Davies' confidence in the past does not last long. In a track on the 1975 album *Schoolboys in Disgrace*, 'No More

Looking Back,' ostensibly about a girl he had once known, he is clear that 'yesterday's gone and that's a fact ... look straight ahead that's the only way it's going to be.' The most explicit condemnation of the 1960s is found in 'Working in the Factory,' from the 1986 *Think Visual* album, which reprises many earlier themes. For the 11+ failure there was no thought of a professional career, but 'they sold us a dream but in reality/ It was just another factory.' Music 'gave me hope back in 1963 ... but then the corporations and big combines/ Turned musicians into factory workers on assembly lines.' There was a sense of profound disillusionment about the 1960s, which they shared with the Who. Ray Davies later wrote, 'the sixties were a con, the establishment still ruled the country.'³⁶ If there was consolation to be found in the music and the lifestyle, it was short-lived, though for Davies the resilience of an older working-class culture provided not simply a fall-back but also a resource.

However, there was an important contrast between the two groups. In contrast to the more aggressively masculine image of the Who, the Kinks offered an alternative masculinity, a greater awareness of gender identities (especially 'Lola'). They also offer a degree of sympathy, albeit in conservative terms, for the problems of women, though at times they appear as the cause of men's misfortunes. The 'sinner ... who used to be a winner' in 'Alcohol' is partly undone by 'his selfish wife's ambition' and later by 'the floosie [who] made him spend his dole.' More often, women, usually young, struggle with a Hogarthian world beyond their control. The threats of the 'bright lights, big city' are seen in 'Big Black Smoke,' in which 'the fairest purest girl, the world has ever seen,' at least according to her parents, ends up, exploited by the men in her life, sleeping in 'caffs and coffee bars' and spending every penny on 'purple hearts and cigarettes.' A stage further on, 'Little Miss Queen of Darkness,' similarly exploited, ends up 'in a little discotheque,' being 'oh so friendly to every fella that she met,' but 'sadly dancing on.' Lifestyle, and by implication class is the dominant consideration in 'Two Sisters.' The affluent world of the unmarried Sylvilla, who 'looked into her mirror ... and her wardrobe,' is contrasted with the domestic drudgery of Percilla, who 'looks into the washing machine ... [and] the

frying pan.' But despite being jealous of her sister's liberty and luxury, Percilla 'saw her little children and then decided she was better off than the wayward lass that her sister had been.' Domesticity and the family triumph over an emancipated lifestyle, in a way that reflects Davies social conservatism. Even the bluesy 'Holloway Jail,' with its sympathetic depiction of 'the living hell' of prison for a mother and child, is predicated on a traditional woman-as-victim theme. The 'young and ever so pretty' lady who went to gaol is now 'old and pale ... [as] she wastes her life away sitting in that prison cell' but there is ironic sympathy for the male singer for whom life, 'now she's in jail, [is] giving me hell.'

Some concluding observations

The beat boom of the mid-1960s has acquired almost mythical status in recent years but behind the hyperbole were several innovative groups, whose skills in terms of music and lyrics profoundly influenced the course of late-twentieth century popular music. However, for all their novelty, their musical achievements grew out of a range of earlier musical influences. Rather than a simple reproduction of the sounds of earlier bluesmen or rock 'n' rollers, there was a process of fusion and development. In addition, to the musical innovations, several songs provided comments on contemporary society. The extent to which this can be seen as a generational revolt against 'the Establishment,' is open to debate. The experimentation of the Beatles, whether in terms of drugs' culture or Indian music, complemented the sense of alienation and isolation in several of their songs. More explicitly, both the Who and the Kinks expressed the aspirations of their generation, particularly working-class youth, and yet both came to the pessimistic conclusion that the promises of the '60s were false. There was a sense of change, but no change. In 'Won't get fooled again.' 'We were liberated from the old, that's all, And the world looks just the same.' The new boss looked just like the old. The con could happen again, but instead of the defiant song title ('Won't get fooled again'), the chorus is less confident. 'I'll get on my knees and pray we don't get fooled again.' There was also a sense of local community under threat, particularly in the songs of the Kinks, but also the Beatles, and of sorrow at

the erosion of older values. The 'Swinging London' of Carnaby Street and the King's Road meant little to the working-class youth of Battersea, let alone Billingham. There was more than a division between the beneficiaries of the new affluence and new youth cultures and those left behind. There was an ambivalence about both the present that was emerging and the past that was (often literally) disappearing during the 1960s.

The advent of these new groups, notably the Beatles, and the response of their fans, was dramatic. However, as with rock 'n' roll, there was no wholesale musical takeover. When 'Love Me Do' and 'Please, Please Me' entered the hit parade, they were outsold by Frank Ifield ('Lovesick Blues' and 'Wayward Wind') and battled with the bland pop of Mark Winter ('Venus in Blue Jeans' and Bobby Vee ('The Night Has a Thousand Eyes'). Even later, 'Pinball Wizard' shared the charts with Mary Hopkin ('Goodbye'), Dean Martin ('Gently on My Mind') and Sarah Vaughan and Billy Eckstein ('Passing Strangers'). The singles charts, however, were not synonymous with popular music. As the album charts reveal, popular tastes were more broadly based. As in the 1950s, film musicals, notably *South Pacific*, but also *The Sound of Music* and *West Side Story* were extremely popular. So too were Frank Ifield, Jim Reeves, Val Doonican and Andy Williams. Equally important were a variety of community-centred forms of music that were not captured in any of the charts. Pub-centred singing was in decline during the 1960s but variety clubs, particularly in the north of England, flourished. When the Batley Variety Club opened in 1967 the headline act was the Bachelors. In following years, performers as diverse as Gracie Fields, Shirley Bassey and Roy Orbison appeared on stage. The Irish diaspora supported a different, flourishing music culture, not only in places with an established Irish community, such as London, Liverpool and Tyneside, but also in those with more recently arrived immigrants, such as Coventry and Luton. Similarly, post-war immigration, especially from the Caribbean and south Asia, brought new music that was largely unknown in chart terms.

Endnotes

- 1 There were important developments in other major cities and towns, notably Birmingham, Manchester, and Newcastle, some of which will be considered in the following chapters.
- 2 K Gildart, *Images of England Through Popular Music: Class, Youth, and Rock 'n' Roll, 1955-1976*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, chapter 3, especially p.64. There is a danger of romanticising the extent to which music brought together people across racial lines. See chapter 21.
- 3 For details see J P Watson, "' Beats Apart": A Comparative History of Youth Culture and Popular Music in Liverpool and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1956-1965, unpublished PhD, 2009, chapter 5
- 4 The Cavern, initially a venue for jazz and folk music, famously banned rock 'n' roll.
- 5 They also included the well-known Liverpool folksong, 'Maggie Mae.'
- 6 *Live! At the Star Club in Hamburg, 1962*, released as a double-LP in 1977 shows clearly the influence of rhythm and blues but also the diversity of their repertoire, which included 'A Taste of Honey,' 'Falling in Love Again,' 'Bésame Mucho' and an up-beat version of 'Red Sails in the Sunset.' The rhythm and blues influence comes over in their performances on BBC radio (Saturday Club and Pop Goes the Beatles) in 1963 and 1964, including 'Johnny B Goode' and 'Memphis Tennessee' as well as the Cricket's 'Crying, Waiting, Hoping.' There are only two Lennon/McCartney songs included.
- 7 It seemed an ill-chosen song for the English market. In Germany, in contrast, it reached no.5 in the hit parade. Their early recordings also included 'The Sheik of Araby' and 'Ain't She Sweet.'
- 8 A Lennon/McCartney number, the song was simple but with a distinctive blues harmonica and harmonies that suggest a debt to the Everly Brothers.
- 9 As well as the rawness of the sound, there was a naive directness about lyrics, such as 'my heart went boom/as I crossed the room.' This phase finished with *Help!* and the abandonment of touring.
- 10 Lennon and Harrison in particular were fans of George Formby.
- 11 M Cleave, 'Why the Beatles Create All that Frenzy,' *London Evening Standard*, 2 February 1963 cited in I Inglis, "'I Read the News Today, Oh Boy!": The British Press and the Beatles,' *Popular Music and Society* 33(40), 2010, pp.549-562 at p.552
- 12 This was part of a wider emerging awareness of northern culture in the BBC, though it is worth stressing the extent to which Liverpool carved out a distinct identity that set it apart from 'the North,' especially as dominated by Manchester. See P Atkinson, 'The Beatles on BBC Radio in 1963: The "Scouse" Inflection and a Politics of Sound in the Rise of the Mersey Beat,' *Popular Music and Society*, 34(20), 2011, pp.163-175.
- 13 'Can't Buy Me Love' is an exception to this observation.
- 14 They were joined by The Swinging Blue Jeans ('Hippy Hippy Shake'), Billy J Kramer and the Dakotas ('I'll Keep You Satisfied') and the Merseybeats ('Wishin' and Hopin') all offering variants on the optimistic love song.
- 15 D Siminelli, *Working-Class Heroes: Rock Music and British Society in the 1960s and 1970s*, Plymouth, Lexington Books, 2012, chapter 2. The quotation is at p.31

- 16 D Sandbrook, *White Heat: A History of Britain in the Swinging Sixties*, London, Abacus, 2006, p.748, and D Fowler, *Youth Culture in Modern Britain, c.1920 to c.1970*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2008, p.174
- 17 See, for example, 'For the Benefit of Mr. Kite.' The reference is to a poster advertising the forthcoming appearance of Pable Fanques' circus in Rochdale in 1843.
- 18 O Heilbronner, 'The Peculiarities of the Beatles,' *Cultural and Social History*, 5(1), 2008, pp.99-115 refers to the Beatles as a 'consensual band representative of English society in the early and mid-1960s' at p.99
- 19 P Townshend, *Who I Am*, London, Harper Collins, 2012, p.4 and p.340 cited in K Gildart, *Images of England Through Popular Music: Class, Youth and Rock 'n' Roll 1955-1976*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2013, p.89 and p.105
- 20 Siminelli, *Working-Class Heroes*, chapter 4, the quotation is at p.72
- 21 Cited in Gildart, *Images of England*, p.105. This sense of failure is also found in 'Substitute' issued in 1965.
- 22 For a more detailed analysis see C J McGowan, 'Harmony and discord within the English 'counter-culture', 1965-1975, with particular reference to the 'rock operas' Hair, Godspell, Tommy and Jesus Christ Superstar,' unpublished Ph.D., Queen Mary college, University of London, 2011, chapter 9.
- 23 K Gildart, 'Class, Youth and Dirty Jobs: The Working-Class and Post-War Britain in Pete Townshend's "Quadrophenia"' in P Turschwell, ed., *Quadrophenia and Mod(ern) Culture*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2017 on which much of the following paragraph is based.
- 24 Later, but in similar vein, 'I work myself to death just to fit in.'
- 25 There is an element of ambiguity in the final track 'Love reign over me.'
- 26 There is a further twist. The filming of *Quadrophenia* coincided with the 1978/9 'Winter of Discontent' and captures some of the sense of betrayal of the 'old' Labour Party, though the image of Mods in the mid-1960s is more nostalgic than in the original album.
- 27 This can be heard in several songs but especially *The Village Green Preservation Society*. It is also clear in Davies' 'Mr Flash' in the album *Preservation Act 2*, who is clearly modelled on Max Miller. Generally, see P G Sullivan, "'Let's Have A Go At It': the British Music Hall and the Kinks,' in T Kitts & M J Kraus, eds., *Living On A Thin Line: Crossing Aesthetic Borders with the Kinks*, Rumford, RI, Rock and Roll Research Press, 2002, pp.80-99
- 28 Ray Davies, who was greatly influenced by Big Bill Broonzy, later referred to 'You Really Got Me' as 'north London blues.' M Doyle, *The Kinks: Songs of the Semi-detached*, Reaktion Books, London, 2020, p.54
- 29 N Baxter-Moore, "'This Is Where I Belong: Identity, Social Class and the Nostalgic Englishness of Ray Davies and the Kinks,' *Popular Music and Society*, 29(2), 2006, pp.145-165
- 30 Family sing-songs incorporated music hall, film musicals, ballads and folk music. Doyle, *The Kinks*, p.39.
- 31 D Davies, *Kink: An Autobiography*, London, Boxtree, 1996, p.134 cited in Gildart, *Images of England*, p.130
- 32 See also 'Mr Pleasant' in which material success ('your brand new limousine, twenty-four inch TV screen') is offset by Mrs Pleasant 'flirting with another young man.'

- 33 There was also a debt to Dylan Thomas, *Under Milk Wood*. Doyle characterises *VGPS* as Pop Art fantasy. Doyle, *The Kinks*, p.130
- 34 A Palmer, "'In Land that I Love': Working-Class Identity and the End of Empire in Ray Davies' Arthur or the Decline and Fall of the British Empire," *Popular Music and Society*, 37(20), 2014, pp.210-232
- 35 See particularly 'Here Come the People in Grey.'
- 36 R. Davies, *X-Ray. The Unauthorised Autobiography*, London, Viking, 1994, p. 311 cited in K Gildart, 'From "Dead End Streets" to "Shangri Las": Negotiating Social Class and Post-War Politics with Ray Davies and the Kinks,' *Contemporary British History*, 26(3), 2012, pp.273-298 at p.292. See also C Fleiner, 'The Influence of Family and Childhood Experience on the Works of Ray and Dave Davies,' *Popular Music and Society*, 34(3) 2011, pp.329-350