

**Háskóli Íslands**  
**Hugvísindasvið**  
**Enska**

*“An Age Yet to Come”*

*The Concept of Nostalgia in Music Journalism*

**Ritgerð til BA prófs í ensku**

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## Abstract

*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*

Proverbs 13:12

Music is a powerful repository of *nostalgia*. In this context, the term refers to a psychological state, defined by past-related emotional overtones, that fill our minds when we hear a relevant tune or lyrics. Similarly, a text can be analyzed as a hauntological phenomenon, in other words, “a spectral narrative transmitting voices of the past into the moment of reading” (Wolfreys, 12). However, the term hauntology, proposed by Jacques Derrida and later developed by Mark Fisher, suggests that it is, in fact, the future we feel nostalgic about. With the constant recycling of ideas, we revisit past events and re-imagine them in the current reality, thus creating our version of the timeline. One of the ways to fulfil the longing for the future is the reconstruction of the past through storytelling. Due to its capability to evoke shared cultural memory and express collective identity, this method has been employed in various fields including medicine and contemporary culture. We consider that narrative techniques apply to music journalism, especially that branch focusing on classic or cult pop and rock acts. This thesis examines three genres, namely feature, catalogue description and review, to show the unifying components such as non-linear narrative, zooming and prosodic features as well as literary devices, e.g. syntactic parallelism and anaphora. Among the media sources considered for the analysis are *MOJO*, *The Arts Desk*, and *Bear Family Records* website. The nostalgic image of the past represented in texts by means of aforementioned compositional elements and literary devices serves for the readership as a portal to other dimensions of time which is both an escape from “now” and one of the means to restore lost identity.

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## 1 Introduction

*I always used to dream of the past  
 But like they say yesterday never comes  
 Sometimes there's a song in my brain  
 And I feel that my heart knows the refrain  
 I guess it's just the music that brings on nostalgia for an age yet to come*  
 Buzzcocks "Nostalgia"

Anyone who has ever listened to music can recall an experience similar to the one described in the lyrics. "Nostalgia", 1978's song by Buzzcocks, tells an age-old story of how our reminiscence shapes the perception of reality. From the theoretical point of view, Niemeyer defines nostalgia as "a bittersweet longing for former times and spaces" (Niemeyer, 32). The more romanticised descriptions include metaphors such as "a melody of two voices", an adolescent who is dying and a physician who is struggling to tell why (Bolzinger, 11). The notion of music in the former definition is not coincidental. Since the seventeenth century, people have been aware of the power of songs to set one on a journey across the memory. According to Lems, an interesting case was recorded at that time (Lems, 419). Swiss peasants, recruited to the French army, began suffering from an alien ailment. It all started after they listened to "Kuhreihen", a Shepherd song originating from the Swiss Alps region. As the story goes, they experienced "a state of melancholic delirium" (419). Some elements of the tune (e.g. mimicking of an animal-call) strongly affected the whole regiment and reminded soldiers of their motherland. However, as Cooley infers, the power to revive the sound of past decades as well as relevant associations is just one of the facets of the issue (Cooley, 71).

Indeed, music is one of the obvious triggers evoking strong nostalgic emotions and arousing a wish to reconcile with the past. This intention can be fulfilled through submersion into the appropriate time context. Even though the actual and expected "homecoming" never happens, we can at least keep the connection by creating a mental image in our mind. While music expresses vague ideas, the verbal description of the place and time where it appeared makes them more vivid.

Some scholars assume that the phenomenon of nostalgia is not as straightforward as it seems to be. Mark Fisher deploys the term *hauntology* that describes a longing for the future which never happens due to the constant fixation on and recycling of the ideas from the past (Fisher, 16). This theory particularly reveals our tendency to imagine what would have happened if some trend had remained or never existed. How different would have been music today if John Lennon had not been killed or Kurt Cobain had not committed suicide? The third conditional prevails in such rhetorical questions and narratives.

Additionally, Fisher defines anything futuristic as “connoted of the settled set of concepts, effects and associations” (16). Originally derived from the homonymous concept proposed by Jacques Derrida, hauntology is opposed to ontology, which refers to the nature of being “in terms of self-identical presence” (19). The French philosopher mentioned this duality in his pivotal work *Spectres de Marx* in relation to Marxism which “would haunt Western society from beyond the grave” (Gallix, “Hauntology: A not-so-new critical manifestation”). While ontology questions existential aspects, hauntology examines, as Colin Davis summarizes it, “the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive” (Davis, 373). In other words, in contrast to ontology which focuses on the very essence of being, hauntology explores the transitional state, the dimension where our memory merges with the unconscious. The psychotherapeutic take on it, proposed by Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, discloses the side related to transgenerational communication (374). With the idea of a phantom, the scholars analyzed how the traumatic experience of our ancestors might echo in our own lives. Colin Davis describes that as “the presence of a dead ancestor in the living Ego” (374). Unlike ghosts in gothic tales, e.g. “The Canterville Ghost”, the phantom does not reveal the shameful secrets of the past but, on the contrary, keeps on misleading the perplexed mind of contemporaries.

Similarly, music transmits the message from the bygone decades whose distorted quality can be compared to the mild white noise in some of John Peel’s early shows, particularly that in 1967 (*The Perfumed Garden*, 6 August 1967). While the retrieval of data out of layers of the radio noise can be taken as a metaphor, Alan Freeman’s show, which was premiered on air in December in 1977, is a literal example

(*Saturday Rock Show*, 17 December 1977). Although the brilliant compilation alongside the news fragment captures the atmosphere of the year, it reaches Millennials and Gen Z only through the haunting sound of the BBC broadcast. Yet, the past and future are only seemingly distant. Fisher mentions that hauntology develops in two directions. One relates to something that is not present physically but still effective virtually. Another implies an event, action or trend which has not happened yet already is efficient “as the virtual” (19). The former causes “compulsion to repeat” or recreate structures while the latter establishes anticipation of something that already exists in the air but has not materialized yet. Taking into consideration the first aspect we can perhaps explain the reasons why some particular music genres and forms emerge and remain popular.

The first aspect might be a trigger for particular music genres and forms to develop. Enhanced by the technological progress, e.g. the invention of the tape recorder in the late 19th century, the idea of a composition as a repeatedly played piece emerged and influenced the further development of music. Constant use of repetitions and loops by contemporary artists might be taken as a metaphor for wandering through the haze of the haunted now. Numerous performers, such as Grouper or Julianna Barwick, employ this method, thus, reflecting on the idea of the restlessness and wandering. The state of mind of a contemporary person might be compared to permanent somnambulism. Being haunted by the past and nostalgic about the future, we invent lullabies to soothe our restless mind.

## 2 History of Nostalgia

*Someday there will be a cure for pain*

Morphine “Cure For Pain”

If we look into the history of nostalgia, it is obvious that the phenomenon was lacking habitual romantic interpretation back in the days. In the late 19th century nostalgia was considered a psychiatric disorder sometimes accompanied by distinct symptoms such as melancholic mood, anxiety and insomnia (Sedikides et al. 304). The perception was changing throughout the 20th century, though nostalgia was still often confused with

depression and anxiety disorder. By the end of the '90s, experts finally had sufficient evidence to differentiate nostalgia from other psychological conditions such as homesickness. Davis states that unlike the latter, nostalgia does not bear negative connotation and is mostly associated with such synonymical words as *good old times*, *childhood* and *yearning* (Davis, 73). The research conducted by Wildschut et al. summarizes nostalgia as “a repository of positive effect”, meaning that it stores the joyous experience which helps us to recover in difficult situations (Sedikides et al. 305).

At the dawn of the research on nostalgia as a medical issue, doctors prescribed ‘storytelling’ as a successful method to heal this sickness (Niemeyer, 41). It is accepted as a reliable practice in psychotherapy. For instance, some specialists, e.g. Dr Andrei Gnezdilov, a founder of hospice in St. Petersburg and psychiatrist known under the moniker Doctor Baloo, use fairy tales and puppets to assuage their patients (Larina, “How to Become a ‘Confessor of Pain’”). In modern culture, similar narrative-suggesting techniques are employed to revive the past. One of the examples is today’s music reissues that often contain booklets featuring the story behind the album and the band’s biography.

Polletta defines a story as a type of narrative that is characterized by a generic plot, “human or human-like” characters and allusive nature (Polletta and Callahan). The last implies references to other stories we find in the text such as Biblical plots, fables and fairy tales.

In his book on the art of storytelling, John Walsh emphasizes the necessity of stories in the age where many members of a potential audience would fit into a category of story thinkers (Walsh, 15). This collocation describes the type of listeners or readers whose perception works at its best if they are provided with the information in the form of tales. In contrast to story thinkers, the writer mentions analytical minds who prefer linear narrative to other alternatives. As Walsh mentions, “people of past generations are the ones who tend to think “in facts and figures” and “the best way to communicate with them is through the outline” (15).

Walter Benjamin underlines that storytelling always mediates between story protagonists and a reader by bringing forth the experience of the former and making it “the experience of those who are listening to the tale”. Another argument provided by Scott underscores the “sense of immediacy” that stories impose on both readers and

storytellers (Scott, 205). Furthermore, as Boje points out, “every story is embedded in the changing meaning of contexts of multiple stories and collective story-making” (Boje, 18). Thus, being a product of collective creativity, stories refer to shared cultural memory. For instance, a feature about a band, who hit the headlines in the '70s Britain as ‘punk’, might tell us about such specifics as miners strikes and Thatcherism. In other words, it revives the decade through the prism of multiple visions, that is of characters, recipient and initiator. As a result, stories create an immersive context for all those involved in the process to transfer from the current state of reality to time and space described in the text.

Such immersive quality applies to particular examples of texts from the music press. By submerging their audience into the context, the writers either capture the time frame they witnessed or present their vision supported by research. Readers, in turn, join on the journey as they might fall into the same age category as journalists and experience instant connectivity between their pasts and now. Thus, the longing for time-travel is reciprocated.

The question arising here is why both readers and writers are willing to undertake this journey through storytelling. One of the reasons could be the escapist nature of nostalgia which helps us to get distracted from fears and dreariness imposed by the current routine.

Another cause for our interest in stories is the identity crisis and lack of clear benchmarks in the present. Pollette and Callahan point out that by sharing stories we build a collective identity (Polette and Callahan). In nostalgia narratives, history merges with memory restoring an earlier era coated in “the warm glow of childhood remembrance”. Allusiveness in storytelling suggests crucial fulcrums that seemingly help a reader to navigate in life and simulate the sense of stability. In music journalism, the nostalgic effect of a text is reinforced by music described in it. As a result, both tools form powerful synergy. While stories present us with the shared cultural context, songs are capable of triggering personal memories. Music has the power to revive episodes of the past and to seize the moments we cherish. This once again refers to the concept of hauntology. Instead of finding the essence of existence we are yet haunted by the ghosts of the narrative.

In either case, the processes are driven by reflective nostalgia, a term suggested by Svetlana Boym who describes it as a phenomenon that “dwells on the ambivalences of human longing and belonging and does not shy away from the contradictions of modernity” (Boym, “Nostalgia”). Unlike restorative nostalgia, which celebrates the tradition of the past as the measure of all things, the reflective type calls the “universal truth” into question. In addition to this, Fritzsche emphasizes that reflective nostalgia is “sensitive to the impermanence of home and cherishes fragments, departments and ruins” (Fritzsche, 128). With its questioning of the reality, this concept resonates with hauntology, suggested here as theoretical framing for storytelling.

Not only storytelling revives the sense of music from the past but also interprets the context for a modern listener or reader, thus eliminating a time-and-space barrier. It is also the text itself that possesses the transient quality. Analyzing the concept of hauntology in Victorian gothic novels, Julian Wolfreys suggests that textual materia is “neither dead nor alive, yet [it] hovers at the very limits between living and dying” (Wolfreys, 12). The scholar cites novelist John Updike who handily commented on books, saying that “without their physical evidence my life would be more phantasmal” (Wolfreys 11).

In this thesis, we coin the term reflective storytelling that defines the variety of texts exemplifying a “future-in-the-past” approach, employed by means of re-thinking the history. This method seems to define the discourse and contribute to the concept of nostalgia in music journalism, particularly, British music press, namely *MOJO* magazine and *The Arts Desk*, as well as the website of the German record label *Bear Family*.

Among three case studies are “Only The Lonely”, a *MOJO* feature by Keith Cameron, “Reissue CDs Weekly: Hank Williams”, a review by Kieron Tyler published on *The Arts Desk*, and “A Slight Disturbance In My Mind - The British Proto-Psychedelic Sound Of 1966”, a catalogue description on the *Bear Family* website. With these examples, the research will focus on interrelated textual characteristics and aspects of storytelling that three works share, e.g. mood, tone, literary devices and prosody contributing to the nostalgic feel. Such methods as formalist approach introduced by Vladimir Propp in his seminal work *Morphology of the Folktale* will be employed. The latter will help us to identify structural elements constituting the

composition which evokes parallels with tales and provides a “soothing” effect or “cure” for that nostalgic pain. Alongside unifying elements, the individual characteristics of the texts will also be taken into consideration as each writer demonstrates his own unique writing style and vision of the past.

### **3 Methods**

#### **3.1 Cinematic Methods: Non-linear Narrative, Zooming, Jump-cut**

To achieve the time-travelling effect in reflective storytelling, authors often rely on cinematic techniques such as zooming, jump-cut and non-linear narrative. The latter implies a narrative with events portrayed out of chronological order (Definitions.net “Nonlinear narrative”). In terms of nonlinearity, the textual composition is defined by deconstruction or what Jacques Derrida called antenarrative in action. “Story floats in the chaotic soup of bits and pieces of story fragments” as Boje metaphorically describes the concept of textual deconstruction (Boje, 18). Thus, each representation of the story gives us new meaning and posits new “authoritative centre”. By displacing the narrative’s episodes, writers are capable of imposing a different interpretation of the events from the past. In music journalism, features and reviews often present a sequence of actions or facts in an alternative fashion defined by the author’s idea and perception.

Initially known as cinematic technique, zooming constitutes what they call the visual grammar of a text. It refers to a writing skill, particularly used in the description, and provides a reader with a sense of travel through time and space towards a character or object. The method implies two distinct types of description - zooming in and zooming out. The first is also known as close-up which keeps a firm focus on an object and represents it in precise details. In music journalism, zooming goes beyond the frames of physical description. For instance, critical analysis of a song or an album sometimes relies on a detailed explanation of the musical structure. Though lacking visual content, in this case, zooming describes invisible dimensions of sound that we can perceive bit by bit with our sense of hearing. Andrew Male’s feature on Joy Division starts with a paragraph describing the beginning of “Atrocity Exhibition”, the

opening track on the band's last album *Closer*. The description evokes a listening experience:

It begins as a tom-tom tattoo, a crawling Pipeline beat dampened in dead space. Eight seconds in, what sounds like a road drill breaks into the rhythm, accompanied by a low, echoing bass, and what might be slaughterhouse cries heard through a dying intercom. A voice, a weary imploring croon, describes a Bedlam-esque nightmare - "Asylums with doors open wide/Where people had paid to see inside" - before beckoning you in. "This is the way, step inside." There are few more imposing songs than Joy Division's Atrocity Exhibition, the opening track on their second and final album, *Closer* (Male, 73).

Another method associated with filming is jump-cut. Although the technique borrows the name from visual arts, writers began to employ it a long time before the invention of the camera. Goodman cites his teacher who pointed out that John Milton introduced cinematic jump-cut in "Paradise Lost" by "instant transitions from Hell to Earth to Heaven" (Goodman "Zooming Out: How Writers Create Our Visual Grammar"). Thus, the ubiquitous use of this method in music journalism is not surprising as it helps writers to reproduce the sense of immediacy and shift between different time dimensions. The following fragment exemplifies such jump-cut with the instant move from the current state of Jarvis Cocker to the early pages of his career with Pulp.

Seeking a multiple-exposure effect, *MOJO*'s photographer has requested some gesticulation as his subject moves across his frame, and Jarvis Cocker is game. As he twirls long, elegant fingers in front of his poker face, 25 years dissolve, and for a moment the knowing mime of Pulp's Common People video reappears. Back in the mid-'90s, Cocker's prancing and pointing were punctuation marks in Pulp's bedsit tragi-comedies, but it seems his tics and flourishes served a practical purpose too (Eccleston, 60).

### 3.2 Formalist Method

Introduced by Vladimir Propp in 1928, the formalist approach provided a method for structural analysis of fairy tales. Propp describes a folkloristic text as a form that follows “the chronological order of the linear sequence of elements in the text as reported from an informant” (Propp, 11). As Bronner points out, Propp concentrates on “the sequential, continuous or syntagmatic structure of Russian fairy tales” (Bronner, 133). Although the linear approach of Propp might contradict with the point in this thesis regarding nonlinearity in music narratives, other aspects of his work are helpful to analyze the discourse. In his seminal work *Morphology of the Folktale*, the researcher introduced eight main character types - *hero*, *false hero*, *dispatcher*, *villain*, *donor*, *princess*, *magical helper* (Propp, 84).

Likewise, certain categories of characters prevail in stories in the music journalism context. Since the majority of features and reviews present band members as protagonists, we can apply a Proppean category of a *hero* as relevant. Central figures in music history narratives are always seekers, as they always look for the ways to progress whether this development leads to creation or destruction. Due to the specifics of the music industry and the ‘sex, drugs and rock’n’roll’ lifestyle, some characters can be dubbed as *troubled heroes*. Such epithets as ‘troubled country star’ (Tyler, “Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams”), ‘musical prodigy on the road to self-destruction’ (Rees, 48) and ‘singer’s tragic demise’ (Male, 70) emphasize the controversial nature of *dramatis personae*. Usually, the *troubled hero* category represents a self-destructive protagonist. This trait might affect the functions of other characters, such as donors, whose help sometimes leads the hero to the “dead end”.

The category of *magical helper* in Propp’s theory represents an agent which is introduced as a gift that helps the hero to overcome difficulties and pursue his goal (Propp, 84). It has a broader range of connotations in music features which implies various means to reveal artists’ talents and boost their creativity despite arising obstacles. These include musical influences, e.g. memorable gig, as in case of Joy Division and Pulp, musical upbringing, gifts and music lessons from parents (for instance, trumpets in cases of John Entwistle and Paul McCartney). The episodes referring to points of connection or describing a meeting with future bandmates allude

to encounter with a donor, so typical for a folk tale plot. Propp defines donor as the one who “is encountered accidentally, most often in the forest (in a hut), or else in a field, on the roadway, in the street” (84).

Similarly to fairy tales, life is a constant struggle between good and evil. Music history narratives often tell us stories of a clash between creative and commercial which frequently evokes the opposition between heroes and villains. Music labels and producers often pursue their own interests that might create conflicts with musicians. Using Proppean terminology, we can tag representatives of the mass-market music industry as *villains*. The morphology theory defines destructive actors as those “who appear[s] twice during the course of action”, turn up suddenly and then disappear (84). This is not necessarily the case in music journalism features where the same actors might be mentioned as many times as an author pleases.

Along with the classification of characters, there are some compositional elements that can be applied to the analysis of cases through the course of this work. In folk tales, one of such important compositional components is trebling. Propp describes trebling as one of the auxiliary elements that provide additional attributive elements as well as lists “individual functions, pairs of functions (pursuit-rescue), groups of functions, and entire moves” (Propp, 74).

### **3.3 Close-reading and Literary Devices**

The overall analysis of the case studies will employ a close-reading method which aims to identify particular literary devices and rhetoric methods. Elements contributing to the syntax structure, e.g. syntactic parallelism and anaphora, dominate the storytelling landscape. In rhetoric, parallel syntax is a tool that facilitates readers understanding of a sentence by eliminating wordiness and improving the flow (“Parallel Structures in Syntax”). Depending on the number of parallel elements in the rhetoric schemes, there are several types of such syntactic structures, known as *bicolon*, *tricolon* and *tetracolon*, which contain two, three and four components respectively.

Repetitions within a structure correspond with the idea of recurrent time-travel imposed by nostalgia. Syntactic loops enhance the perception and, thus, by following

the storytelling, readers immediately dive into the flow of events described in the text. Narratives in music journalism often employ parallel constructions that not only contribute to easier understanding and help to follow the plot but also add a poetic aspect to the text. With syntactic repetitions, some lines of an article might sound rhythmic and song-like, such as in the following fragment: “*Strange Boutique* was produced by Bob Sergeant, who had done the same job when the band recorded for the John Peel Show. *Love Zombies* was produced by Alvin Clark, who had engineered *Strange Boutique*” (Tyler, “Reissues CDs Weekly: The Monochrome Set”).

Another rhetoric device, contributing to reflective storytelling, is anaphora. This writing technique implies the repetition of the beginning of the clauses that follow the initial part of the sentence. The definition of anaphora on the *Literary Devices* emphasizes the origins of the technique which has been in use by writers and poets since ancient times (“Anaphora”). Examples of this device are found in Biblical Psalms as well as poetry by Elizabethan and Romantic authors. With its capacity to enhance the poetic properties of a text, anaphora makes historic music narratives smoother and syntactically consistent. In his feature, Jon Savage employs anaphora which adds balance to the structure: “On the surface, this was business as usual, with the attitudes and preoccupations of the ’60s counterculture continuing. This was barely remarked on at first, but as 1970 progressed, observers began to assess the previous decade” (Savage, 68).

Other elements that, as we assume, contribute to the creation of nostalgic sense, are metaphor, personification and grammatical features such as conditional sentences and past tense.

## 4 Case Studies

### 4.1 MOJO: Only the Lonely

The feature by Keith Cameron published in the recent March issue of *MOJO* magazine is dedicated to the anniversary and reissue of *Closer*, the final album of Mancunian post-punk legends Joy Division. However, this article celebrates “Love Will Tear Us Apart”, a single which was released a month before the LP. The song has gone through

a transformation from a gloomy crooner for stuffy arty venues to an anthem for the football fans audience. Cameron provides both musical and personal contexts that defined the sound. Like in films with a non-linear narrative, the text starts with the description of the aftermath following the single's release. Then it shifts to the earlier events mentioning various circumstances including personal life of the band's lead singer Ian Curtis and the antecedent musical influences which contributed to the sound of "Love Will Tear Us Apart".

With attention to details, Cameron provides specifics for the first public performance of the song. We learn that it was Annik Honoré, a Belgian music promoter and Ian Curtis's lover-to-be, who chose "a converted sugar refinery" as a venue for the band to play. Though vaguely, irony can be read in the lines: "Thus, Love Will Tear Us Apart, a song Ian Curtis wrote about the decaying relationship with his wife, was debuted at an event co-organized by the person he had just fallen in love with" (Cameron, 78). Embedding Honoré's recollection into the text, the author "zooms in" on the moment when Annik chats with Ian for the first time. Even though the fragment is written in the past tense, one may experience a distinct sense of presence: "There was something. The chemistry was there. We both agreed on David Bowie and on Iggy and The Velvet Underground, so that night we listened to *Low*. I think we mentioned Kafka... then we came to talk about personal things: his married life, his child..." (78).

Propp's formalist method helps us to identify a few types of characters in the text. The image of Ian Curtis created by the media perfectly fits into the 'troubled hero' category. The song itself seems to act as a *magical helper* which facilitates the protagonist's complicated journey. Likewise, band members and Annik Honoré appear in the story as *donors* contributing their creative energy and love respectively.

Similarly to the concept of trebling in folktales, the text can be seen in three parts (Propp, 74). Each starts with an identical sentence stating the name of the song at the beginning as if mimicking the repetitions in the chorus:

Love Will Tear Us Apart came out on June 20, 1980, one month after Ian Curtis's death.

Love Will Tear Us Apart came together at TJ Davidson's Rehearsal Rooms in Manchester, the result of a conscious effort, according to Bernard Sumner, to come up with "a bit of a rabble-rouser" that would energise gigs.

Love Will Tear Us Apart was first recorded on November 26, 1979, at the BBC's Maida Vale studios, and then broadcast alongside three other new songs on John Peel's December 10 show. (Cameron, 78)

These parallel constructions sound like declarative statements and help the author to keep the storytelling flow. Taken out of the context, they seem to be extended versions of the same epitaph. Precise dates in the description help us to keep the timeline in mind. Considering the whole story, they serve as a contribution to an obituary-like overtone of the text. On the contrary, constant use of personification emphasizes the living state and immortal nature of music: "rabble-rouser", "droney, beaty, power", "raw slice of real life that remains caught in time" (Cameron, 78-79).

Mentioning the word *epitaph* in the lead sentence, the author does not mean it as a figure of speech but rather uses it literally. *Love Will Tear Us Apart* is an inscription on the tombstone above the grave of Ian Curtis, who took his life on May 18, 1980, following a two-year struggle with depression and epilepsy. While the career of Joy Division was on the rise, his health, as well as the relationship with his wife, were in decline. The fact that the lyrics are so straightforwardly personal implies that the song is a story on its own. As Cameron writes, it "took on its own life, even as Ian Curtis let go of his" (79).

Referring to the epitaph, the writer might have attempted to establish a common ground with his audience, sharing the universally acknowledged perception of this band. Thus, "Love Will Tear Us Apart" is recognisable and easily retrieved from auditory and also visual memory. It conceals several layers of meanings and alludes to the wider cultural context, apart from that personal we know about. In fact, the song's title is an ironic response to "Love Will Keep Us Together", a sugary twee pop song, first performed by a-husband-and-wife duo Captain & Tennille in 1975 (78). Despite its pop predecessor and temporary Frank Sinatra's influence, musically it, nevertheless, implies rebellious origins. The first strumming chords in the song's opening pay

homage to “Anarchy in the UK” by Sex Pistols, whose gig in July 1976 became a starting point for Joy Division’s musical path.

## 4.2 Bear Family: Slight Disturbance in My Mind

“Pregnant with the future, impregnated by the past” - this metaphorical line from a song by Manchester-based band W.H. Lung perfectly describes the contemporary audience, including music fans and readership of the music press (W.H. Lung “Simpatico People”). Eager to meet their needs, many record labels specialise on reissues of the music from previous decades. Often presenting extensive compilations, the releases usually include booklets that provide the background and description of the record. During the 45-year history, Bear Family Records has formed an immense catalogue which can be browsed on the label’s website. The page “About us” looks like a diary entry rather than a dry corporate profile. The slogan “We are not in it for the money” not only alludes to the title of The Mothers Of Invention’s album but also corresponds with the personal tone of the label’s strategy statement or, as they call it, “master plan” (The Mothers Of Invention, *We’re Only In It For The Money*). Here, Bear Family celebrates time as the key criteria for value and passion which is the primary driving force.

Among the feedback quotes from musicians, some are emphasizing this attitude of the label’s management. Pat Todd, a Californian punk rock musician specifies that in his commentary: “We live in a world where people shy away from doing things for the love of it because of personal cost. BEAR FAMILY reminds us that love may be all we’ve got” (Pat Todd, *Bear Family*).

The catalogue on the label’s website presents reissues which are divided into different genre categories, e.g. country, blues, schlager, rock’n’roll, R&B/soul etc. Most items have a brief description alongside that contains information about the release and the time it was out to the world. Unlike listings on the websites offering commodities for sale, these texts tell us stories. Some of them have distinct folk tale qualities. For instance, an overview of *...And The Answer Is*, a compilation of ’60s country music, contains clear storytelling hints. There are several syntactic structures throughout the text similar to conventional *once upon a time*, that introduce the narrative in a similar

fashion. This approach conveniently fits the concept of the compilation that contains so-called answer records or songs, written with the intention to respond to hit singles and take over music charts. Such tradition was common for the music business in the '50s and '60s especially for artists playing in country, pop and R&B styles. The story presented in the description features musicians and characters from songs, who often appear to be real people. There are some colloquial elements that contribute to the informal discourse of the text. The lines below are reminiscent of a post on someone's blog:

There used to be 45s, LPs that looked sharp stacked on the floor, and real disc-jockeys as well. And there used to be answer-discs. Almost any record big enough to stay a few months in the charts was virtually assured of attracting an answer-disc. Here are some of the ...err ...best. Let's start with Jack Scott's Burning Bridges. Jack was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada ó just across the river from Detroit, and Detroit was where he grew up. (Bear Family, "And The Answer Is - Country & Rock and Roll CD-Album Series by Bear Family")

There is a slightly different approach to storytelling in the description of *A Slight Disturbance In My Mind*. This compilation of records defines proto-psychedelic period, preceding the blossom of the genre both in the UK and America. The composition of the text relies on retrospection which helps a reader or potential listener to imagine the time frame. The narrative implies that the audience has a certain background and "reads between the lines". Those who come across such records are either collectors or music fans of venerable age, therefore, there is no need to explain that 'See My Friends' and 'Still I'm Sad' are songs by The Kinks and The Yardbirds respectively.

The first few lines of the texts submerge the reader into the cultural context of the mid-'60s. It reads a bit academic, yet, perfectly presents the time-travelling shifts:

The release that August of Revolver brought the concept of psychedelic music out of the margins and into the mainstream. However, psychedelia had been percolating throughout the year. The word was already in subterranean use in

America, adapted by the likes of The 13th Floor Elevators and Hollywood hustler Kim Fowley, who in late 1965 had become the first person to promote a record with the term “psychedelic” (Bear Family “Various: A Slight Disturbance In My Mind - The British Proto-Psychedelic Sound Of 1966 (3-CD)”).

The fragment can be imagined as a script for one of the episodes from the British Pathe archive (*British Pathé* Archive). The nostalgic tone of the narrative evokes entertaining newsreels from the past.

The rest of the text contains the description of the compilation itself. Alongside the epithets characterizing the genre, e.g. *introspective pop*, some alliterations seemingly mimic the prevailing sound on the record - “*a dizzying, dazzling mix of nascent psychedelia*”. Throughout the paragraph, there are recurrent references to the period that accentuate its significant role in the history of music. These are epithets and metaphorical expressions such as *tumultuous twelve-month period*, *epochal*, *priceless period* and *the gates of a new, strange and wonderful dawn*. The last one defines the late '60s with its adventurousness and intention to widen the time frame. As Kieron Tyler states in his review on this compilation: “The year 1966 has become a perennial for those behind compilations, as it represents the point when pop music definitively became more than moon, spoon, June, etc.” (Tyler, “Reissue CDs Weekly: Slight Disturbance in My Mind”).

#### **4.3. The Arts Desk: Hank Williams**

*Reissue CDs Weekly* is a regular column on *The Arts Desk*, a British website presenting chiefly reviews but also art-related interviews and news. The section provides articles on the recently reissued albums, focusing on the past decades, especially '60s music. The case study, chosen for this thesis, however, suggests slightly further travel in time. A post-war decade in the United States saw the rise of honky-tonk style. One of the prominent singer-songwriters who defined the specifics of the genre was Hank Williams. Yet, as Kieron Tyler points out, “his songs transcended genre barriers” (“Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams”).

The review covers the recent reissue of Hank Williams's radio broadcast records - "Pictures From Life's Other Side". Focusing on the release, the writer explores two dimensions of this persona - the image imposed by media and impression from listening to the records that "reveal[s] brighter sides of this man" (Tyler, "Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams"). The narrative begins with the notion of his death. Here, storytelling follows a non-linear path, listing the major events in reverse order. Finally, the fragment, which due to the past tense and sympathetic voice of the author reminds a bit of an obituary, is concluded with a summary, "It seems that few paths were smooth for Hank Williams". With the facts provided, this statement is not necessarily the journalist's point of view: "He had spina biffida and was in constant pain. There were prescribed painkillers, self-medication and a long-standing problem with alcohol. He missed shows. Contracts were cancelled due to drunkenness. He had married Audrey Sheppard in 1944 but they fought. Divorce came in 1952" (Tyler, "Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams").

In general, the media coverage presents Hank Williams as a character that fits into the 'troubled hero' category. Nevertheless, while describing the musical content of the reissue, the author shifts from past to present tense and gives another characteristic to the musician who is described now as "droll, eloquent, sardonic, self-mocking and in never less-than-good humour". One may feel a sense of presence delivered in writing. With the "now" mode, the journalist also attempts to capture the atmosphere of radio broadcast recordings from the release.

From the audio representation, the reviewer moves on to the visual aspect describing the photographs in the book *Pictures From Life's Other Side* published as part of the release. Here, the momentary impression co-exists with the permanent image easily evoked in the memory of fans and everyone who is familiar with Hank Williams' music.

Leafing through shows the grip he had on his image. OK, he looks skeletally thin and shot to bits in some shots but this biggest-ever illustrated Hank Williams compendium captures a man who was never off his game sartorially. The shirts and suits change. The hats and cowboy boots do too, but he was the complete

article. He knew how to package himself (Tyler, “Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams”).

Simple one-clause constructions prevail in the text. They ease understanding and ensure clarity. Short and precise sentences are embedded into a structure with predominant syntactic parallelism which helps to set the rhythm: “The shirts and suits change. The hats and cowboy boots do too”; “He knew how to package himself”; “He made the time”.

The reviewer successfully employs a zooming effect to emphasize some details exposing “the brighter side” of Williams: “The wildest photo catches him on a flight to New York in March or April 1952. He and two female flight attendants are on their knees, facing the camera. With their hands up, the trio make out that they are praying and are clearly larking about”.

The precision in the description of photographs has an immersive effect. With particular details mentioned, e.g. “a young boy in lederhosen”, as well as the distinction between posed photos and quick snaps, one may experience personal nostalgia as if he was leafing through a family photo album.

The history context embedded in the article contributes to the nostalgia in the global sense. For instance, describing *Mother's Best Flour Show*, a radio show featuring Hank Williams' live performance, the reviewer provides some specific details about the timing and the title. We learn that it was on air every early morning on weekdays and “sponsored by the titular flour, grain and animal feed company”. Another interesting detail is that due to the busy tour schedule the musician had to pre-record the live show bits on acetates which would be delivered on the program's scheduled date. This not just educates about the broadcast routine but also gives a hint of what kind of audience Hank Williams had back then. Interestingly, it has changed from working-class honky-tonk habitues to music enthusiasts, middle-class intellectuals and Wes Anderson fans.

## 6 Conclusion

Although the three aforementioned case studies represent different genres, there are common elements contributing to nostalgic mood. While mostly relying on description, the texts are replete with literary and rhetorical devices, e.g. metaphors and personification, parallel syntax and anaphora. The last two are shared features between three case studies. Music often acts as an independent “immortal” character. Keith Cameron quotes Joy Division members who address songs as if they would talk about living creatures - “rabble-rouser”, “droney”, “beaty” (Cameron, 78). *Bear Family* catalogue description presents psychedelia as a persistent form of life: “However, psychedelia had been percolating throughout the year” (“A Slight Disturbance in My Mind”).

Apart from shared literary devices, there are unifying grammatical characteristics. Past tense prevails over all three texts when they describe actions and events. The passages addressing the music are written mostly in present simple. Some fragments expressing overtones of reminiscence or reflection contain the elements of conditional sentence grammar, such as in Cameron’s text - “I said, Wouldn’t it be better if they did something really nasty to it, instead of being a twee pop song?” (Cameron, 78). Similar mood applies to Kieron Tyler’s review which expresses a wish for more context to be provided: “It would have been good to set these on-air performances in the context of what was issued on record, when the records were released (how much of what was aired was known by listeners?)” (Tyler, “Reissues CDs Weekly: Hank Williams”).

Zooming effect, used in all three cases, helps the writers to invoke the spirits of the past while emphasizing its connection with the “now”. The texts begin with the facts which now are milestones in the history of music. Following this, writers travel back in time to provide us with more information on personal circumstances. “Only The

Lonely” mentions the instant banger effect of “Love Will Tear Us Apart” and then zooms in on the episodes from the lives of the band and Ian Curtis. Starting with the death note, Kieron Tyler subsequently zooms in on, what he calls, the “brighter sides” of Hank Williams. A similar principle can be tracked in the *Bear Family* catalogue description. Providing “the bird’s eye view” on the music trends over the time preceding the release, later it focuses on the nitty-gritty of the record.

Another technique related to visual arts and common for all chosen case studies is a non-linear narrative. A sequence of events presents stories with chronological order that depends on a writer’s angle of vision. This is more obvious in the case studies from *MOJO* and *The Arts Desk* as their storylines focus on the music heritage and life of particular personae. The description from *Bear Family* performs time-wandering within the chosen frame, from 1965 to late 1966.

The fairy tale aspect reveals the soothing nature of the music narratives. Similarly to lullabies, features and reviews transfer us to another dimension and broaden our perception of time. It would be fair to say that storytelling in music journalism has a therapeutic effect that nevertheless entails a controversial outcome. Representation of people and music trends from the past, on one hand, loosens our ties with the current moment, on the other, makes us feel more conscious of the time we live in. For instance, the notion of some genres, e.g. post-punk, not only restores specific images in mind, where industrial landscapes would prevail, but also provides some food for reflection. The sound of post-punk is equally sentimental and dystopian and, thus, evokes associations with past and future respectively. Keeping both dimensions in mind, we analyze the present moment and let the phantoms fill the space. The dark and melancholic baritone of Ian Curtis evokes his image in the collective memory and also stimulates us to question the moment. Would contemporary music have been different if Joy Division had not disbanded? The depth of questioning and intensity of time-travel experience depends on a reader’s background. However, regardless of social factors, such as age and status, everyone has access to the spectral world. Likewise, as Wolfreys says, “all forms of narratives are spectral to some extent” (Davis, 378). We are beguiled by nostalgia as it gives us a sense of presence that fulfils our longing. We are charmed by the secrets and riddles it offers to us even though those are unlikely to be solved right away. Davis summarizes the nature of secrets that phantoms of time keep behind in one

sentence which sounds plausible and explains our endless craving for nostalgic experience: “The secret is not unspeakable because it is taboo, but because it cannot (yet) be articulated in the languages available to us” (Davis, 378).

Thus, music narratives are a repository of reflective nostalgia. Not only do they fulfil the longing of those who miss “old good times” and distract from anxieties before now but also make us question and investigate reality. It is an example of reflective storytelling which attempts to re-visit history so to challenge conventional ideas and stereotypes. The images of deceased legends, such as Ian Curtis and Hank Williams, have been mythologized and transformed into *dramatis personae*. The narratives investigating history, on one hand, reinforce mythical aspects and introduce phantoms of the past, on the other, lift a lid on the concealed side of life and present an alternative view. For instance, we learn that despite his illness and problems with alcohol Hank Williams was a hard-working and resilient artist. Likewise, learning more about Ian Curtis’s personality and the work he did with the band, we get distracted from his “dark star” image (Savage, “Dark Star: The final days of Ian Curtis by his Joy Division bandmates”). Although the whole story will always be shrouded in mystery, some bits might affect our connection with time.

When reading narratives about the music of past decades, one may experience vague longing for “home” which in this context implies recollection of images associated with the most soothing moments of one’s life. However, the time described in the text might trigger nostalgia also in those readers who have not witnessed it. For instance, millennials feel wistful when listening to post-punk music as much as do baby boomers whose youth coincided with the heyday of the genre, that is the late ’70s and early ’80s. The former find minimalist aesthetics of this music fascinating. Despite its nearly 40-year history, it indeed sounds contemporary and even futuristic. With its initial impact on baby boomers, the impulse of these cold dystopian sound reached Generation Y and spread over like ripples on the water. Maybe it is the desperate wish for the future to come that the after-war cohort transmitted to the next group in the demography succession line, who, being presented with all previous achievements, has been doomed to produce anything new.

Notwithstanding, having no direct access to that time in regards to memories, today's 30-year olds discover "home" while listening to this music. As the one who represents the age group, the author of these lines recalls images from her childhood - Soviet red-brick buildings, muddy railroad and the scent of coal tar from a local carriage works factory.

Thus, nostalgia in music narratives outline the path which would, as we think, help us to restore the connection with our inner selves. It reminds us where we come from and what a long way we have made to pursue our goals in life. And such encouragement is precious.

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