Chapter 24

The Cultural Legacy of Syd Barrett's English Pastoral

Simon Gwyn Roberts

University of Chester

Introduction

Notions of cultural imperialism in relation to popular music have tended to revolve around the market penetration and subsequent dominance of so-called 'Anglo-American' popular culture. But Syd Barrett was an early riposte to this reductive conflation: contributing to a line of artists who, inversely, found an English voice in a Americanised art form.

It is hard to discuss Barrett's legacy without reverting to cliché – his short period of creativity and subsequent drift into isolation has been trawled over and micro-analysed for decades. But that legacy, when assessed in wider political terms, remains relevant. Barrett's mobilisation of a distinctive southern English pastoral vision – subtly emphasising an identity that withers the moment it is directly articulated or politicised – retains its significance as a totem of non-toxic Englishness. This chapter argues that it connects to post-Brexit debate around English identity, as well as the older observation that two competing visions of Englishness and the English landscape exist – one based on imperialism, law, royalty and conflict; the other on the ancient, the pagan, the whimsical, the land itself.

This chapter will therefore explore the legacy of Barrett's work in relation to contemporary political debate about place, belonging and the politics of identity.

Versions of Englishness

The retreat into idealised Englishness, or a personal vision of Englishness, was not an entirely original inspiration for musicians when the Barrett-led Pink Floyd began plundering

childhood literature and half-remembered landscapes, then fusing them with a psychedelic imprint. Some of Barrett's near contemporaries had also experimented with musical forays into versions of Englishness and themes of lost childhood. The Ray Davies' composed *Village Green Preservation Society* of 1968 is an obvious example,[1] albeit a record that saw less commercial and critical success than his earlier output with The Kinks. It is notable that even in the context of the era, Davies saw this work as being "about the decline of a certain innocence in England".[2] The idea that popular music might be used as a vehicle for the exploration of Englishness and its contradictions was therefore also present in the music of other artists, and even at that relatively early stage was often accompanied by a semi-politicised take on the implications of change.

In a different context, and a different era, Vaughan Williams and others linked folk music traditions to specific landscapes, presenting English folk songs as "the natural development of excited speech".[3] Vaughan Williams in particular felt that these were "founded on the rhythm and timbre of native language" and were therefore expressive of "a national essence'.[4] Some English regions conformed to this 'national essence' better than others; notably those that were rural and (broadly) southern. Robert Stradling (1998) suggests that 'Severnside' – a somewhat notional English 'region' of his own definition - is unlike any other in terms of the "intensity of published reference to… culture, history, destiny".[5] In that sense, A. E. Housman's novel *A Shropshire Lad* (1896) combines with Joseph Gibbs' 1898 novel *A Cotswold Village*, as differing musical-literary takes on this stereotypically English region, bounded, in Stradling's view, by Shropshire to the north-west and the Cotswolds to the south-east. Stradling credits Gloucester-born composer-poet Ivor Gurney,[6] in particular, as having "the insight of the true artistic seer…he apostrophized the city's unique historical-geographical position in relation to the surrounding region". [7] He cites Gurney's "intensely

pastoral patriotism, which as early as 1905 wished to write out the names in a verse of the places worth dying for”.[8]

Gurney suffered from Bipolar Disorder for much of his life, his mental illness worsened by the wartime experiences that form a significant proportion of his work. Gurney experienced a major breakdown aged 28, after which he was hospitalised: he spent the last 15 years of his life in psychiatric institutions. Barrett, famously, suffered from mental illness worsened – or accelerated – by drug use and the realities of life in the Pink Floyd of the mid-to-late 1960s. Since his death in 2006, much speculation has surrounded the nature of Barrett’s mental collapse, with some suggesting Bipolar Disorder, others Asperger’s Syndrome and others Schizophrenia (while others still, including his sister Rosemary, have argued he was merely ‘eccentric’). Whatever the reality, there are clear parallels between some of Barrett’s lyrics and the poetry of Gurney. Both embody a distinctive indirect lyrical take on landscape and the pastoral: these, for example, are the opening lines of Gurney’s ‘I saw England – July night’ (1920-21):

She was a village
Of lovely knowledge
The high roads left her aside, she was forlorn, a maid —
Water ran there, dusk hid her, she climbed four-wayed.
Brown-gold windows showed last folk not yet asleep;

Water ran, was a centre of silence deep,
Fathomless deeps of pricked sky, almost fathomless
Hallowed an upward gaze in pale satin of blue.

That sense in which a particularised, highly individual vision of the English landscape is explored through compressed, allusive language, is mirrored by, for example, Barrett's 'It is Obvious', from his 1970 (final) solo album, *Barrett*.

> So equally over a valley, a hill
>
> Wood on quarry stood, each of us crying

Barrett then talks of a 'velvet curtain' that is 'grey', a 'blanket where the sparrows play', and 'trees' next to 'waving corn'; that his 'legs move... to you', and 'in suspense' 'our minds shot together'.

For Barrett, Englishness and the pastoral was a little more elusive and less often directly articulated. It was darker, perhaps, and it was apolitical. His solo material, notoriously haphazard and chaotic in its recording, touches on these themes lyrically more often than his work with Pink Floyd, although the legacy of the Floyd material remains considerably more influential. Indeed, by far the most celebrated example of Barrett tapping into those themes is the Floyd album that bears his distinctive mark more than any other: *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* (1967). With a title culled from chapter seven of Kenneth Graham's 1908 novel *Wind in the Willows*, the album pursues the blend of the sinister and the whimsical that characterised all his best work.

The blueprint thus established is detectable across huge swathes of British (more often specifically English) popular culture, from films like the *Wicker Man* and *A Field in England* to musicians like *XTC*, Robyn Hitchcock and the *Young Knives*.[9] For Graham Coxon of *Blur*, its influence was profound. Chapman (2010) quotes Barrett, "The accent was my own, the childish rhymes came from my own childhood… the music was expressive rather than

technical".[10] The lazy conflation of 'Anglo-American' begins to seem as simplistic as any other trite generalisation in this context.

Topophilia

Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) coined the word 'topophilia' to define the attachment that people have to a particular place.[11] He suggests that place is not just a 'thing' in the world, but a way of understanding the world. It suggests value and belonging, whereas space implies economic reality and rationalism. Place is invested with significance – because places imply attachments and connections between people and place. For Carter, Donald and Squires (1993) spaces do not ground identifications, but places do.[12] Space becomes place by being named, by embodying the symbolic and imaginary investments of a population – it is space to which meaning has been ascribed. By challenging that meaning and perhaps subverting it, as artists and musicians often do, new forms of identity are forged, the results of a different, more nuanced, vision – and one that is much harder for populist politicians and one-dimensional patriots to mobilise.

Barrett never specifically 'named' place, never harnessed the latent power that the naming of place can achieve emotionally, but as Sarah Cohen (1995) argues, an Ivor Gurney-style articulation of place is not always necessary in the context of rock and pop:

> Music plays a very particular and sensual role in the production of place, in part through its embodiment of movement and collectivity, and through the peculiar ambiguity of its symbolic forms, music can appear to act upon and convey emotion in a unique way. It represents an alternative discourse to everyday speech and language, although both are of course ideologically informed and culturally constructed.[13]

For Barrett, the place was Cambridge, a city to which he returned after his mental decline, presumably associating it with security, continuing to live there until his death, aged 60, in 2006. His connection with the town, as with so much else about his life, is hard to pin down, partly because of his reclusivity and the narrowing of horizons that must have involved. Yet Barrett and Cambridge remain inextricably linked. As Chapman says, "Syd's unfulfilled early promise and dreams abandoned seemed to hover over the place [Cambridge] like a spectral presence".[14]

Raymond Williams' (1958) much-cited but rarely defined 'structure of feeling', which was intended to describe the felt quality and pattern of life as experienced by individual 'cultures' (he also said, famously, that culture was one of the hardest words in the English language to define) is perhaps apposite here.[15] Barrett in many ways invented the rock music version of the English pastoral, although he was drawing on the longer and broader tradition of Housman, Williams, Gurney and others when it came to the use of musical form to explore that 'felt pattern of life'. His take proved highly influential, with dozens of artists subsequently using varied forms of rock music to explore and interrogate their own culture.

Music's effectiveness in stimulating a sense of identity, in preserving and transmitting cultural memory, and in establishing the production of place has frequently been commented on by academics and critics. Individuals can use music as a cultural 'map of meaning', drawing upon it to locate 'themselves in different imaginary geographies at one and the same time' and to articulate both individual and collective identities, as Stuart Hall (1995) has suggested.[16] Barrett's work is suffused with imaginary geography and half-remembered landscapes: his lyrics get close to expressing the essence of place, while seeming to revel in the indefinable nature of southern England, the perfect backdrop to songs about a love unfulfilled, or a psychedelic flashback to childhood. The notion of loss, something just out of reach that cannot quite be recaptured or articulated, is central to this.

For Leyshon, Matless and Revill (1998), "the images and experiences engendered by music are […] dependent upon the particular circumstances in which the music is performed and heard, and upon the musical style and activity involved".[17] Barrett's music and lyrics are contextual, they emerged from a particular era: two decades after the end of the war, a version of a subconscious patriotism that dared not speak its name (or, more accurately, would have deemed direct articulation inappropriate) far removed from the crass mobilisation of later years as English identity politics became weaponised by populist politicians.

The gradual shift in academic, cultural and political emphasis from space to place has frequently been commented on.[18] Space, once, meant endless opportunity – place, by contrast, geographical constraint. But space suggests the abstract, the impersonal, even the imperial. Place is personal, communal, human, and as such it seems more appealing and contemporary. A major caveat to that appeal has become necessary since the middle years of the 2010s, however, in the sense that these notions can, of course, be powerfully manipulated because place is also – by definition – populist. We all have homes. The potential for place to be mobilised by populist politicians was, arguably, not given sufficient consideration by an earlier generation of academics and cultural commentators who saw only the positives in place's humanity and constrained dimensions.

As a partial consequence, some have observed that there is now a liberal tendency to celebrate 'good' localism (thriving communities, locally sourced food, vernacular architecture, indigenous languages) while simultaneously deriding 'bad' localism (hostility to immigration, nativism, bombastic nationalism). The suggestion is that there is a fundamental hypocrisy in so doing, that the two are inherently connected.[19] David Goodhart (2017) articulated a different but related observation in his much-reported take on Brexit, where he suggested that the UK and much of the developed world has split into two opposing tribes: 'somewheres' (those rooted in place and community) versus 'anywheres' (mobile,

open to change, tolerant).[20] This, he says, is the contemporary faultline that made Brexit inevitable; and Theresa May then transplanted the observation into populist politics with her 'citizens of nowhere' speech.

Although a superficially attractive way of explaining contemporary culture wars, this observation seems dubious in the context of popular culture, a false dichotomy. It is perfectly possible, in fact it is arguably standard, for interesting musicians to be rooted in place and simultaneously open to wider influences: indeed, the two are frequently mutually reinforcing, not mutually exclusive – in the sense that traveling reveals the distinctiveness of one's own culture by forcing you to see it afresh and discern an infinitely nuanced blend of differences and similarities which provoke empathy, not antipathy. Consider, in this context, obvious examples like Lennon and McCartney's work on *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band (1967)*, or Blur's *Parklife* (1994): that attractive blend of personal heritage and global influences that, when combined interestingly and meaningfully, produces unique and groundbreaking works of art.

Whatever the contemporary political role of place might be, Feld and Basso's (1996) *Senses of Place* suggests that 'storytelling', in whatever cultural form that takes, seems to be the universal means of place-making.[21] Stories – whether songs, artwork, or works of literature – have the power to transform object and area into place and landscape. For Burden and Kohl (2006), "symbolic landscapes and places have specific cultural meanings that construct, maintain and circulate myths of a unified national identity, or whose visible ironies deconstruct those myths".[22] The *Piper at the Gates of Dawn* repeatedly plays with stereotypical ideals of the English landscape, inviting the listener into a vision of nature which combines the aesthetic and the psychological. Burden and Kohl (2006) suggest that landscape is already an encoded way of seeing the countryside, and when mobilised by English artists of whatever stripe, "this splendour has then stood for everything that is quintessentially

English".[23] There is, of course, nothing exclusively English about this: Schama (1995) argues that the cultural habits of humanity have always made room for the sacredness of nature.[24] All our landscapes, he suggests, are imprinted with our tenacious, inescapable obsessions.

Hudson (2006) argues that the links between music and senses of place and identity are strong both historically and contemporarily. There is, he says, ample evidence to support the proposition that music has the ability to conjure up powerful images of place, feelings of deep attachment to place.[25] He describes it as an oddly neglected topic in human geography – suggesting such work as there is tends to be conceptually limited. Yet music influences virtually all aspects of culture and is obviously 'spatial' in terms of its impact and construction.

Englishess and The Piper at the Gates of Dawn

In this context, Barrett's take on place and Englishness imbues *Piper* with a highly distinctive imprint, a flourishing of ideas that had a lasting impact. For Nick Kent (1974), this creativity set the stage in Barrett's song-writing:

> for what can only be described as the quintessential marriage of the two ideal forms of English psychedelia – musical rococo freak-outs joining together with Barrett's sudden ascent into the lyrical realms of ye olde English whimsical loone, wherein dwelt the likes of Edward Lear and Kenneth Grahame.[26]

There's a suggestion that it veers close to parody in places, although there were of course wider factors at play that go some way to explain the lyrical content. Characteristic of the album is 'The Scarecrow', which combines takes on the English landscape, the English

pastoral, with Barrett's own deteriorating mental state. As the song directly suggests, Barrett was already resigning himself to the reality of that decline:

> The black and green scarecrow as everyone knows
> Stood with a bird on his hat and straw everywhere
> He didn't care

'Matilda Mother', meanwhile, explicitly references themes of middle-class English childhood, whilst also seeming to predict a reclusive future, back with his mother in the Cambridge family home. Barrett recalls 'The doll's house, darkness, old perfumes' and 'fairy stories' told by his mother. Elsewhere, the drug-addled nursery rhymes of 'Flaming', references out of body experiences fused to the English countryside, and pursues the pastoral theme whilst infusing it with a distinctive psychedelic take: 'Yippee! You can't see me / But I can you'... through to 'Watching buttercups cup the light / Sleeping on a dandelion'.

The essential Englishness of 'See Emily Play' is another obvious example. Lyrically, all four of these tracks are deliberately childlike and naïve: there is no equivalent of the Ivor Gurney-style sophistication of Barrett's compositions 'It is Obvious' or 'Wined and Dined', with lines like 'chalk underfoot, light ash of blue' from the later solo work.[27] Yet for Kent (1974), the ultimate harsh critic, *Piper* "manages to capture Barrett's blinding spurt of acid creativity in its perfect ascendant", with its songs about hallucinating cats, eastern religions and "the spirit of Albion suddenly transformed into space-age day-glo".[28] It is certainly possible to identify Barrett-era Pink Floyd as something of a focal point in the history of the darker take on the English pastoral; a hinge around which the past and future of this particular vision revolve.

Piper established an influential blueprint to be pursued and developed by the likes of the aforementioned British bands XTC and Blur, but the vision of a specifically depoliticised English identity had a considerable precedent before being plundered by Barrett in an autoethnographic way. As with the mobilisation of what Vaughan Williams called 'musical citizenship',[29] the artistic technique of 'defamiliarization' was hardly new in the English context. Looking afresh at the commonplace, the everyday – warping it and considering it from a different perspective – obviously resonated with the psychedelic explorers of the 1960s but had a much older precedent in the UK. Knights (1996) for example, cites the work of H. V. Morton in the 1920s. Superficially, a series of celebrated travelogues and motoring guides to the English regions, Morton's work was actually underpinned by a 'synoptic and almost spiritualised vision'. For Knights, "the England for which Morton and implicitly his readers were searching was rural, or small town, an England of thatched cottages, market towns and cathedral closes, its centre of gravity is the Georgian South Country".[30] It was, he suggests, a vision of England manifested and fed by sources as various as Cecil Sharp's folk songs, country dancing, horticulturalist Gertrude Jekyll, and composers Edward Elgar and Vaughan Williams.

For Knights, however, Morton's work is not always what it first appears to be in his most famous 1920s work, 'In search of England', which is still in print. He argues that "the pastoral quest does not always lead to utopia. It was always possible for the travelogue format to articulate a darker, more contradictory, even dystopian vision".[31] The Russian concept of 'Ostranenie', or defamiliarization, enhances perceptions of the familiar by presenting them in unfamiliar or destabilising ways. Sigmund Freud (1919) later articulated a similar technique in *Das Unheimliche* ('The Uncanny'), suggesting that "the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar". [32] Whilst on

one level, the work of Morton holds an obvious attraction to patriots and the nostalgic, on another its opinionated idiosyncrasy strikes a different tone.

The notion of the simultaneously strange and familiar also underpins much of Barrett's most creative work, indeed it is fundamental to it – the disturbing subversion of standard English tropes, seeing the familiar landscape in unfamiliar ways, partially drug-induced, but partially also playing homage to this older tradition. It plays with the 'two traditions' of Englishness previously mentioned: feeding into the contemporary (in late 1960s terms) take on those alternative visions of whimsy, mysticism, paganism; the England into which the new counterculture could comfortably plug itself, the England of the Glastonbury festival, stone circles, Fairport Convention and Silbury Hill. H. V. Morton's deliberate romanticism spills over into near-parody in its attempt to interpret the familiar:

> These Warwickshire lanes, deep and banked; these mighty trees; these small, arched bridges over small streams, how well I knew them when I was a boy. There were little villages in which men still spoke Elizabethan English, such as Welford-upon-Avon, where there was a maypole, where they grew the most delicious raspberries and took the sweetest honey from straw skeps. Here it was years ago that I saw a man in a smock. There was Bidford – 'drunken Bidford' – where an old woman, with a face like a withered apple under a mauve sun-bonnet, used to point out the crab-tree beneath whose shade Shakespeare, so the legend went, slept off a carouse at the Falcon Inn.[33]

Jan Morris (2002) suggests that Morton's work became "a myth in its own lifetime[…]the Englishness he represented, like the England he described, lives on only in myth, longing, and literature, and in his own engaging cadences".[34] It was made possible, in other words, by an essential confidence born of insular independence. That, perhaps, is what has changed

most in the intervening years: a sense that this confidence has been replaced by what Fintan O'Toole (2018) describes as an aggressive sense of victimhood, the "lure of self-pity, the weird need to dream England into a state of awful oppression".[35] This rhetoric presents English identity as something very different, simultaneously bombastic and defensive, framed around something it is not, rather than the quiet reaffirmation of cultural practice that characterises more tangible forms of national identity.

Writing about Morton, Morris (2002) suggests that:

> we know better than the author ever could how fragile was the matter of his descriptions. How could he have guessed that the proud society he celebrates would so soon be pitifully unsure of itself, or that the great imperial sovereignty it underlay would be left high and dry among the nations, searching decade after decade for its role in a new world?[36]

In the contemporary political context, this view from 2002 seems unusually prescient.

Apart from establishing a specific blueprint for an entire strain of English popular culture, *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn* also marked the highpoint of Barrett's influence within Pink Floyd, as his behaviour and performing became more erratic. For Clinton Heylin (2012), "(Syd's) own inner world was closing in. In a single weekend at the end of July (1967), so the story goes, he went from being the pied piper of English pop to Mr Madcap".[37] Heylin continues:

> By the end of 1967 Barrett was hardly alone, inside or outside 'his band', in his struggle to retain both his creativity and his sanity. A whole generation of English singer songwriters were wrestling with their inner demons, usually – though not necessarily – let out of the bottle by the LSD genie.[38]

Much has been written about that era, with Nick Kent (1974) suggesting that the final track on *Piper*, ‘Bike’, is a portent of things to come, "reeking as it does of warped crazy basements and Barrett’s eccentricities beginning to go the way of the warped…concurrent with all this mind-blowing music, strange things were starting to happen to the Floyd but more particularly to Barrett himself".[39]

Barrett was, famously, replaced by Dave Gilmour – but not before recording ‘Jugband Blues’ for the band’s second album, *Saucerful of Secrets*. ‘Jugband Blues’ uses specifically English phraseology to pursue the theme of mental decline, although it is equally easy to interpret as a comment on his status within the band:

> It’s awfully considerate of you to think of me here
> And I’m most obliged to you for making it clear that I’m not here

Context is everything

Context is indeed everything. At the time, Englishness would rarely have been directly articulated, still less used in popular music or crass politicking. Instead, the fantasies of a magical Britain fused with hippy ideals in the late 1960s, and found a natural habitat in southern England. Glastonbury opened near the legendary site of Avalon and was soaked in psychedelic mysticism from the start – the apotheosis of that ‘second’ vision of England that opened up this chapter, the one that celebrates the ancient, the pagan, the landscape, and rejects the pomp and circumstance of the other.

It is not an original observation to argue that nostalgia is a prism through which Britons understand their present and their past, and John Harris (2010) explores that argument in the context of pop culture in his book about British music in the 1990s.[40] A tendency to wallow

in nostalgia is hardly unique to Britain, of course. But in the context of pop culture, the 1990s emergence of what came to be called ‘Britpop’ sometimes misrepresented that earlier era of global rock and pop dominance in its attempts to celebrate it. In reality, the creative outburst of the late 1960s was more subtle in its referencing of nostalgic or national tropes. Consider the difference between Barrett, or The Beatles, in their mid to late 1960s pomp, and some of the subsequent attempts to reference the mores of that era.

The child’s eye view of The Beatles’ 1967 track ‘Strawberry Fields Forever’, for example, referenced a very specific place, suffused with memories of a very specific childhood. For McDonald (2007), it revolves around "an eerie longing for a wild childhood of hide-and-seek and tree-climbing: this visionary strawberry fields of his [Lennon’s] imagination".[41] McDonald goes on to suggest that the true subject of English psychedelia was neither love nor drugs, but nostalgia for the innocent vision of the child, and the impossibility of that being recaptured as an adult: “The Northern childhood motifs in Sgt Pepper are too pervasive to ignore, whether or not actively coordinated”.

Compare this to the crass narrative that was sometimes woven by the media around Britpop. Zuberi (2001) argues that the cultural nationalism of 1990s Britpop has been generally regarded as “‘a circling of the wagons’, a defensive reaction against the perceived threat of multiculturalism and American cultural hegemony".[42] The April 1993 edition of *Select* magazine,[43] for example, pictured Suede’s Brett Anderson on the cover, backed by a Union Jack and the phrase ‘Yanks Go Home’. In fairness, even at the time Anderson seemed an odd choice for such crude alpha male triumphalism, with his obvious Bowie influences and inherent sexual ambiguity. And Zuberi’s argument is rather reductive: the bands loosely placed under the ‘Britpop’ banner were actually a disparate bunch with a wide range of ideological takes on identity and their relationship with it.

That said, in a broader political context this kind of framing did form part of a wider shift, whereby distinctively British (almost exclusively English) forms of 1990s pop music were mobilised for political reasons. As Bennett and Stratton suggest (2016), “critical to a contemporary understanding of the Britpop phenomenon is the way in which it was effectively hijacked…by mainstream politics in the mid-1990s…a crucial and seemingly willing partner in the promotion of a new cultural political discourse – Cool Britannia”.[44] Blair’s New Labour project was central to this, viewing it as a prime example of the UK’s ‘soft power’, exactly the kind of vibrant modernity it wished to project globally. Dig a little deeper, however, and it can be read as symptomatic of a still broader set of political trends, even if – in origin – it was more innocent in its simple nostalgia. As Bennett and Stratton (2016), argue:

> 1960s groups were nostalgic for a lost empire and a time before American-driven consumerism… groups in the 2000s nostalgic for what they think was the simpler nationalism of Britain in the 1970s, a time, perhaps, before devolution and the vote to join what was then the Common Market.[45]

But unlike the nostalgia that cuts through *Piper* or ‘Strawberry Fields’, it is not the poignancy of attempting to recapture childhood innocence that began to characterise the post-Britpop political mobilisation of its emotional appeal. Instead, the appeal of nostalgia began to be infused with that sense of exceptionalism that, while always present, came to dominate certain aspects of English public life in the 2010s. In a much-quoted 2019 interview, author John Le Carré attempted to characterise this: "What really scares me about nostalgia is that it’s become a political weapon. Politicians are creating a nostalgia for an England that never existed, and selling it, really, as something we could return to".[46]

It is unfair, and an exaggeration, to suggest that the roots of this lie in that lightweight version of independent music that dominated 1990s charts (not least because Britpop itself was an absurdly reductive term, bracketing wildly different bands together under one meaningless umbrella description). But Britpop as broader cultural phenomenon was certainly implicated in the production of a nostalgic, hybridity-erasing form of Britishness (even if it was Englishness 'writ large').

The fundamental split in the referencing of English national identity between ancient mysticism and bombastic imperialism is rarely cited post-Brexit, but it is analogous to the broader schism characterising contemporary politics. Competing visions about the nature of English identity have characterised post-Brexit debate but alternative, more nuanced ideas of what Englishness might look like have been notable by their absence: there has been little attempt to mobilise that alternative form, perhaps because it warps and withers the moment it is directly articulated. Instead, the renewed force of English nationalism expresses itself in a robust but unusual way. It is rarely based around community engagement with shared traditions and cultural practice (although these do, of course, exist) but more often on symbolism, sport and politically-inspired 'values'. At its best, this is arguably more inclusive than the more typical 'shared tradition' model familiar in Continental Europe, but at its worst its lack of tangibility combined with laments for a lost period of former dominance leads to a destructive focus on 'the other' that can be easily exploited.

In contrast, celebrating distinctiveness on a micro scale places a renewed emphasis on the regional; the plural and the distinctive that does not have to be damaging or introspective. Barrett's mobilisation of a very personal nostalgia and take on the southern English landscape represented the opposing pole of bombast and exceptionalism, capturing – in its innocence – a particular time and a particular place. This, perhaps, is one of the reasons Syd Barrett was the one creative element of Pink Floyd that it was acceptable for punks and those that

followed to say they liked, or were influenced by. Alan McGee, founder of influential indie label Creation Records professed to being "obsessed by Barrett and Pink Floyd".[47] In 1987, *Beyond the Wildwood* was released by Imaginary Records, a collection of Barrett cover versions by numerous British and American indie bands. There have been multiple other cover versions over many years (from Bowie's version of 'See Emily Play', through The Jesus and Mary Chain's 'Vegetable Man', to Smashing Pumpkin's 'Terrapin'). In 2012, Paul Weller released *When Your Garden's Overgrown*, about Barrett, and multiple other tributes and references continue to be made (there are, for example, two different bands called Baby Lemonade).

The essential appeal of Barrett's work remains, perhaps because there is something fundamental about that blend of the particular and the universal, and the way in which it connects to the innocent discoveries of childhood. Schama explores the ways in which cultures promote myths that relate to landscape: the notion of an idyll, a pastoral Arcadia, seems to transcend global societies, he suggests. [48] The most "intensely felt landscapes" are those we knew as a child and therefore there is a kind of innocence about them. The fusion of such memories with other, much broader influences characterises a particular strand of English popular culture: it is typified by Barrett's work, and it is in danger of being lost in the contemporary political environment, which prefers instead to mobilise the alternative version. Barrett's period of creativity lasted no more than four years, after which his status was cemented by his reclusion, yet its legacy still connects. The celebration of an identity that cannot easily be defined seems a singularly appropriate legacy for an artist who redefined what it meant to be elusive.

[1] 'The Village Green Preservation Society' is a single and album by the English band The Kinks (1968). It is a nostalgic reflection on the 'village green' often associated with English villages before the war – some kind of imagined rural ideal.

[2] Heylin, C. (2012). *All the Madmen: Barrett, Bowie, Drake, Pink Floyd, The Kinks, The Who and the Journey to the Dark Side of English Rock*. London: Constable, page 66.
[3] Williams, R.V. (1987[1934]). *National Music and Other Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Stradling, R. (1998). 'England's glory: Sensibilities of place in English music, 1900-1950'. In Leyshon, A., Matless, D. and Revill, G. (eds.). *The Place of Music*. New York: Guilford Press, page 189.
[6] Ivor Gurney (1890-1937) was an English poet.
[7] *Op. cit.* Stradling, (1998).
[8] *Ibid.*
[9] Which references the earliest, still extant, English folk song in its startling and infamous concluding scene: 'Summer is icumen in', a thirteenth century 'rota' revolving around rural signs of the changing seasons, 'lhude sing cuccu' and so on.
[10] Chapman, R. (2010). *Syd Barrett: A very iIrregular head*. London: Faber and Faber, page ix.
[11] Tuan, Y. F. (1974). *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*. New York: Colombia University Press, page 4.
[12] Carter, E., Donald, J., and Squires, J. (eds.). (1993). *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*. London: Lawrence and Wishart, page vii.
[13] Cohen, S. (1995). 'Sounding out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*. 20 (4):434-446. The quote is on page 343.
[14] *Op. cit.* Chapman, (2010), page xvii.
[15] Williams, R. (1958). 'Culture is Ordinary'. In Williams, R. (1989). *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. London: Verso, pages 3-14.
[16] Hall, S. (1995). 'New cultures for old'. In Massey, D. and Jess, P. (eds.). *A place in the world? Places, cultures, and globalization* (The shape of the world: Explorations in human geography). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
[17] Leyshon, A., Matless, D. and Revill, G. (eds.). (1998). *The Place of Music*. New York: Guilford Press, page 286.
[18] See for example, Feld, S. and Basso, K. H. (1996). *Senses of Place.* New Mexico: University of New Mexico.
[19] See Meek, J. (2019). *Dreams of Leaving and Remaining*. London: Verso.
[20] Goodhart, D. (2017). *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. London: Hurst.
[21] *Op. cit.* Feld, S. and Basso, K. H. (1996).
[22] Burden, R. and Kohl, S. (1996). *Landscapes and Englishness*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pages 207-224. The quote is on page 23.
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] Schama, S. (1995). *Landscape and Memory*. London: Harper Perennial, page 18.
[25] Hudson, R. (2006). 'Music, Identity and Place. Progress in Human Geography'. *Progress in Human Geography,* 30:5:626-634.
[26] Kent, N. (1974). 'The Cracked Ballad of Syd Barrett'. *New Musical Express*, 13 April.
[27] This lyric is actually from 'Wined and Dined'.
[28] Kent, 'The Cracked Ballad of Syd Barrett'.
[29] Williams, R. V. (1934). 'Should Music Be National?' *National Music and Other Essays.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pages 3-22.
[30] Knights, B. (1996). 'In Search of England: Travelogue and national between the wars'. In Burden, R. and Kohl, S. (eds.). (1996). Landscapes and Englishness (Spacial Practices 1). New York: Rodopi, pages 165-185. Quote is on page 171.
[31] *Ibid:*172.
[32] Freud, S. (1919). 'Das Unheimliche'. *Imago. Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften V.* gutenberg.org/files/34222/34222-h/34222-h.htm.
[33] Morton, H.V. (1934/2002). *In search of England*. Cambridge, Mass: Da Capo Press, page 247.
[34] Morris, J, (2002). 'Foreword'. *In Search of England*. Cambridge, Mass: Da Capo Press, page xi.
[35] Economist editor Walter Bagehot came from an entirely different political tradition and era, yet was similarly scathing as he outlined the inescapable class dimensions of English identity in 1867 (The English Constitution): "The mass of people yield obedience to the select few", as well as its lack of real substance, with its dependence on superficial pomp; "people defer to what we may call the theatrical show of society… we must not let in daylight upon magic [in reference to the monarchy]." Also see, O'Toole, F. (2018). 'The Paranoid Fantasy Behind Brexit'. *The Guardian*. 16 November. theguardian.com/politics/2018/nov/16/brexit-paranoid-fantasy-fintan-otoole.
[36] *Op. cit.* Morris, (2002), page xi.
[37] Heylin, C. (2012). All the Madmen, page 2.
[38] *Ibid:* 7.
[39] Kent, N. (1974). 'The Cracked Ballad of Syd Barrett'. *New Musical Express*, 13 April.
[40] Harris, J. (2010). *The Last Party – Britpop, Blair and the Demise of English Rock*. London: Harper Perennial.
[41] McDonald, I. (2007). *Revolution in the Head – The Beatles' Records and the Sixties*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, page 191.
[42] Zuberi, N. (2001). *Sounds English; Transnational Popular Music*. Illinois: University of Illinois, page 23.
[43] 'Pop Babylon'. *Select*. April 1993.
[44] Bennett, A. and Stratton, J. (2016). *Britpop and the English Musical Tradition*. London: Routledge, page 2.
[45] *Op. cit.* Bennett and Stratton, (2016):5.
[46] Le Carré, J. (2019). 'John le Carré: Politicians love chaos - it gives them authority'. James Naughtie, BBC Radio 4, *Today Programme*, 14 October 2019.
[47] McGee, A. (n.d.) 'My Life in Vinyl: Alan McGee'. *Loing Live VINYL*. longlivevinyl.net/alan-mcgee-interview/.
[48] Schama, S. (2004). *Landscape and Memory*. London: Harper.