



America in Performance of 20th Century Identity and Individualism in Chrissie Hynde's *Reckless*

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Abstract

Chrissie Hynde relocated to London from her native Ohio in 1973. She has now spent well over twice as much time in Britain as she has in America, only moving back briefly to care for her dying parents - whose passing facilitated the releasing of her autobiography: *Reckless* (2015). When she moved to London she felt she had found her spiritual home, in direct contrast to Akron, her fast changing hometown. In forming this link Hynde can tell us a lot about America from a British perspective. She lived on the front line with, for example, first hand experience of the Kent State University shooting, whilst England still had no place for the 'Street Fighting Man': Her America is not the wild west of her hero Keith Richards, nor the 'continuous positioning of himself vis-à-vis America' of her ex-husband Ray Davies. Hers is the visceral and realistic picture of a failing society. Hynde is a complex character. Famously tetchy, intensely private, why did this American become such an Anglophile, living under the noses of the infamous English media? Cynical of the American Dream she chose to escape to what was the most exciting place in the world of entertainment in the 1970s. Talking of her material heritage she states 'it was the 'land of opportunity' but people like mine didn't get very many back then'. How prescient she was, as those failures come home to roost now in the politics of the US. Chrissie Hynde is arguably the epitome of the 'British Other', a legal alien if you will, offering a perceptive eye and commentary upon the world across the pond. Like Henry James before her, she adds an extra, informed, dynamic in her sharp analysis of America compared to anyone else.

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In 2019 President Donald Trump controversially challenged four, non-white, female Democratic representatives to 'Go Home [to where they came from]' on the now pervasive short interactive social media platform Twitter. Republicans rallied and came to his defence: asked if President Trump's tweets were racist, House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy answered, 'No. This is about ideology. This is about socialism versus freedom' (*New York Times* 2019). Whilst there are a myriad of circumstances contributing to this series of events (not least an election pending where the incumbent was seeking to scaremonger about the extreme left in the Democratic Party), this comment highlights how the concept of American freedoms has become interrelated and enshrined in an unfettered, unrestrained capitalist system, as a key pillar of Western democracy. To Trump's perceived support base socialism is diametrically opposed to this concept. Equating freedom with the policy of economic freedom, is perhaps best epitomised by James Carville's phrase - and Democrat, Bill Clinton's campaign by-line - 'It's the economy stupid'. The American 'other' or enemy, for at least much of the American Right, has mutated subtly from fascism in the early twentieth century, to communism (and the other McCarthy) post World War Two, to any form of socialism after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This fear of socialism is directly and indirectly addressed in *Reckless: My Life as a Pretender* (2015), the autobiography of Chrissie Hynde. This article explores Hynde's contrast between what she outlines as actual freedoms in punk-era Britain and the false freedoms of the consumerist America that she left behind. I will address to what extent *Reckless* can function as a critique of consumerism and individualism. Although not an overtly political book, *Reckless* could rewardingly be read as an indictment on the capitalist drive to economic progress at the expense of the natural world and artistic expressions. Thus, anticipating the current Extinction Rebellion (XR) movement and echoing the early twentieth century economic historian and anthropologist Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944).

Chrissie Hynde

As lead singer of The Pretenders, and a successful solo artist in her own right, Chrissie Hynde is one of only a few females within the upper echelons of rock music's hierarchy in terms of both global sales and reputation. Her distinctive, rasping voice ensures that her tracks remain instantly recognisable and attributable, with 'Brass in Pocket' (1980), 'Back on the Chain Gang' (1982) and the Christmas perennial '2000

Miles' (1983) among her band's most famous hits. Many albums have sold in their millions (*Pretenders* and *Learning to Crawl*) and others respectably over half a million (*Packed!* and *Last of the Independents*) in the UK alone (RIAA). The band itself, The Pretenders, is a vehicle for Hynde, or a tribute band as she has admitted in the past.¹ She also garners a huge amount of respect and admiration in the industry and amongst musical peers, with very little animosity and criticism beyond her desire for answers and a jealousy of her intimidating abilities.² Johnny Marr, who has worked with her in the past, has stated 'The Pretenders were liked by everyone who was into Rock Music'.³ Her admirers acknowledge both her ability to separate public requirements and her private life, alongside her sincerity about the cause of animal well-being, stable ecologies and her desire to garner publicity for these.⁴ Hynde is famously prickly in interview as well.⁵

Notoriously protective of her private life, *Reckless* perhaps unsurprisingly purported or promised to offer more than it appeared to deliver, she does this not to add mystery but to keep her private life just that – private. Her 'performance' is the public persona (the performance of which she first witnessed at the fairground), her private life need feature only so far as it relates to the story of The Pretenders (Hynde 42). Most of the autobiographical information she covers is already out in the public domain should people choose to search for it, all Hynde is doing is bringing much of it together. Indeed, much of the information was not a revelation and could have been gleaned by even a passing fan from a few strategic longer interviews in the music press between 1978 and 1985.⁶ Hynde herself admitted that her autobiography is light on novelty and scandal stating that 'the stuff I really regret I left out of the book'.⁷ This is an autobiography that is in some ways her best performance, or, as described elsewhere, best viewed as a 'greatest hits compilation'.⁸ It has been called a love letter to music but is also an open adoration of London and the UK, where she has spent most of her adult life.⁹ She is an unabashed Anglophile (228). At one point she claims: 'Every cell in my body had become a receptor, transposing Englishness into something like a hormone or vitamin to stave off rickets' (103).¹⁰ In so many ways this is a very standard pop autobiography with very little introspection and yet it is more subtle than has been given credit. John Lydon of The Sex Pistols and P.I.L. has said of her 'she'll always be an awkward person to get on with, she is very difficult ... in that difficulty she looks for answers', and it is this search for answers that keeps her motivated and may have inspired her autobiography.¹¹

The subtitle of this book is 'My life as a Pretender'. It is this word, as a verb and noun, which she is playing on. Veracity as a 'pretender' is unlikely. Indeed, veracity in autobiography is impossible to achieve and merely a pretence.¹² Autobiography has

a long history but also has a faux authenticity, a faux authenticity replicated by Rock 'n' Roll.¹³ Celebrity autobiographies are also perceived as famously shallow, with Stein and Butler (2015) calling them 'a rubric that evokes simplistic assumptions of shallow mass entertainment and a lack of literary value'.¹⁴ Though the celebrity memoir, which is what Hynde's is, can lay claim to being the most influential subgenre of autobiography based on commercial ubiquity, popular appeal, and arguably, *democratic* accessibility.¹⁵ One cannot gauge Hynde's or others' sincerity, but she does have an aim beyond putting her story out to the public. Her own inspiration, the *Bhagavad Gita*, which she has been reading since at least her early 20s, is a book which could be said to be about 'forgetting the self' and getting rid of the ego – almost at odds with the remit of a traditional autobiography. Autobiography is by definition a singular ego document however much one tries to write against it, and yet, early on Hynde writes wherever possible in the plural. Hynde acknowledges the fiction of autobiography when humorously highlighting her more obvious lies within the text. For example, the narrative describes one gig she performed at, yet a few pages later chronologically, she states she was performing her first ever gig (122). This is one of the more obvious 'pretentions', but its presence leads readers into questioning what other circumlocutions or out and out inventions are inserted into her story.¹⁶

Famously vegetarian and an activist for PETA and animal rights, Hynde's vegetarianism, she claimed was to 'inform everything, the course of my destiny' (68).¹⁷ Consequently, Hynde has manifested herself as one of the early twenty-first century's growing number of voices echoing the sociologist Karl Polanyi and his observations regarding the problematic and damaging nature of consumer capitalist culture. Her autobiography puts forward that life in the Western world has taken the wrong trajectory and needs realignment. Polanyi's definitive text *The Great Transformation* cogently conveys the argument that society has been misdirected since the early 19th century in its drive towards the capitalist free market economy. Polanyi's, sometimes historically occluded opinions, are themselves now gaining traction in not just Economics but History of Literature (Heide Estes), Sociology (Naomi Klein), Anthropology (David Graeber) and Philosophy (John Gray).

During the 1950s and 1960s with the climate of the Cold War, economic growth and accelerated technologies, few, including Hynde's parents, wanted to hear any negatives about the progress of society. But the spectacular failure of modern economic theory (in 2008 with oft cited echoes of The Great Crash of 1929) and the ensuing global financial crisis have resulted in alternatives being given more considered attention and media coverage. The metaphors which run throughout *Reckless* are used to display the symptoms of an emerging individualism tied up with

a fervently avarice consumption within the country which Hynde loves, but pointedly kicks against. This rebellion, though sincere, is at the same time hollow and non-committal, as befitting the life of a *pretender*. She has played on this since the first album. A track called 'Mystery Achievement' includes the lyric 'I've got no tears on my ice cream, but you know me I love pretending'. Lyrics are of course notoriously difficult to rely on - the kernel of an idea may have truth but sometimes must be made to rhyme and fit the rhythm, generally at the expense of accuracy. I do not plan to dwell on lyrics or their autobiographical merit in the text. Suffice to say, like her hero Bob Dylan, whose own autobiography was in part fabricated from *Time Magazine* articles, Hynde is clear in her pointers within the book that she 'loved a good con' (33).¹⁸ This, in conjunction with her lack of investment in the validity of autobiography in itself should leave us suspicious of many aspects of this book: she has often rejected advances to write one and publicly dismissed both suggestions and even this book. But at the same time Hynde acknowledges the scope of her own contradictions, for which Rock 'n' Roll, itself 'a good con' as she calls it, is also a great *conduit*.

A review from the *Daily Beast* on the back of my copy of *Reckless* states that Hynde's writing style is like her musical output in that it is 'impulsive, untamed, ragged, proud, a little sad around the edges'. There is definitely sadness and pride present throughout her narrative, but to call her prose (in book- or musical- form) impulsive, untamed, and ragged is to undersell the artful construction of Hynde's output. As one of only a handful of prominent punk female artists, and one with an unsurpassed longevity, Hynde's lyrics and performances are a capsule of her lived experience be it sexual assault at the hands of bikers ('Tattooed Love Boys') to the mournful reminiscing of a destroyed childhood municipality ('My City Was Gone'). Her songs are autobiographical though often matter of fact rather than directly judgemental, her autobiography is no different. The apparent simplicity and directness of her autobiography overshadows Hynde's considered and pointed cultural criticisms. Janet Varner Gunn analyses the autobiographical impulse as leading away from the collective and towards the personal experience. It is a genre that valorises isolation and individual exceptionalism over and above community: 'The relentless individualism of the genre subordinates all other considerations'.¹⁹ An author, by the very act of writing an autobiography, emphasises the exceptionalism of the individual and focuses attention on personal interpretation over and above historical meta-narratives. Hynde's autobiography turns away from the established rock memoir arc of hedonism and self-discovery. Some of the more simplistic autobiographies like Duff McKagan's or Slash's, or even the disappointing Wayne Kramer text, challenge less about society and more about personal choices. Although

not reaching the dizzying artistic heights of Dylan or Springsteen, Hynde's narrative is closer to Sylvain Sylvain whose recent autobiography certainly questioned the American Dream narrative he had been sold as an émigré.

Unlike Patti Smith, there is no evidence that Chrissie Hynde is concerned with placing herself within the canon of autobiography. Where Patti Smith might place herself in the broader 'high art' Hynde's self-representation and ethos place her firmly in the hedonism and escapism of popular music. Her focus, even prior to the release of her autobiography, was and is about individual freedoms versus communal duties. Community in her opinion is being destroyed for the sake of big corporations under the misguided banner of individual freedoms. This is manifested in her controversial advocacy of the return of mandatory conscription, a stance that a large majority of her fanbase do not support. Her conviction is based on the power of communal effort as opposed to individual choice. She references this in her autobiography knowing that some find it hard to accept and reconcile to their own 'liberal' agenda.

Self-identity, ethnic and national identity are also key themes from page one of *Reckless*. It is not uncommon in American autobiographies to explore the question of heritage - but Hynde seeks to instil the 'average' / silent majority identity of her family early on. As she states: 'we were born the norm, the mean', trying from the outset to capture the idea of being the very average all-American family (9). They are of good British (Scottish and Welsh) stock through both sides of her family. Upon moving to London, she brilliantly inverts the apparent importance of Anglo-Saxon heritage by highlighting, despite her father's petition to the contrary, that her London neighbours 'don't care' ('they are Greek!') (2). Hynde talks of other races and ethnicities but reiterates again how homogenous her identity and her childhood was. There is mention of Africans, Italians, Chinese, Jewish, Hispanic and Asian all within the first 500 words alone (2). These groups though are all distinct from the majority, to stress how the majority was the 'norm', a homogeneous mass of white northern Europeans, and inverting the popular idea that the United States is the melting pot of various cultures. In dispelling the melting pot myth, she is showing how the UK, or at least the London she moved to in the 1970s, was more heterogeneous and comfortable with difference, meanwhile in America 'White Europeans – we owned the joint' (2). This 'owning of the joint' (in the past tense) has been said by some to have inspired the success of Donald Trump in both the 2016 election and renewed interest amongst some of the 74 million who voted for him in the 2020 one.²⁰

Despite 'moving away for good' in 1973, America casts a long shadow in the construction of Chrissie Hynde's first autobiography. American is represented in a damning light and Hynde argues convincingly that her punk identity and ethos was

shaped despite, rather than because of, the environment she grew up in (104).²¹ From the outset Hynde makes clear her lack of investment - possibly even contempt for - the American Dream: 'It was the land of opportunity - but people like mine didn't get very many back then' (3).²² And yet Hynde herself declares in the book 'when you start to become serious, your roots become everything' (170).²³ Given the fact that she represents herself as the homogenous majority, this comment is damning indeed. The opening words of the book are about the loss of her all-American cherry tree in the back garden to make way for 'progress'. She is not subtle in her criticism of urban 'improvements' that would soon 'swallow America', going as far as to declare 'our houses were in the way of progress' (8).

Her teenage formative years also coincided with the British Pop Invasion which helped to formulate this fascination with *all things English* as she perceived it.²⁴ Ten years after the British Invasion the American band, the New York Dolls, and later the Heartbreakers (Johnny Thunders), brought their blend of punk to British shores, at the same time as Hynde was there trying to find success with her own bands.²⁵ Hynde, firmly established in England, was at the forefront of this evolution and movement which became *London* punk in 1976. 'Although Chrissie is from the United States [...] She is fundamentally a British artist' declared Danny Goldberg, as he signed her new contract.²⁶ Despite being a 'Yank in London' or 'the archetypal loudmouthed American' she had the advantage of knowing Svengali Malcolm McLaren, as well as the New York Dolls themselves.²⁷ It is not a huge stretch to assert that if national identities were needed she was a British Punk in ethos, but an American musician. And as an industry insider, writing for the *NME*, she took a less typical path alongside punk to form the rock band The Pretenders.

The twenty-first century has seen a change in perception, treatment and reception of Pop and Rock music autobiographies. A strong early foundation was laid when the Nobel winning songwriter and hallowed musician Bob Dylan published Vol 1 of *Chronicles* in 2004. Given Hynde's reverence of Dylan, it is likely his output inspired her to write her own story. Although not as structurally experimental as Dylan's writing, Hynde's apparently linear chronological narrative conceals some stylised prose with connective threads running throughout in the form of a recourse to repeated metaphors. When it suits the text, these are direct – like the strategic placing of the all-American cherry tree versus the ominous, unstoppable growth of new road and railways. At other points the same theme crops up at apparently unconnected threads – like the Amish community or even Margaret Thatcher's political influence. In part, I aim to show that this celebrity autobiography is more intelligently constructed than initially appears and that it is emblematic of a changing mentality,

or possibly even sea change, that stems from earlier writers but is gathering pace, in placing the needs of the ecology above economy. Implicit in the text is that the inevitable violent clash between rabid capitalism and the environment seems imminent. For Hynde, this will manifest itself in not eating meat: 'Every intelligent person will eventually become a vegetarian' she declares with increasing validity.²⁸ But in identifying a capitalist urge for growth as the driving force of ecological destruction, *Reckless* is also in danger of picturing a false idyll; a pre-lapsian halcyon golden age of which Hynde caught glimpses in her youth as it made a final flourish. The metaphor of the cherry tree from her youth cut down in its prime is emblematic of a lost Eden. The cherry is of course an ambiguous symbol that can at once represent life's innocent pleasures, the preciousness of life (Japan), but also ultimate femininity, woman's beauty (China) and, of course, more broadly, sexuality. Hynde shows an awareness of these literary and cultural echoes.

At other points Hynde's use of metaphors are more suggestive than overt, for example the figure of the grandma is employed as a metonym for family, and by extension community. The deliberate and premeditated disappearance of the grandma from American homes rings a death knell for any sense of communion or cohesion for Hynde (28). The direct consequence is that the core of the 'family' is eroded in America, but this also serves a larger point because it embodies a lack of community spirit and appreciation for the past. Similarly, the Amish communities 'With their steady, unchanging commitment to family and community' contrast to most of Western society's focus on 'progress' equated exclusively to material wealth (7). Indeed, most of the metaphors that Hynde employs throughout *Reckless* function as reminders that the American drive to 'progress', and its attendant neoliberal dream of individual and economic freedoms, is a dangerous chimera that robs nations and individuals of a safe communal environment in which real art can be achieved and ecological balance restored.

Reckless's overarching point is that life is a journey and not the transport method used to get there, which we have been mis-sold in the name of 'progress'; and Hynde contrasts the more organic journeying that she finds in punk-era England with the American consumerist society that she leaves behind. Her formative years were spent in Akron, Ohio, the USA, where she saw first-hand the effects of 'progress' on the town and country of her youth, of this and the environmental aspect she is very critical (8, 20). She presents her own life as a journey and her modes of transport (on foot and bus) - which are pointedly addressed from the very outset - are, in American culture, outmoded and associated with poverty and deprivation. In contrast to the declining importance of the train in the realities of American life, the bus is the important mode

of transport in her new home (Britain), one which she uses as a synecdoche of the British welfare system - or socialist ideal. To be clear, Hynde in no way indicates that she thinks the United Kingdom is 'socialist', merely that the 'the means of production', or, in capitalist terms, the funds generated from it, are distributed and regulated more widely by the community as a whole, at least in the 1970s. (With the appointment of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979 Hynde feels that Britain, following in the United States footsteps, is beginning to embrace the misguided neoliberal agenda.) The bus not only offers greater freedom of movement but does so to most people whilst being kinder on the environment, in comparison to the American mentality of car ownership as a form of prestige and isolation from the natural world and from one's neighbour. 'Everybody had to own and maintain a car. It was the biggest con in the Land of the Free. Well, along with the tobacco and alcohol industries, which also pumped out poison and had the nation in their grip. Pharmaceutical and firearms would join the party in due course' (23).

Unlike the American, and increasingly, British majority for whom she writes though, Hynde's journey encompasses two excursions, a personal and different public journey. Thus, *Reckless* partakes in the celebrity memoir genre, outlining, as it does, the key moments in the birth of this rock star and its awareness of the duty to perform to an expectant audience. Yet Hynde steps outside these boundaries and into more familiar autobiographical territory in her exploration of the interplay between community and individuality and her emphasis on how national cultures shape these debates. A 'traditional' American autobiography tends to closely follow Benjamin Franklin's solid archetypal foundational narrative in its desire to provide a remarkable history of a self-made 'man'. Hynde obliquely acknowledges this trope to show her readers its redundancy in modern life. She gestures towards this narrative by outlining her early years and suggesting key moments in her personal growth, but ultimately her main focus is on exploring communal identities and blasting the myth of poetic individual genius. Hynde, in contrast to Patti Smith for example, does not imbue her early home life with poetics but the hard-working mundane realities of a family aspiring to the American Dream, that con as she condemns it.

Yet paradoxically the production and publication of autobiography is also individualism and consumption in the extreme; individual's expressing themselves and it (the contents) being consumed. Nevertheless, as stated in a recent (2021) Facebook post by Hynde her 'personal politics is the environment', a broad brush which encompasses animals, nature, and the planet's well-being. All of which she has publicly fought for in the past and through which she uses her platform in *Reckless* to argue that rampant individualism and unfettered economic growth are not only

dangerous to modern life but are unsustainable for the future. This rape of the natural world which her autobiography alludes to is contemplated on and enlarged throughout the book using strategic violent images. Hynde uses the symbolism of violence, violence which is erroneously linked in the popular imagination with punk, a movement Chrissie Hynde is part of (at least in the public perception) to show consumerist drive to progress wreaks havoc on social as well as ecological equilibriums.

Hynde walks a tight rope in an attempt to interweave an ecological warning to her readers. Indeed, as she shows with her concerted engagement with strategic metaphors, autobiography is not merely the history of the self but placing the self within a social, political, and cultural matrix, thus contemplating the creation and narration of history on a broader scale. It places the self within a history of ideas and a national and literary history. In its examination of violence and the terrible toll it takes on individuals and nations *Reckless* seeks out the general in the personal and attempts to analyse and critique cultural assumptions that underpin a patriarchal society that devalues the power of collective action and community-based industry. The construction of an autobiography is arguably a dissenting and rebellious gesture, as the ultimate focus on an individual life questions and interrogates the 'we' of the community. As George O'Brien (2007) succinctly points out: 'rather than seeking to dismantle the "we," the autobiographical aims to augment it, make it more pliable, more accommodating, more complicated.'²⁹ Autobiography works within and against nationalist structures of perceiving the world. So autobiographical writing is Janus-faced in that it partakes of the tradition of dominant modes of expression whilst also dissenting from them. Hynde's autobiography seeks to undermine individualism's dominant (almost sacrosanct) role in modern society whilst also attempting to outline the early years of a music icon.

The LANGUAGE OF VIOLENCE: Hynde's placement of references to violence in the text to foreshadow events

The broader language of violence occurs throughout Hynde's autobiography. It is focused on America, in direct contrast to Europeans (who, to Hynde's bemusement, unlike Americans just do not wash daily!).³⁰ In placing herself on the receiving end of this violence, as opposed to as a perpetrator, she is reminding the reader that despite the popular media's simplistic equation of punks and violence it is a cultural phenomenon that she chooses to portray as generally American.³¹ Likewise, it is violence perpetrated by the apparent hypocrisies of the flawed American system that

is emphasized throughout the text. She portrays America as a country increasingly devoid of community and by extension devoid of concern for the suffering of others. Here the ubiquity of both casual environmental violence (like the violence perpetuated in creating any new road) and the more personal acts of outrage, such as sexual and physical assaults, weaken the fabric of a 'progressive' society. The language of violence and implied violence recurs at strategic places throughout the text, not necessarily as they occur but referenced when relevant to apparent Western 'progress'. This is laid bare from the first chapter in the form of the spliced worm left behind by the felling her beloved cherry tree (9-10). Some of this violence is, of course, perpetrated against her – and therefore arguably is relevant to the plot rather than inherently symbolic. As well as subject to it (broken collar bone, sexual assault), she is asked to use a gun for a job (at the Hotel Garfield), she refuses, building nicely to the final violent event before she leaves America when the guns are turned against her and her fellow students at Kent State University on the 4th May 1970 (11).³² The Kent State Shootings are firmly placed in their geographical and historical setting, being the only precise dates and times in the book. The rest is pointedly vague because she is deliberately not delving into her own (private) life, the specifics of which she wishes to keep private.³³ While the violence of everyday life is shown to be private in its scope, it is the public, state-sponsored violence against protesting students that proves to be the pivotal moment for Hynde as the protagonist leaving her nation, as a writer finding key moments in the desecration of community and environment. For Hynde though leaving America also marks the death of her ideals for society and community – and marks the beginnings of her pragmatism.

When not discussing violence against her, or endemic in American gun culture, it is the power of violence as a tool for ecological destruction that is addressed. *Reckless* consistently refers to the violence of environmental destruction in the form of roads and 'progress' more generally. Direct, plosive language describes the building of roadways 'like swathes of concrete severing streets: spliced like a worm, still wriggling' but also the 'suffocating cloak' upon America and the destruction like molten lava, as well as the simile of the damage inflicted by Zorro's blade.³⁴ In many ways she offers a damning portrait of a nation slowly killing itself and the rest of the planet. A lack of engagement with others and its own landscape is damaged by continuous expansion. 'Our houses were in the way of progress', 'we moved out of the way', 'out of the way of the coming of a new America' (8). Of the future of humanity, in its current form / technical progress, Hynde declares that 'we were digging our own graves' (23). Her obvious resignation in that sentence places this destruction in the past tense, but the implication is that it is now more relevant than

ever. America, from her perspective, is not represented by the romantic violence of the Wild West of her hero Keith Richards³⁵ or the honourable Civil War of Charlie Watts.³⁶ Nor is it the exuberant and exciting location of the blues which were held so dear (and romanticised) by nearly every British band and artist including The Animals, The Kinks, and Them of the 1960s or The Verve, Gomez and Elbow in later eras, to name but a few. Rather than the, albeit ambivalent, attitude towards America of some of her 'British' peers, Hynde instead shows an antipathy for much of it, but is still invested emotionally in the United States – such investment emphasised by some of the titles and tracks that sandwich her career from 'My City was Gone' (1984) to *Breaking up the Concrete* (2008).³⁷ Hers is a very real investment: Devastated as she is by what she sees as a decline which enters every aspect of the society she grew up in. *Reckless* shows that replacing the new with the old was not necessarily progress, but the majority implemented it with little interrogation (11, 23).³⁸ New was good, perhaps even God, for Hynde's parents' generation, but for her, the dream turned sour by the early 1970s, more specifically possibly even 4 May 1970.

The Rise of Individualism *versus* the Communal: A sacrifice and a mistake

One of the key struggles in Chrissie Hynde's autobiography is the emergence of her own identity. This is perhaps to be expected in any autobiographical writing.³⁹ The book is deliberately, and pointedly, written in the early stages in the plural: 'We' did, or took, or thought, this. Consistently it is the 'we' as an implacable entity when discussing her generation, seldom the 'we' of family dynamics. 'We [...] We [...] We wanted to Rock.' 'We watched [...] we all were', 'we saw', '*Everyone* under 30 in the US smoked a bong' 'we all did, we all listened' (26,38,37,45 [my italics],50). However, this plurality decreases pointedly, not as she blossoms into her own maturity and identity, but as specific events destroy her *communal* spirit. Beyond the ecological damage she points to, 'community' is deeply embedded in her dislike of cars as a key for of transport (and a facilitator of isolation). However, it is after the Kent State shootings that 'we' is replaced more pointedly by 'I' and the idea that time is running out for her and her alone: 'the clock on the wall was talking' (182).⁴⁰ Increasingly we read the 'I' as an individual in society who gives up on her generation as she comes of age but also as she loses hope for America and, arguably with Kent State killings, the government that turned on its own. 'I' is the isolated disenfranchised individual, rather than the self-aggrandising discovery of self as is outlined in most foundational Western male autobiography that usually define and celebrate the American Dream.

The Kent state shootings of May 4, 1970 was a shooting of unarmed college students by members of the Ohio National Guard at Kent State University (Ohio). It resulted in the death of four students. In the confusion it seems at least some of those shot were not even involved in the protest against the US bombing of Cambodia which had prompted the National Guards presence. As well as being present at the event as a protestor, Hynde also knew at least one of those shot. The event became an immediate scar on the US State and arguably its authority, by its perceived willingness to turn arms on its own. These events inspired popular music by The Beach Boys and Bruce Springsteen but most famously the hit single 'Ohio' by Neil Young (CSNY). However, more broadly it was picked up on in popular culture by artists as diverse as Allen Ginsberg to Stephen King. More recently for the fortieth anniversary it was described as having entered the American repertoire and psyche, indeed National Public radio is still calling it 'A Wound Not Quite Healed'.⁴¹ The foundations of Hynde's feelings of powerlessness may have been laid by the limiting of walking as a travel choice: 'when I started to realise that the days of walking were numbered, I subconsciously began to plan my getaway'(25). But it was the violent destruction of her community by state sponsored authorities as she saw it, that was the final nail. As the unity and the communal she feels for America begins to disintegrate she begins to talk in the singular.⁴²

Hynde also uses the communal to manipulate emotions: Hynde's life is a life she desperately wants to live in the communal, but like her Rock 'n' Roll, it is a pretence. Although the autobiography concludes in 1983, and despite her efforts to the contrary, *Reckless* informs us about Chrissie Hynde at the time of writing in the early twenty-first century, and perhaps the intervening four decades. Today she also now has the advantage that she lives the individual dream of financial security and gave up on the dream of the communal, at least at 'home', when she left America. Hynde is not afraid to talk in bland generalisations and sweeping statements, even patent untruths that are emotional rather than factual: '*everybody in America was taking drugs*', '*Everybody liked to get high*', 'I knew I was against Vietnam like *everybody* else' (109, 75, 94. My italics). Like the communal self-identity, such sweeping generalisations also end abruptly with the Kent State shooting – perhaps forcing her to realise that not *everybody* within her communal perspective thought the way she did, or she assumed they did, indeed far from it. Instead, she looked to London. The London which the young Chrissy was so in awe of. But a new town required a new persona - she only 'became' Chrissie' when Nick Kent christened her that in London. The added urgency that 'time was always running out' after the Kent State Shootings gave the listening public Chrissie Hynde of the Pretenders, but the factors contributing to it killed her

ideological aspirations (86). Instead, as she reflects in her writing she is (perhaps appropriately, by 2016) left *Alone* and *Reckless*: Hynde was now left 'Alone', this point was driven home by the documentary of that name (*Alone*), and the first Pretenders album to follow *Reckless*. Hynde epitomizes the frustration of a cross over generation which feels the 60s generation was misguided but she was too late to join the party.⁴³ Perhaps the party was the damaging aspect – too high on drugs to care about her own wellbeing and safety, as shown by her disengagement from her body and pain during her physical and sexual assault due to the number of drugs she had imbibed. Such 'recklessness' also makes true recollection neigh on impossible anyway. But despite this impediment Hynde constructs a scathing narrative.

The A TRAIN: A journey of destruction.

Hynde's main aim and objective is not directly to inform about the United States or the United Kingdom, but to entertain her readers with stories about her life on stage and the journey to becoming a popular entertainer. Although from the text we can glean some scathing observations, many of which revolve around the main modes of public transport - the train and buses. One of the most clichéd of American metaphors (and the one she chooses to explore without obvious necessity) is the train; A form of public transport and the very antithesis of the individualistic car, and yet a symbol with a deeply ingrained history in America. 'At one time America had the best train system in the world'.⁴⁴ Indeed both forms of transport maintain an insurmountable place in American folklore, but the former is now a relic of a past age and has become a trope:⁴⁵ In music and popular culture more generally the soul train, the runaway train and the train tracks, built by emigrants, are the arteries that built America, yet trains also further facilitated destruction of Native American communities and the natural environment and ecosystem. Within music alone there are most famously Casey Jones, Mystery Train and John Henry, all of which were used to create, amongst others, Johnny Cash's mythologizing. Many more artists from Jimmie Rodgers to Woody Guthrie, and more recently Bob Dylan as well as Seasick Steve have used the imagery and tracks as a downtrodden American badge of pride.⁴⁶ For the young protagonist the train was both a saviour and the USA's doom.

Hynde demonstrates a healthy critical eye to the fact that the rape of American landscape was caused and facilitated largely by trains in the late 19th century - but this in turn also enabled American expansion and the quality of life she enjoyed growing up. The old train through her town restored her faith in an old America, an old America 'out of a cowboy film' (67). Indeed, she goes as far as to romantically state

'The sound of the train whistle always had an underlying feeling of promise' (67).⁴⁷ This sound was not enough to keep her resident there beyond her teens, yet as a US citizen in England 'she'd never really get off the train and she'd never really leave home'.⁴⁸ This train, be it a metaphor or not, is now seen almost exclusively as a mode of transport only for the underdog – or at least the black poor (possibly one in the same). As Gibbens points, when discussing Bob Dylan, 'The train was a potent symbol of release, of possibility to the Black People of America [...] so potent a symbol that it can become anything'.⁴⁹ But perhaps the important point here – which Hynde tries to move beyond by pointedly not addressing colour or race in her text when the opportunity is there – is that it is not necessarily colour but opportunity and availability of cultural capital (3). Ultimately American culture does not teach or encourage people to move beyond the consumerist capitalist model, but to reinforce it through demand and desire – perpetuated by the advertisers and marketing men both in school and America's worship of a utopian unachievable American Dream. A dream Hynde identifies as a fraud (3).

It is in her celebration of the decidedly un-American public transport of the bus that marks her as different from most Americans. In *Reckless* Hynde's worship of the benefits of public transport are realised first on the back of a bus in Mexico: 'I was with people I had nothing in common with other than basic human elements like pain and hunger, but I felt, for the first time maybe, at home' (98). The bus, for the American public, represents a lack of choice resulting from a lack of capital – it is a mode of transport synonymous with the poor underclass, lacking in opportunity, and, literally, drive. Rather than being a travel method of choice, the perception of *Greyhound* is that of being the last way one would choose to travel and only taken because you didn't have the option of a car. In contrast to this generic perception, the geographical closeness to 'others' and their shared destination on the bus engenders a sense of contentment in Hynde that she believes the average American does not experience (in their cars). It is this sense of loss that recurs throughout the America that she is about to leave.

Despite feeling at home for the first time in Mexico she chooses the more 'advanced' site of London to set up home within the year. Not having to rely on lifts anymore in London she feels unprecedented freedom and makes note of this: 'I never got over the thrill of not having to wait for someone with a car to pick me up' (140). The bus became her escape route.⁵⁰ 'Buses were another shared commodity. They weren't just for down-and-outs' (171). Although it is not dwelt upon, this freedom is also found in the communal London of the squats – a well-known facet of what would become punk.⁵¹ Indeed, Hynde portrays the bus as a synecdoche of British liberalism with, as she sees

it, a less commercial structure to society and instead a generous social welfare system that facilitates a sense of travelling together to reach a shared destination. When she observes 'Public transport (What genius thought that up! When word got out in America, they'd all want it!)' (137). she knows, as her earlier reference to it in the US, that that would be a little too socialist for the United States. For example, when Hynde recalls her initial introduction to Britain, she comments: 'Government grants like in England...it would be like socialism' (37 and 139). These 'socialist' concessions in London were a revelation to her and left her 'mesmerised' but Hynde does gloss over the fact that post punk and at the time of writing (c.2013) these squats, government grants and reliable public transport are not as bountiful as they once were (175). This is ignored as Hynde places herself firmly in the present of writing, not highlighting what she might see as the modern missed opportunities.

GRANDMA as a Vehicle, for her message, and the Arts.

Hynde links the birth of creativity, and by extension, punk with the social welfare system through the symbol of the grandma. Increasingly in Hynde's portrayal of America as her autobiography progresses material goods take precedent over community and reverence for the past, epitomized by the symbol of the grandma, which in and of itself may sit as a critical observation upon the contrast between UK and US. With the increased popularity and availability of the double garage Hynde observes that: 'American households had no room for grandma, but the car's needs were paramount.' (23).⁵² The car stands as a vehicle of modernity and the American Dream in its mass manufacturing, its unconstrained speed and its subsequent desecration of the planet. Hynde has many references to hating the car, but also is quoted elsewhere as saying 'I wanted to get out of cars...I could see the way car culture was going' (23,137, 140). As her biographer Adam Sobsey puts it 'Car culture put all her aversions into one vehicle' or more appropriately 'the cardinal symbol of cultural evil'.⁵³ For her heroes, like Bob Dylan, the *road* was the all-important metaphor – the poor downtrodden heroic American dust bowl population of the 1950s and 1960s, which Dylan tried (in his early career) to epitomize and encapsulate, didn't own cars. This *journey* is something Hynde herself picks up on. But for her peers like Bruce Springsteen the car was *the* American way of life – aspirational, achievable but also romantic. Springsteen has built nearly an entire genre around movement in and by car ('Cadillac Ranch', 'Thunder Road', 'Pink Cadillac' and many more), whilst Dylan was a troubadour *walking* the roads (literally – 'how many roads must a man walk down' and 'I don't have no sports car, And I don't even care to have one, I can walk

anytime around the block').⁵⁴ Even when he is forced to get into a car he must abandon it out west and walks ('Tangled up in Blue'). It is Dylan who remains Hynde's hero as reiterated by the image of the records she holds on the dustjacket of *Reckless* (outside back cover of book) and more recently her 2021 album and tour, both focusing on Dylan. For Hynde the road needs to be addressed in one manner. She rallies her listener 'Ram it! Cram it! Grand Slam it! Break up the concrete'⁵⁵ This is in conjunction with the cover image of the album *Break Up The Concrete*, which features a pneumatic drill literally breaking up the man-made road. In 2008 the time for subtlety in the form of 'My City Was Gone' (1982) has given way to urgent violent action.

The displacement of the grandma in order to make room for the car not only epitomises the drive to consumerism and isolation, it also represents how America was failing in its protection of diversity and creativity. In direct contrast, Hynde acknowledges that, in London, the availability of space in terms of time and location is found in Mick Jones' grandma's flat which facilitates the early burst of creativity that her musical outlets experienced and the early furtive days of what would become 'punk'.⁵⁶

The figure of the grandma stands not only for the family bonds but also a reverence for the past and for communal activities and arts and crafts – such as knitting or later playing guitar, rather than mall rats simply consuming, ironically something the teenage Hynde self-defined as (133,156). Grandma recurs in the text as a symbol for the demise of America and the rise of punk. For Hynde, grandma's absence acts as a signal for misdirection and forgetting the past at our peril. Without Mick Jones' grandma, punk may never have happened – and it certainly wouldn't have happened in the form it did. As if to underline the message Hynde even names a chapter title 'Mick's Gran's' (239). To extrapolate further, punk, which, as Hynde herself acknowledges, famously evolved from the squats and social welfare of the UK (enabling people to not immediately take work to survive), would not have occurred in the US – as Social Welfare was too close to 'socialism' which American's feared (37,139). The importance of space and room, both in terms of time and environment for creativity to flourish – grandma's garage, devoid of the car, became Hynde's 'Room of Her Own'.⁵⁷ It is the metaphor of the grandma and how material goods take precedent over her which is a very real manifestation of the failings of American society in comparison to Britain (or at least London) of the same era. Because America cleared grandma out, art, the crafts, and creativity more generally, and arguably beneficial social movements, could not or would not happen in the same way, giving space to a potential matriarchy in a capitalist patriarchal society. In a less 'progress' focused society, the grandma is a potential saviour and facilitator of creativity. A

creativity which Hynde implies, but would never go as far as to say, changed the Western World for the better in its questioning of firmly held cultural assumptions. This outrage, for Hynde, is symbolised by society's disregard for the grandmother representing the 'suffocating isolation [which enveloped] America' (21). If her tirade against individualism needed pointing out, it is in this phrase very early in the book.

Margaret Thatcher: We have become a Grandmother.

On 3rd March 1989 Margaret Thatcher, in a personal capacity but as the (current) Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, stood on the steps of 10 Downing Street and declared 'We have become a grandmother'. She is also attributed with the albeit apocryphal comment that 'only losers take the bus' - a phrase synonymous with her which picked up on by the Irish political band The Fatima Mansions in that year. Thatcher had indeed become a grandma. But in using the 'royal we', associated with the British monarchy, she was deemed, in public opinion, to be climbing well above her station (continuing the British class hang ups and analogies!). 1980s Britain, epitomised by Thatcher's celebration of the individual and their 'ability' to better themselves – materially – runs in contrast to Hynde's celebration of the family. Ironically the individualism that Hynde seems to write against is the very individual success that she has achieved and is milking still with tours and album releases. That is because, as she has stated elsewhere, she has largely given up fighting through the medium of music and now focuses on targeted animal rights protests outside specific shops or events. Yet still flies regularly between the US and UK - a polluting act that is in itself becoming indefensible. In many ways Hynde is now the epitome of the self-made individual that Thatcher sought to encourage: She has succumbed to the emergent shameless self-interest put above that of the communal means that people are increasingly looking out for number one as a main priority, and this is reinforced and condoned by society. It is this apparently irreconcilable dichotomy between the individual and the communal that many struggle with.

Identity and the Amish, and the West's wrong direction

It is generally acknowledged that Hynde has an eye for the controversial⁵⁸ but, in choosing to make the hotly contested area of religion as another recurring theme in her autobiography she is consciously stoking those flames. Subtle references to religion and the religious *flood* are made through the opening of the book, even though by page 16 Hynde already 'loves horses more than God'.⁵⁹ The greatest manifestation

of religion for Chrissie Hynde is the distinctly American group the Amish, who also crop up later in the text unlike the other religions referenced. They are a religious group of traditionalist Christian churches with Swiss German Anabaptist origins. Hynde though feels she needs to offer no background and little context as to who they are, being a group subject to modern parody in the popular media for their perceived 'backwards' ways.⁶⁰ Amish culture is at odds with the majority of the population of America. But Hynde's all-important community is central to the Amish way of life. They are mocked largely because Amish group norms, including the rejection of individualism and labour-saving technologies, are at odds with capitalist consumerism, that is so central to the functioning of contemporary American society.

Modern innovations, the competitive and ecologically damaging cycle of invention, packaging, advertising and selling which in turn encourage status aspiration, are perceived by the Amish as leading to the potential for vanity and therefore protected against. Talking from an 'All-American, middle America' point of view early on Hynde states that whilst the majority went along with 'progress' unquestioningly 'we'd thought the Amish were the *odd ones out* *it was increasingly obvious that it was us*' (23, my italics). These same Amish appear later on in the text in reference to London: 'It looked like the Sixties had been hijacked by the Amish' (135), the very London she was falling in love with. Talking of London, she states 'I woke up every morning, a girl in love' (176). Hers was a love affair that had preceded meeting it (139) but developed into 'that stage of love where the object of desire has no faults' (139,141). A love the Amish had nurtured, facilitated, and enabled. A love for a more 'backward' way of life. For Hynde the Amish symbolised this back to basic way of life fostering, therefore, a respect for the landscape and community.⁶¹ 'With their steady, unchanging 'commitment to family and community' they act for her as a contrast to majority of Western society's focus on progress (7). But her thrill for and of the Amish doesn't end with lavishing praise. She also draws direct comparisons with the key heroes of the counterculture she lived through. She links the Amish attitudes with Hippies' pacifism (95). Such conscious repetition across the text is a direct attempt to tie the marginalised Amish with the popular and now revered Hippy generation. In making the link the reader is asked to redress the balance of popular culture and asked to rethink many previous assumptions.

Conclusion

The still (as of 2022) incumbent 'Minority leader' of the 'House of Representatives' Kevin McCarthy, referred to at the beginning of this essay, concluded his defence of

the 'Go Home' comment being about 'Socialism versus Freedom', by stating that 'This is unfortunate. We should get back to the *business* of America' (my italics). The observation about a nation's interests being run as a business is a term loaded with economic connotation but is symptomatic of the agenda and mentality of the American Dream hijacked by extremists and utopian ideologists on the right wing of American politics. The business analogy reiterates Karl Polanyi's assertion that we have changed our outlook, and some have amended their agenda accordingly. We in the West, or at least in America, are no longer a society where the market and economics are embedded in society but a society that has become disembedded and re-invested solely within the branch of economy. An express climate change denier and keen Obamacare objector, McCarthy's conviction, and dedication to defeating the evils of socialism seem myopic.⁶² Social welfare, a safety net, and the perils of over consumption, do not feature in his rhetoric. As Polanyi's title *The Great Transformation* avers, since roughly 1800, the world's people have been passing through an all-encompassing and unparalleled systematic transformation to the point where words with apparently commendable traits have become so loaded with connotation that they are dangerous. Hynde in her music and writing knows all too well the power of words and uses them wisely. Towards the end of the book Hynde observes that "Thanks for keeping it real' is the highest compliment that can be paid to a rock musician' (278). This statement is clearly meant as a send up when put into context of seeing the *con* trick of her hero Mitch Ryder early in her life. Having seen Mitch Ryder and the Detroit Wheels fabricate a contrived fight on stage for both their sets she was devoted to the idea of being a in band: 'I loved a good con' (33). The book is also strewn with humorous and ironic references to the manufactured nature of and false construct of Rock 'n' Roll. But that does not detract from Hynde's love of it. The packaging of music is also another consumer product, so the hypocrisy is apparent. And she does not attempt to reconcile this contradiction.

Elsewhere, upon the release of *Reckless*, she has declared 'My message has never changed. I'm only here to offer what I've always offered: my music and trying to encourage people to stop killing animals'.⁶³ The highest global meat consumption is of course based in the United States.⁶⁴ Chrissie Hynde's autobiography, like Sylvain Sylvain's of the New York Dolls some three years later, is another growing vocal, albeit oblique, criticism of the All-American Dream. Rock 'n' Roll (and most obviously one dynamic of it - punk) has become all too easily complicit in selling us the rebel, packaged neatly within the terms of capitalism and patriarchy. And whilst a mid-twentieth century economic historian and anthropologist (Polanyi) may seem a long way from a late twentieth and early twenty-first century pop star, such economic

thoughts are not far from the forefront of Hynde's mind in the early twenty first century, as the interviewer Simon Price found out: 'before you know it she's giving you an answer about the breakdown of commerce and a return to the barter system' – proving this kind of reading was not far from her mind.⁶⁵ Hynde, like her near contemporaries Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Costello, both of whom she has compared herself to repeatedly, not always complimentarily, are all going through a period of introspection.⁶⁶ Why does this matter? Because rather than the obvious and common trope of decline, in the sense that writers often see the past in romantic notions of a better world, for Hynde the unspoken premise is that the American Dream, in the form of capitalist consumerism that has since been sold far and wide across the globe, is systematically leading to a possible disparity and disconnect from the important things in life.

Autobiography, a form that is sometimes accused of promoting hegemonic norms and favouring patriarchal authority, narrates not only a life but the life of a community. Whilst this text is most certainly not a Roman-a-clef it does try and interrogate the modern, recognized formula of nuggets within the text as a series of related objects that trace a thread. In the case of Hynde this is laid out from the opening chapter with ecological damage and political hegemony and concentration of wealth (big pharma, tobacco, petrol, Hynde 23), destroying the people and the planet. People have become disjointed from family units. In doing this she is offering another voice in the growing consensus that human life is not a continuous direct linear journey of progress but a cyclical journey with series of corrections, and in her opinion a major correction is urgently needed. Her ultimate message is that at some point America took the wrong direction. Like her heroes, The Rolling Stones, she too has to conclude that, for her at least, London has 'no place for a street fighting man' and extraordinary resignation to the status quo she feels she cannot change.⁶⁷ At some point America beat the revolutionary out of her and left a hollow rebel. Exactly when that 'life blood leaving [her] lifeless body and flowing into the nearby gutter' I would date to 4 May 1970 and the Kent State University Massacre.⁶⁸

But this change in emphasis does not negate her very real desire for change: In doing this she precedes Heidi Estes call within her book on Mediaeval history and ecology: 'These are not just words. This is a call to action. Stop. Think. Reverse course'.⁶⁹ In this call-to-action Estes emphasises that 'the fight against racism, imperialism, colonialism, and neoliberalism is also an environmental struggle' – in her own story Hynde brings together all those strands of 'a life lived'. She sees humans as culpable in destroying nature. Hers is an eco-story from the outset. Hynde's writing is oblique when discussing a mainstream society she sees as unconcerned with how

'we' are 'self-destructing and taking down everything we came into contact with us' (28). She is mournfully observing how the country of the US is being sodomized by its blind worship of fiscal progress at the expense of environmental conservation: 'Just outside the city limits the whole country was bending over to take it up the backside. Green meadows...churned up and rolled away' (23, 127). For her this seems to be the post war generation and the explosion of availability of consumer goods and technology which enable expansion in the form of massive building campaigns be it roads, houses or shopping centres all of which receive short shrift in *Reckless*. In the age of self-involvement Hynde epitomizes the battle between self and community and how through her ideals of community early in her life she sought change, but when this change didn't just elude her but was violently shot down, the self, in the short term at least, won.⁷⁰ The autobiography may serve as a small attempt to change that thinking, but ultimately only vaguely looks back at an earlier teenage aspiration. In presenting her argument in this manner Hynde also plays with generic convention in her sly references to *pretending*, and that is not new to her. Keeping it real is certainly not her main priority – but her 'con' she would argue is smaller and more excusable than corporate conglomerates of America. She has lost the war but recording her battle for posterity. She has tried to stay largely true to herself as far as she can. Whether she has succeeded depends on the perspective of posterity.

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About the Author

James Masterson is a freelance music journalist and Radio DJ with a Masters in Anthropology and Archaeology (Oxon). After two decades interviewing musicians and reviewing popular music he now concentrates on a more anthropological bent. He is especially interested in the analysis of the presence of ecological awareness amongst musicians and recording artists from the 1970s onwards. This work is focusing on the increasing number of autobiographies of musicians of the era. In this field he is deeply indebted to his wife Dr Muireann Leech an autobiographical scholar. He is currently researching a paper on the relevance of Protestantism on Heavy Metal music. For the purposes of this paper he is classified as an independent scholar.

Notes

¹ A tribute specifically to now deceased member James Honeyman-Scott (see Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Induction speech 2005 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQI4qCv8nls>). To the public at large she is seen as a key constant - her consistent sound and the fact that she is the one continuous member in all Pretenders line ups also means that her back catalogue, including solo work (*Stockholm*), duet albums (with JP Frame) and band related releases are seen as little different. The Pretenders released their last album (*Alone* - as if to drive home the point she is alone the constant in the band) in 2016 after a 4-year hiatus but Chrissie Hynde was touring with the band in 2019 – time will tell if they release another album or if she releases albums in a solo capacity. [Slight update to this – Hate for Sales (11th studio album) was released in 2020.]

² Albertine 2014 p158

³ Marr 2016 p283

⁴ I am not conflating animal welfare with the environment – but in Hynde's eyes they are 2 aspects of the same ideology and interchangeable. But also see DJ Rush Limbaugh's classification of her as 'environmentalist and animal rights wacko' (or 'nut' depending on the source!)

⁵ Eg. Greene 2015 and Felsenthal 2015

⁶ Eg. Loder 1980. For the perils of music autobiographies being retelling of interviews see Stein and Butler 2018 p118

⁷ www.kunc.org

⁸ Sobsey 2017 p3

⁹ Light 2015

¹⁰ Made slightly sharper by the fact that Rickets is colloquially known as 'the English disease'

¹¹ Lydon 2014 p93

¹² Meihuizen 2016 p5

¹³ See, for example Gilmore, Leigh. *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and Testimony*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca NY. (2001) or Eakin, Paul John. *Fictions in Autobiography: Studies in the Art of Self-Invention*. Princeton University Press, Princeton: (1985). Or Smith, Sidonie and Julia Watson. *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives*. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, (2001). For authenticity in music see for example Barker & Taylor 'Faking It: The Quest for Authenticity in Popular Music'. (2007) or 'Dettmar and Richey 'Reading Rock and Roll: Authenticity, Appropriation, Aesthetics. (1999). Amongst many others.

¹⁴ Stein and Butler 2015 p116

¹⁵ McIntyre and Negra 2018 p363

¹⁶ There is of course the further complication that this is how she rationalizes it in her head – the first gig somehow 'didn't count'.

¹⁷ Even googling the most mundane 'Goldberg signs Chrissie Hynde' the top link is a video to 'Chrissie Hynde on why she doesn't eat meat' https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1CHBF_en-GBGB824GB824&ei=mtV-XL_EJ-HUgwfgraKYCw&q=goldberg+signs+chrissie+hynde&oq=goldberg+signs+chrissie+hynde&gs_l=psy-ab.3...25930.25930..26312...0.0.0.58.58.1.....0....1..gws-wiz.YnDHWOrSWDk

¹⁸ For Dylan's 'con' see Warmuth 2008

¹⁹ Gunn 1981 p102

²⁰ Labelled 'white fright' it plays into fears of being 'overrun' by non white Anglo-Saxon immigration. 'Owning the joint' is now no longer their guaranteed right.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/us/politics/trump-economic-anxiety.html>

²¹ This is her only autobiography to date and likely her only one but that is still open –the original commission from the publisher was for her story to the present day. She just felt she had nothing to add after c.1983 (In and of itself telling)

²² The same vitriolic hatred with which Karl Polanyi is said to have held the entire capitalist framework.

²³ However as highlighted in this analysis she also sends this up – when she worked in an early job designing heraldic coats of arms for families she made clear that 'Everybody has a family history...if they didn't, they did when we got through with them' Hynde p113

²⁴ She interchanges London and especially England and the UK with limited distinction between the countries or nations or pragmatic economic union (depending on how the reader classifies them). Nor does she feel the need to make distinction. It would stand to reason that she had no knowledge of the distinction as a teenager.

²⁵ The New York Dolls were a proto punk band formed in 1971 disbanded 1977 (but tapered out from 1974 onwards). A band who exploded onto the New York scene as something different and refreshing or threatening depending on your perspective. Perhaps more importantly inspired by the Dolls a budding underground movement began to evolve in New York (Blondie, Ramones many more) that mutated into London punk in 1976 before finding more general coverage globally.

It is no exaggeration to say they were everything to some music journalist (for example Nick Kent and Tony Parsons now both famous writers) and it is not an overstatement to say without them there would be no Smiths or Guns and Roses and probably no Talking Heads. Whilst the artistry of David Bowie, The Sex Pistols, The Rolling Stones, The Clash, The Damned and Hanoi Rocks. If it still existed in some cases, would be completely different. Critically their success was made and solidified in the U.K.

²⁶ Sobsey 2107 p143. See Danny Goldberg later. However the British Sun newspaper proprietorially and patronisingly called her 'one of our own'.

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/tvandshowbiz/2066231/chrissie-hynde-speaks-about-relationships-visiting-graveyards-and-her-new-music/>) Billboard magazine list them as a UK act as well [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Gw8EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA62&lpg=PA62&dq=%22pretenders%](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Gw8EAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA62&lpg=PA62&dq=%22pretenders%22)

[22+albums+sales+figures&source=bl&ots= MH8YGs--&sig=ACfU3U1yrrMVtUGu3LPZFHtOAm4lRye7WA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiS1ae95uvgAhUzpnEKHelCASg4ChDoATAMegQIABAB#v=onepage&q=%22pretenders%22%20albums%20sales%20figures&f=false](https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/chrissie-hynde-without-tears-101729/)

²⁷ Henke 1984 <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/chrissie-hynde-without-tears-101729/> plus Reynold and Press 'The Sex Revolts' 1995 p238

²⁸ Sobsey 2017 p13

²⁹ O'Brien 2007 221

³⁰ Daily hair shampoo US Hynde p24, unlike French p163 England p138. This, apparently flippant observation, made on a few occasions, is actually a critical point within the bigger picture. To use cosmetics is facilitated in part because the media tell you to, as she highlights, but more importantly the repeated and growing use of these products both damages the worlds finite resources but also pollutes the environment as well.

³¹ Punk is of course synonymous with London, but the ethnicity and identity of her Punk peers is a fascinating question not relevant here. Joe Strummer (born Turkey), Viv Albertine (born Australia), John Lydon – very keen to play / dwell on his Irish roots.

³² This is made more ironic by the lack of violence over Kent itself, where she merely has the text peter out (chillingly), as her friend's boyfriend 'was lying facedown, the blood leaving his lifeless body and flowing into the nearby gutter' p81

³³ The ethereal nature of it is as loosely non-committal is reminiscent of Bob Dylan's *Chronicles*. Again a more complex book than initially recognised. See for example (and most famously) Warmuth 2008.

³⁴ Hynde p8 Violence: 'like swathes of concrete severing streets: spliced like a worm, still wriggling' but also page 21 (suffocating cloak), page p116 (broken collar bone). The sexual assault (p111-123 – one of the longest chapters in the book) and p40 (Zorro's Blade) p127 (molten lava)

³⁵ Hynde has in the past been called a Keith Richards clone see Sobsey 2017 p60 – although Iggy Pop was actually her biggest hero or idol

³⁶ Watts, like Richards, is a collector of Civil War memorabilia, though the Civil War itself was famously violent. Possibly being a contender for being the first 'modern' war.

³⁷ These songs are both references to her childhood hometown, not London.

³⁸ For the 'new' in the Hynde house see Hynde p11 and p23 but also consumption – p136 no fat people in UK, or at least less abundant by implication. Instead of newness of all things Hynde, as a punk and ecologist, champions recycling which is perhaps why her autobiography is in part a rehashing stories that are already familiar to her fans – in the form and content she kicks against consumerism.

³⁹ See for example Finney 1985

⁴⁰ Talking is the correct quote from the text. This could either be a simple typo for ticking, or possibly even a humourous reference to the voracious drug taking she talks of in the book – in which case the clock could appear to be talking.

⁴¹ <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126453425&t=1560112448096>

⁴² She chooses not to mention President Nixon's re-election with a landslide majority but the state authorised actions and logic are implicit. This action was tacitly supported by the 'majority'.

⁴³ A sentiment echoed in popular music and culture more generally. The feeling that growing up in the 70s 'the Circus had left town' was how Lester Bangs famously described it Grossberg 'We Gotta Get Out of this Place' 1992 (p199). A similar sentiment expressed Greil Marcus – see Grossberg p417.

⁴⁴ Hynde p7. Hynde acknowledges at the same time in her wry nod to community 'probably because most of the men who built it were *chained* to other dedicated workers'. My italics. Her implication is community is sometimes forced upon people. One of those great *contradictions*, especially in an increasingly individualistic society.

⁴⁵ <https://blogs.loc.gov/folklife/2015/07/folklore-of-trains-in-usa-part-one/>

⁴⁶ *ibid*

⁴⁷ This romantic notion arguably features in her lyrics as well (incl 'Back on the Chain Gang' and 'My City Was Gone').

⁴⁸ Sobsey 2017 p11

⁴⁹ Gibbens 2001 p164

⁵⁰ Although Hynde does not dwell on, indeed pointedly avoids any references to feminism, focusing instead on individual choice, for her this rather than the pill is a real facilitator of feminism; allowing freedom of movement and taking away forms of dependence and isolation.

⁵¹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/the-birth-of-the-clash-956305.html>

⁵² This is a similar analogy to Raymond Carver's short story about the car "Are These Actual Miles?", the Grandmother is a comment on health of society.

⁵³ Sobsey 2017 p10, p102

⁵⁴ Lyric 'Blowin in the Wind' Bob Dylan 1963 and 'Bob Dylan Blues' 1963. In other songs and album titles – *Highway 61 Revisited* – may imply a car but as with much of Dylan these are seldom overtly stated – From a 'Buick 6' has no real reference to the car manufacturer and more about a Graveyard woman.

⁵⁵ *Breaking up the Concrete* 2008

⁵⁶ Mick Jones most famously went on to become a member of the Clash

⁵⁷ A nod to the Virginia Woolf story is 'A Room of One's Own'

⁵⁸ In the interests of raising awareness for the things she believes in – this can be animal rights or her own 'Brand Hynde' (Sobsey 'Chrissie Hynde: A Musical Biography' p157). She has always been good at manipulating media and garnering coverage through apparent controversy- be it the release of an album, her campaigning for Peta (Hynde was once arrested for destroying over \$1000 worth of leather clothing at a Gap store in New York) - <http://www.mtv.com/news/669920/chrissie-hynde-arrested-at-animal-rights-demonstration-in-gap-store/>) or the release of this book.

⁵⁹ Hynde p2 (Presbyterian), p5 (Quakers, Memmonites) p17 (Lutheran), p16 (Jesus Saves). God and horses p16 In a nice twist later when discussing London squats Hynde references the fact that Margaret Thatcher lives in Flood Street nearby. (See later paragraph)

⁶⁰ 'Weird' Al Yankovic song 'Amish Paradise', Hollywood movie King Pin and many others.

⁶¹ This neatly overlooks for simplicity the fact that the Amish communities may in fact be damaging the planet by polluting it disproportionately more than most. Assuming (And it seems reasonable to assume) that methane is in fact a major cause of global warming – the Amish may be more guilty than other sectors of society. (Approximately 12,000 of the 40,000 dairy farms in the United States are Amish-owned as of 2018. See: 'Licensed Dairy Farm Numbers Drop to Just Over 40,000'. Milk Business. February 21, 2018. And 'Amish dairy farmers at risk of losing their living and way of life as their buyer drops their milk'. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Retrieved 2018-12-21.

⁶² The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act 2010

⁶³ See SFEXAMINER <http://www.sfexaminer.com/writing-memoir-chrissie-hyndes-looking-forward/>

⁶⁴ www.fao.org/faostat/en/#data/AF (2013). Current Worldwide Annual Meat Consumption per capita, Livestock and Fish Primary Equivalent. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations).

⁶⁵ Price 2003

⁶⁶ 2 Autobiographies: Springsteen *Born to Run* 2016 and Costello *Unfaithful Music and Disappearing Ink* 2015

⁶⁷ Lyrics - Rolling Stones – 'Street Fighting Man' [*Beggars Banquet*]

⁶⁸ Hynde 81. A direct quote from her talking about the death of her friend's boyfriend killed at Kent State.

⁶⁹ Estes 2017 p192

⁷⁰ Age of self-involvement - <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/05/helen-dunmore-obituary>