"Can't Get No Satisfaction" - Culturally Subversive Elements in Selected Songs by the Rolling Stones

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1. Introduction

The Rolling Stones were founded in 1962 and are still active today, 55 years later. While some members left and new ones joined, vocalist Mick Jagger and guitarist Keith Richards have always been, and still remain, part of the band. As a band, they have not only enjoyed considerable economic success over the years, but also influenced people all over the world with their music, becoming icons of popular culture in the process.

In this thesis I will examine the lyrics of three Rolling Stones songs - "Let It Bleed", "Sympathy for the Devil", and "Can't get no Satisfaction" respectively. The analysis will specifically be centered on the culturally subversive elements within the lyrics to determine their meaning, the nature of their subversiveness, and how they appealed to the Stones' audience at the time. Additionally, I will investigate what the public reaction to these culturally subversive lyrics was. To accomplish this, I will make use of the concept of moral panic as outlined by Stanley Cohen in *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* and draw some comparisons to other examples of public backlash caused by music, musicians, and their audience.

For the purpose of this thesis the early years of their band's career are especially relevant. The generation growing up in the mid 1960s, which constituted a significant part of the audience of the Rolling Stones, was the first to grow up after the second World War. As such, the values and youth culture of this new generation centered more on an intrinsic desire for freedom, change, and self-actualization, and because of that often conflicted with the values of their parents which were often influenced by the social and economic necessities of living during wartime.

So far, there has been little academic research on lyrics by the Rolling Stones, especially when compared to the number of articles on the Beatles, whose earlier success strongly influenced popular culture of the early to mid 1960s. Therefore, a great amount of potential for new findings exists in closer examinations of the Rolling Stones, their lyrics, and their influence on popular culture.
2. Music, Controversy, and The Rolling Stones

In this section I will analyze some of the controversy rock-music, its inspirations, and some of the genres building on it have caused over the years, in order to put the subversive elements found in the songs of The Rolling Stones into perspective. Specifically I will be looking at two distinct time periods - the time before and after 1969 - with the Altamont Free Concert on December 6th, 1969, separating the two periods due to its significance in the history of The Rolling Stones and for rock music in general.

2.1. Subverting Culture

In order to understand how something is, or can be, culturally subversive, a definition of what is meant by cultural subversiveness is needed. The *OED Second Edition* defines the act of subverting something as "To disturb, (the mind, soul); to overturn, overthrow (a condition or order of things, a principle, law etc.)." ("subvert" 1989: 88 6.) This is strongly related to the concept of deviance which is defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* as "[...] non-normative behavior that, if detected, can be subject to informal or formal sanctions." ("deviance" 2006: 135.) This definition includes criminal acts as a form of deviance, and while some aspects of cultural subversion and specifically 1960s counterculture, such as drug use and public protests, often come in conflict with the law, there are also numerous other themes, especially in music, that aim to subvert established social norms. The motive of subversion includes an intention to change mainstream culture. However, not all members of a subculture and not all fans of music that contains culturally subversive themes, have a desire to enact that change. They might just want to enjoy the music while being among peers. Moreover, some instances of mainstream cultures, foremost among them media outlets, might draw public attention to individual culturally subversive aspects which they deem to be controversial and thereby also affect these less overtly subversive audiences.
2.2. Music and Controversy before 1969

2.2.1. Jazz

Especially during its beginnings in the 1950s rock and roll was massively inspired by jazz. In turn Jazz, which experienced a sharp rise in popularity during the 1920s, has its roots in Afro-American music styles (cf. Russell 2011: 15), which were heavily influenced by the experiences of imported slaves in the US. Due to this, jazz - especially in the southern states of the USA - saw itself faced with multiple, partially racist-motivated, attacks.

One example of such attacks can be observed in an article in *The New Orleans Times-Picayune*, written in 1918, as quoted by Moynihan and Søderlind, and concerning worries about the effects jazz has on its listeners: "On certain natures sound loud and meaningless has an exciting, almost an intoxicating effect, like crude colors and strong perfumes, the sight of flesh or the sadic pleasure in blood. To such as these the jass [sic] music is a delight." (1998: 2.)

While being kept intentionally vague concerning the people who might be negatively affected by listening to jazz - referring to them as "certain natures" - this statement assumes that psychologically unhinged people with poor impulse control especially enjoy jazz, with the unspoken consequence, implied by the reference to "intoxicating effects" and senses overwhelmed by stimuli, that it might motivate them to commit violent acts. The excerpt also invokes the racist stereotype of Afro-American people being brutes, more animalistic in nature and having a tendency towards aggressive behavior. According to Sullivan, similar accusations connecting rock music with African paganism and cannibalism would be made by Christian fundamentalists in the late 1960s (cf. 2011: 318).

These concerns about jazz were not limited to a fear of its psychological effects but also to possible physical effects. As Russell states, jazz was often described using disease-related vocabulary such as "epidemic", "virus", "infection" etc. (cf. 2011:14) and most notably to epileptic attacks due to the dance moves associated with it (cf. 2011:18-19). Furthermore jazz
was also suspected of being a possible cause for neurasthenia, due to its alleged lack of regular rhythm (cf. 2011: 20).

2.2.2. **Mods, Rockers and Moral Panics**

An important concept associated with the instances of controversy examined in this section is that of moral panics. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* defines a moral panic as "A disproportionate public reaction in response to actions deviating from established social and cultural norms;" and notes further studies of the concept which "highlight the indispensable role of mass media, and the (British tabloid) press in particular, in creating moral panics." (cf. "moral panic" 2006: 400-401.) Given that culturally subversive music and the listeners who feel best represented by it, by definition deviate from the social norm, controversy is created at the point where mainstream society responds to this subversion with moral panic.

Cohen provides a case study of a moral panic based on several confrontations between members of two subcultures, the mods - short for modernists - and the rockers, which took place during Easter 1964 in the eastern English town Clacton, and which resulted in some minor injuries sustained by some of the mods and rockers, multiple accounts of property damage and vandalism, as well as 97 arrests made by the local police force (cf. 2002: 23-24). The media coverage of this and similar confrontations between the two groups was characterized by highly exaggerated headlines, such as describing three youths breaking one store window as a riot (cf. Cohen 2002: 25-27). This medial exaggeration reached its peak in 1966 - at a time when confrontations between the two groups became increasingly rare - when newspapers resorted to reporting the lack of violence at an event where mods and rockers were present in the small print beneath a headline such as "Violence" suggesting the opposite of what actually happened (cf. Cohen 2002: 36). The demographics of the two subcultures would also be subject to considerably inaccurate portrayal. For example, many news articles portrayed the mods and rockers as being organized in gangs, wealthy enough to own Scooters, classless, and causing considerable economic damage, while they actually consisted of loose groups, of
mostly unskilled, working class males at the lower end of the income-scale, who caused only marginal amounts of property damage (cf. Cohen 2002: 29-34).

As Cohen states, rockers tended to base their way of dressing on the biker-style featuring "black leather [and] metal studs." (cf. 2002: 210.) They were also seen to be rowdier and unkempt as compared to the mods, while also possessing a romantic attachment to their working class backgrounds. Their name was attributed to their preference for early rock music. The mods, on the other hand, usually dressed in suits reflecting their desire for social advancement. They were also more concerned about the impression the public had of their subculture (cf. 2002: 210-211). In his analysis of the meaning of music for the mods, Nik Cohn quoted in Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* states that "[The Rolling Stones] stirred up a whole new mood of teen arrogance’ and they were ‘turning into the voice of hooliganism’" (cf. 2002: 214).

While the media mostly reported on the confrontations between mods and rockers, the defining features of their subcultures, such as the music they listened to, would also become topics of debate, and were often assumed to be representative of most teenagers of the time. Cohen, for example, cites an editorial from the *Glasgow Sunday Mail*, published on May 24th, 1964: "[...] we've been leaning over backwards to accommodate the teenagers. Accepting meekly on the radio and television it is THEIR music which monopolizes the air. That in our shops it is THEIR fads which will dictate our dress styles [...] Smiled indulgently as they’ve wrecked our cinemas during their rock and roll films" (2002:59). These instances of generalization serve to expand the perceived number of young people engaging in subversive behaviour (cf. Cohen 2002: 59-60). This, according to Cohen, further serves to expand the elements symbolizing a subculture to teenagers as a group, thereby further increasing the perceived threat to societal values once these symbols have been rendered "unambiguously unfavorable" through exaggerated media reports (cf. 2002: 37). Once said features of a subculture have become sufficiently unfavorable in the eyes of the public, demands for measures of social control arise, as for example to remove symbols of a subculture from the eyes of the public, confiscating scooters or banning certain articles of clothing and hair lengths from being worn in public (cf. Cohen 2002: 90-95).
Considering these characteristics of moral panics, the news articles based on unfounded preconceptions surrounding jazz and its listeners in the US can also be seen as an early form of moral panic. Similarly, the concept of moral panic can also be attributed to the following examples of controversy in music.

2.2.3. "More popular than Jesus"

On March 4th 1966 John Lennon, singer and songwriter of The Beatles, gave an interview to reporters of the London Evening Standard in which he talked about how he believes that Christianity would become outmoded and cease to exist at some point in the future and on how the Beatles are "more popular than Jesus now." (cf. Sullivan 1987: 313.) While the public reception of the interview was calm in the UK, this quote in particular would begin to cause controversy starting on July 29th of the same year when it was reprinted in an issue of adolescent-focused American magazine Datebook (cf. Sullivan 1987: 313).

This quote was regarded as blasphemy by many religious groups who encouraged boycotts of Beatles records. While those calls for boycotts originated primarily in the southern states of the US, similar demands were also raised in Spain and South Africa. In response multiple radio stations refused to play songs by the Beatles. Priests of some smaller churches threatened members of their congregation with excommunication if they were to listen to any music by the Beatles, and in some cases radio stations and religious groups arranged public record burnings (cf. Sullivan 1987: 313-314).

The controversy caused by Lennon's quote also features several aspects of a moral panic, as outlined by Cohen. Compared to the calm reception of his quote in the UK, there was a strong reaction by religious Americans exaggerating and distorting its meaning to be that he considers the Beatles to be better than Jesus, and possibly a replacement for religion in general. As Sullivan states, some preachers would go so far as to declare the Beatles to be enemies of the American way of life (cf. 2011: 314) similarly exaggerating the weight of the quote. While
some parishioners being threatened with excommunication can be seen as an instance of
generalization, making people who listen to the Beatles appear just as 'guilty' as Lennon, the
public record burnings can be seen as attempted measures of social control of the problem (cf.

2.3. The Altamont Free Concert

The Altamont Free Concert was, as the name implies, a Rolling Stones concert held for free at
Altamont, California on December 6th, 1969. It is one of the most controversial points in the
history of the Rolling Stones due to the death of concertgoer Meredith Hunter at the hands of
security personnel about halfway through the concert.

The events surrounding the killing unfolded as follows: The security personnel at the Altamont
Free Concert was provided by the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, which had and has a history
of criminal activity and which, according to Jagger, was paid "$500 in beer" for their services
(cf. Bangs et al. rollingstone.com). Over the course of the concert the Hells Angels security
suppressed multiple fights in the crowd, one of which involved Meredith Hunter, using
violence. Later on, allegedly during the song "Sympathy for the Devil", but actually, as stated
by Jagger, during "Under my Thumb", Hunter approached a group of Hells Angels guarding a
stage entrance while brandishing a revolver. Armed with a knife, Alan Passaro - one of the
Hells Angels - intercepted Hunter and stabbed him multiple times, resulting in his death (cf.
Bangs et al., rollingstone.com). Besides Hunter, three other deaths occurred at the concert: one
accidental drowning, and two in fatal car accidents. Alan Passaro was later found not-guilty,
with the judge ruling that the stabbing occurred in self-defense (cf. The Altamont Trial.
rollingstone.com). The autopsy report of Hunter also found that he had consumed
methampetamines, a drug known for psychedelic effects, prior to the incident that cost his life,
and likely was still under their influence as he approached the stage with his revolver (cf.
Harrington eastbaytimes.com).
The incident is also referenced by American singer Don McLean in the fourth verse of his song "American Pie" on his album American Pie, in which he makes allusions to multiple bad events, ranging in significance from personal to international.

Oh, and as I watched him on the stage  
My hands were clenched in fists of rage  
No angel born in Hell  
Could break that Satan's spell

And as the flames climbed high into the night  
To light the sacrificial rite  
I saw Satan laughing with delight  
The day the music died  
(McLean 1971: MP3 File).

The above passage shows how much symbolic potential for controversy lay within Hunter's death at the Altamont Free Concert. The "fists of rage" can be interpreted to refer to the chaotic conditions at the concert - such as fights between drunken/drugged audience members and the Hells Angels security forces. Following this line of interpretation, the Hells Angels and their poor performance at de-escalating fights between riled-up audience members are referenced by the next two lines. The central theme of Satan performing on stage likely refers to the Rolling Stones allegedly playing "Sympathy for the Devil", the lyrics of which reveal the speaker to be the devil, during Hunter's death. This is rounded off when the killing of Hunter, the climax of the violence at the concert, symbolized by the flames climbing higher, is compared to a satanic ritual sacrifice in lines 5-7. The verse ends with the more direct statement that the music died that day, which can be interpreted as referring to the Altamont Free Concert, which is often seen as the end of the late 1960s 'Peace and Love' era (cf. Moynihan and Söderlind 1998: 3).

Despite the death of Meredith Hunter at the concert being its controversial high-point and becoming notorious as the end of an era, no notable moral panic concerning it did occur. In the introduction to his study, Cohen talks about how there are three elements that are needed to create a successful moral panic: First of all, "a suitable enemy" - preferably unable to defend themselves against media accusations - secondly, "a suitable victim" - who, in essence, has to
be relatable enough for the average consumer to empathize with - and thirdly, a general belief that the subject of the moral panic is a problem for society as a whole (cf. 2002: XII).

Applying these three conditions to Hunter's death shows the problems in basing a moral panic on it. In terms of a suitable enemy, two come to mind, either drugs, due to Hunter having consumed meth before his death, or the Hells Angels. Drugs had already been a subject of public concern before the concert - in fact becoming a subject of the "war on drugs" in later years - and while the Rolling Stones have numerous drug references in many of their songs, Hunter's case would have been just one of many reports about drug abuse, quickly overshadowed by others. In a similar manner, the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club already had a reputation for consisting of outlaws when the concert took place, theoretically offering ample material for the media to pick up on. However, while the Hells Angels security personnel was criticized for the violent crowd-management tactics they employed at the concert, the killing of Hunter was ruled as self defense, thus disarming the controversial potential of the most violent happening at the concert.

Similar to the matter of an enemy, Hunter's status as suitable victim can also be disputed. As a young Afro-American man Hunter is already difficult to relate to from the perspective of many white Americans in the 1960s. The ability to relate to Hunter is further reduced by his drug abuse, which also ties into the next point. Being stabbed in self-defense after pointing a firearm at security personnel because one got into a fight with them earlier, while also being under the influence of drugs, does not only make Hunter drastically less relatable to but also calls into question his status as victim.

Both of the previous two elements strongly influence the third one concerning the general impression newsreaders have of whether an incident is just one part of a greater issue threatening mainstream society. Since the blame for Hunter's death cannot be squarely placed on one thing or actor, it is difficult for media and its consumers to determine at how much of a risk society is placed by such events. Therefore, constructing a successful moral panic based on Hunter's death was too difficult to accomplish.
2.4. Music and Controversy after 1969

With the beginning of the 1970s the focus of music-related controversies and moral panics shifted from rock music to the newly emerging metal-genre, with a special focus on black metal and its thematic forerunners. Moynihan and Søderlind mention the American band Coven as one example of such an early group associated with this genre. Their first album, released in 1969, has the memorable title *Witchcraft Destroys Minds & Reaps Souls* and which heavily featured satanic imagery (cf. 1998: 6-7). Another example is the British band Black Sabbath, also founded in 1969, who also included many references to occult and satanic themes in their works, and went on to become a major influence for the metal-genre as a whole (cf. Moynihan and Søderlind 1998: 5-6). Also of note in the development of these occult elements in metal music, according to Moynihan and Søderlind, was a LP featuring a recording of a satanic and a black mass [sic], released in 1968 by Anton LaVey, who had founded the Church of Satanism two years prior and also released a manifesto entitled *The Satanic Bible* in 1969 (cf. 1998: 8-10).

A special type of moral panic affecting these bands and genres was concerned with alleged satanic messages which are recorded backwards and hidden in popular songs in order to either hint at secrets of the band or, in some versions, to subliminally influence listeners. Especially in the USA, the leaders of religious fellowships furthered these moral panics by becoming vocal opponents of rock and metal music, on multiple occasions inspiring groups of concerned individuals to publicly destroy music records (cf. Vokey and Read 1985: 1231-1232). These concerns likely have their roots in rumors that arose towards the end of the 1960s according to which Beatles member Paul McCartney had died years ago and had subsequently been replaced with a body double, which in turn caused the Beatles, out of grief, to hide messages about this incident in their songs (cf. Sullivan 1987: 324). As Vokey and Read concluded in their own study of the phenomenon, backwards recorded messages have no effect on the people listening to them (cf. 1985: 1237).
2.5. Summary

The examples mentioned in this section have several things in common. Many of the moral panics mentioned took place in the US, or were particularly strong there, and many of them were to some extent religious in nature. Taking a look at the "more popular than Jesus" controversy as an example, record burnings and radio stations refusing to play music by the Beatles were mostly an American phenomenon. A possible reason for this can be seen in differences in the hierarchical organization of American and European churches. In the US, the priests of individual parishes enjoy a considerable amount of autonomy concerning their decisions. In Europe on the other hand, the Roman Catholic and the Anglican Church have a stricter hierarchy, with a head of church who has a great amount of influence on church policies, and various means of calling to order priests deviating from official policy. Thus, while the Vatican objected in writing to Lenon's quote, the Anglican bishop of Montreal - as well as some of the more liberal Protestant American priests - agreed with it, partly due to their opinion that materialist values had become more important to Americans than religion (cf. Sullivan 1987:313). Another point of interest, as noted by Covey, concerning the far stronger reactions in the US is that the Puritan roots of many American Protestant churches - especially those strongly influenced by Calvinism - were traditionally opposed to most kinds of music for religious reasons (cf. 1951: 388).

Rothman quotes a record promoter as saying: "The kids with the clean songs are having a hard time coming up with hit songs." (cf. 2015.) As we will see later in the chapters about lyrical analysis, Mick Jagger and Keith Richards had the same idea in mind when they wrote songs for the Rolling Stones. Their lyrics frequently feature themes like sex and drugs, and they also do not shy away from criticising mainstream culture on topics such as the taboo associated with female menstruation (cf. Rothman. 2015). They certainly expected that such explicit lyrics would cause some controversy which, in turn, would generate publicity for their band. Indeed, American TV shows reacted to their lyrics by censoring some parts of their songs. There are
two notable examples of this happening: The first one is how the sex-related line "And I'm tryin' to make some girl" in their 1965 performance of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" on the show Shindig! was censored by distorting the audio of the recording (RollStoneYP 2011: 3:00). The second example is from 1967 when Jagger was told to replace the line "Let's Spend The Night Together" of their eponymous song with "let's spend some time together", if the Rolling Stones wanted to perform on The Ed Sullivan Show (cf. Richin 2015). It is likely that these are not the only examples of Rolling Stones' songs being censored. The censorship probably caused a rise in records sales for the Stones, thanks to young people who were curious about the uncensored lyrics. Thus, the Rolling Stones succeeded to some degree in causing controversy and attracting the attention of moral guardians.

The most important common denominator of the moral panics mentioned in this section is that The Rolling Stones were notably excluded from highly public religious controversy similar to the "more popular than Jesus" quote made by Lennon, despite multiple allusions and direct references to the devil, satanism and blasphemy, in their works. For example, their 1967 album Their Satanic Majesties Request and their 1968 song "Sympathy for the Devil" already have said references in their titles.

A possible reason for why the Rolling Stone did not become a more prominent subject of multiple controversies is that they were overshadowed by the Beatles in terms of early success, and by other bands in terms of controversial material. Beatles records were already gaining popularity in the US in late 1963/early 1964, a point in time when the Rolling Stones' popularity was mostly limited to the UK (cf. George-Warren et al., rollingstone.com). While the Rolling Stones soon managed to expand their popularity into the US later in 1964, the Beatles - thanks to their earlier successes - were already on the way to becoming the musical icon of the 1960s (cf. Roberts 2010: 3). Despite attempts by the Rolling Stones to distinguish themselves from the Beatles in terms of their band image, and their later credit for ending the cultural era that the Beatles started, the Stones were not able to replace them as the hub of popular culture. However, this outstanding popularity also placed the Beatles in the focus of groups and individuals opposed to rock music. For example, Roberts mentions the American
Federation of Musicians (AFM) trying to prevent the Beatles from receiving visas to the US in 1964 by claiming that their rock music to be of no cultural value (cf. 2010: 2-4). Another example, given by Sullivan, is that of American Rev. Noebel, who focused much of his writings critical of rock music on the Beatles. His writings were not only based on religious reasoning but also claiming them to be part of a communist psychological-warfare project intended to brainwash young Americans into starting a revolution of the working class (cf. 2011: 314-315). Sullivan goes on to note the irony in the Beatles instead of the Rolling Stones becoming the focus of Noebel's writings, but explains this with the Beatles being the first rock music icon of popular culture matching Elvis Presley in scale of popularity - who due to his self-professed Christian faith and service in the army was not a suitable enemy for Christian fundamentalists. He also points out that Lennon's famous "more popular than Jesus" quote provided the initial momentum for religious criticism of rock (cf. 2011: 316-317). Picking up on this momentum and the public support of his cause following Lennon's quote, Noebel, among others, continued to focus on the Beatles in his writings well past the 1960s (cf. Sullivan 2011: 318). The preoccupation of such groups with the Beatles can be seen as another reason for the Rolling Stones being spared from becoming the subject of moral panics despite trying to outdo the Beatles in terms of controversial musical content.

Cohen states that while new popular media, such as culturally subversive music, quickly becomes a target for moral guardians, it also tends to be quickly forgotten once a new expression of popular culture moves into the mainstream media's focus (cf. 2002: XIX-XX). A historical example of this, as Roberts points out, is the AFM opposing ragtime - a musical genre closely related to jazz - as lowbrow culture during the early 20th century, while from 1950 onwards they mainly promoted jazz, was attacking the newly emerged rock genre as being a form of lowbrow culture and citing "dirty lyrics" as one main point of contention (cf. 2010: 8-9). Following this line of argument, it is possible to assume that at the time the Rolling Stones became known for ending the 'Peace and Love' era of the 1960s, the interest of the media and moral guardians shifted from rock lyrics focusing on sex, drugs and violence to the more occult themes starting to appear in musical works of the metal genre, overlooking the Rolling Stones in the process. This is not to say that the media completely ignored the Rolling
Stones from 1969 onward - after all they are still active and successful today - but the potential for widespread controversy mirroring that of the moral panic surrounding Lennon's quote had moved on from rock by the time the Stones emerged from the Beatles' shadows.

To summarize, while the Rolling Stones managed to cause enough controversy to have parts of their TV-performances censored, they were never the center of a large moral panic. The closest they got to becoming the subject of a moral panic was at the Altamont Free Concert. While it was not necessarily their intention, the Stones successfully subverted the 'Peace and Love' counter-culture by ending its era at Altamont. Don McLean's song "American Pie" draws connections between the Rolling Stone's performance at Altamont and satanic imagery, so a certain sentiment that could have been the base for a moral panic did exist. This shows us that explicit lyrics are not guaranteed to cause widespread controversy or a moral panic. As with most things in life, random acts of coincidence no one could have accounted for - such as Meredith Hunter taking drugs and having brought his revolver to the concert, or Datebook reprinting a four-month old interview - can have considerable influence on whether or not an event becomes the starting point of a moral panic. At the same time, having famous 'competitors', such as the Beatles, can also lower the amount of media attention one's own subversive lyrics and actions receive.
3. Analysis of "Let It Bleed"

"Let It Bleed" is a song by the Rolling Stones, released in 1969 on their eponymous album *Let It Bleed*. Despite notable similarities of the title and lyrics of "Let It Bleed" to the Beatles song "Let it Be", which might prompt the conclusion that the former is a parody of the later, "Let It Bleed" was released several months before "Let it Be" and therefore cannot contain references to it. However, due to its strong focus puts on themes such as drug abuse, violence, and sex, "Let It Bleed" strongly subverts the 'Peace and Love' culture of the late 1960s, and in doing so serves as an example of how the 'bad-boy' image cultivated by the Rolling Stones differs from the Beatles' image.

All lyrics quoted in this section are transcribed from: "Let It Bleed" on the album *Let It Bleed*.

3.1. Chorus and First Verse

Well, we all need someone we can lean on A [Chorus 1]
And if you want it, you can lean on me B
Yeah, we all need someone we can lean on A
And if you want it, you can lean on me B

She said, my breasts, they will always be open A [Verse 1]
Baby, you can rest your weary head right on me B
And there will always be a space in my parking lot C
When you need a little coke and sympathy B

The first verse features the ballad stanza (ABCB) while the second verse is written in cross-rhyme (ABAB) with end rhymes being used in both cases. Notable here is that the last line of the first verse, and therefore the first line that completes a rhyme in that verse, mentions "coke", which is known to have a stimulating effect, temporarily suppressing the need for sleep or food. While it might just be coincidence that the rhyme scheme stabilizes from that line on, this might also be interpreted as an allusion to the effects of cocaine allowing tired songwriters to keep working without a decrease in the quality of their rhymes.
Most iterations of the chorus follow the same ABAB rhyme scheme visible in the first chorus. This only changes after the second verse when the chorus rhyme scheme is ABCC ending on a slant rhyme. The change occurs after the climax of the story relayed by the speaker and further serves to emphasize the unexpected turn of events contained in it.

The song starts out with its chorus, which, read on its own, is a quite simple offer of physical and emotional support, possibly to the listener. It is not until the first verse of the song that the sexual and drug references start. From the information provided in the chorus and first verse it can be assumed that the speaker is one person, in the case of the chorus possibly also offering comfort to the women mentioned in the first verse. The first two lines of the first verse imply that the woman the speaker is talking about offers him to rest his head on her breasts which has a sexual component to it. The third line has some ambiguity to it. One possible explanation is that the woman owns a parking lot with multiple spaces in it. However, there is also the possibility that the woman is a prostitute offering her services in said parking lot. This is supported by the casual sexual connotations present in the verse. Furthermore the woman might be prostituting herself in order to afford drugs, which can be interpreted based on her offer of cocaine and her poor economic situation, implied by prostituting herself at a parking lot instead of at an apartment. This interpretation foregrounds the dark, 'mature' themes of the song and is further reinforced in the rest of the song.

Another interpretation of the third line is that it was inspired by Jagger's girlfriend at the time, Marianne Faithful, who used to refer to her sexual organs as her parking lot. The use of the term parking lot is a metaphor for sexual promiscuity since parking lots often have many different visitors. Additionally, having sexual relations with multiple partners at the same time might also be implied because parking lots usually have multiple spaces. Such a strong reference to female promiscuity aims to subvert the conservative attitudes towards sexuality which were common in mainstream culture at the time.

The themes of casual sexual relationships and the possible interpretation of the woman being a prostitute subvert some values of mainstream culture. This subversion affects religious values
the strongest, because Christianity prohibits pre-marital sexual relations, regarding them as a deadly sin. However, even the more secular members of mainstream culture often opposed young people having casual sex, due to it possibly resulting in unintended pregnancies which can cause economic problems and social stigma. Cohen notes, that 1960s British tabloids often described young female members of the mod subculture as being especially promiscuous (2002: 56). Lastly, prostitution has a long history of being associated with crime, sinners, social outcasts, disease and poverty.

This first verse of the song also shows why it is often compared to "Let it Be". In "Let it Be" the lyrics revolve around how the speaker is comforted by "Mother Mary" - presumably the Mary that in Christianity is best known for being the mother of Jesus - when they worry about worldly problems. While it has been established that "Let It Bleed" was released several months ahead of "Let it Be" there is the possibility that the Rolling Stones knew about the contents of "Let it Be" and intentionally included some similarities to it in "Let It Bleed". A popular motif in Christian art, which exists in the form of sculptures and paintings, is that of the Pietà - or piety in English - Mary holding the tortured dead body of Jesus. There are multiple variations of this motif, often Mary supports the limp body of Jesus in her arms, but there are also sculptures showing Jesus' head leaning on Mary's chest while she looks on in sorrow, as is the case with the sculpture (Partridge 1906) in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York.

There are several parallels between the iconography of the Pietà and the lyrics of "Let It Bleed" which already become apparent in the first chorus and verse. Similar to the woman in the first verse offering her physical and emotional support to the speaker, a central theme in the Pietà is the virgin Mary holding the corpse of her son who has been sentenced and killed by worldly powers. This portrayal of motherly love that outlasts death also provides catharsis to the viewer of the sculpture. This relates to the offer of sympathy at the end of the first verse. The mention of breasts also alludes to Mary's role as mother, and how infants are comforted by mothers via breastfeeding during the first months of their life. However, the female breasts are also a very sexualized body part which is where the unique style of the Rolling Stones can be observed. The comfort the women offers to the speaker is mostly via sex and drugs, two very bodily
pleasures. In the case of cocaine, the comfort it provides is extremely addictive and has dangerous self-destructive potential, in short, it is the very opposite of piety. This points to a very cynical approach the Rolling Stones take to the concept of comfort as found in the Pietà. They subvert the traditional religious ideal of being rewarded for enduring pain by contrasting it with people engaging in bodily excesses in order to forget their problems.

3.2. Chorus and Second Verse

Yeah we all need someone we can dream on  
And if you want it baby, you can dream on me  
Yeah, we all need someone we can cream on  
Yeah and if you want to, you can cream on me  
I was dreaming of a steel guitar engagement  
When you drunk my health in scented jasmine tea  
But you knifed me in my dirty filthy basement  
With that jaded, faded, junky nurse oh what pleasant company, ha

The chorus changes in its second iteration, increasing the focus on emotional and physical support. The first two lines change the "lean on [me]" from the first chorus to "dream on [me]". This can be interpreted as an invitation to a logical progression from the first chorus, with one person first leaning on the other in support and then falling asleep on them, dreaming. There also is the implication of a stronger emotional bond forged by this physical closeness, with the person falling asleep possibly dreaming of the other one. The next two lines in the first section however add further sexual dimensions to the song with the speaker telling another person to "cream on" them, which is slang for ejaculation.

This second chorus changes and adds to several assumptions established in the first chorus and verse. The song might have two different speakers, based on the first verse starting with "She said [...]" and the speaker in the second chorus telling the another person to ejaculate on them which would require said other person to be male. Additionally, the two speakers are likely referring to each other in the verses and chorus. Therefore, it can be assumed that the speaker of the first verse - hereafter called speaker A - has a male voice, while the speaker of the first
and second chorus - hereafter called speaker B - has a female voice. The offer speaker B makes in the chorus to have speaker A ejaculate on her also supports the interpretation that speaker B might be a prostitute and that the offer to let the other person rest his head on her breasts eventually resulted in sexual intercourse. It could be argued that the speaker in the chorus might be a man, possibly a transsexual, engaging in homosexual prostitution to finance a drug habit but considering the rest of the lyrics - especially the references to female anatomy - this seems unlikely. Despite this interpretation being unlikely after a closer reading of the lyrics, some casual listeners might still get the impression that the speaker is a male prostitute, partially because Mick Jagger has a male voice. In that case the lyrics would appear culturally subversive since, at the time "Let It Bleed" was released, homosexuality had only recently been decriminalized in England and Wales (cf. Sexual Offenses Act 1967). Homosexuals have a long history of being harshly oppressed by religious and secular authorities. Alluding to homosexuality in a song subverts the strict taboo mainstream culture placed on it.

The second verse features some measure of ambiguity. Having previously established that there are two speakers with differently gendered voices, there are two reasons that make it seem more likely that, in this verse, it is the male-voiced speaker A who speaks the first verse and is addressing speaker B from the chorus. Firstly, drinking "scented jasmine tea" would, from the perspective of traditional gender roles, fit a female better than a male. Secondly, the third line in which the speaker complains about being stabbed in his basement, would make sense assuming he was speaker A from the first verse picking up speaker B, a prostitute - possibly one he already knows and feels some sort of emotional connection to - and taking her to his home.

The same ambiguity is also present in the first two lines of the verse. While the "steel guitar engagement" in the first line can be understood to mean that speaker A, was hoping for employment as a musician, he did so while speaker B was drinking "[speaker A's] health in scented jasmine tea". As Gao et al. state, jasmine tea is a common drink in Asia and differs from green tea only in minor steps during production, not having any psychoactive effects that would fit the drug-theme of the song (cf. 2009: 2004-2005). There are also no sources
indicating whether "jasmine tea" might be drug-addict slang for another kind of drug. One possible interpretation of the "drunk my health" part that remains is based on the emotional connection that is implied between speaker A and speaker B. A picked up B at a parking lot, drove her to his home, and then - as a sign of courtesy, out of loneliness, or both - offered to drink some tea with her. B agreed but, without A's knowledge, added some kind of drug with a sedative effect to his cup which took effect while he was talking to her about his employment prospects as a musician. The specific mention of "scented jasmine tea", to an extent, could be explained with its effect of neutralizing the taste/smell of a possible sedative mixed into it. This interpretation still conflicts with speaker A choosing the distinct formulation of her having drunk his health. However, it can be argued that A sees the tea drinking as a shared activity. Because of his emotional attachment to B, speaker A did not notice the effects of the drug in his tea, attributing it to being captivated by B's beauty instead. These two lines can be interpreted as subverting traditional gender roles. Traditionally, women are not considered to be prone to using violence. Men have usually been the gender from which soldiers are recruited, the gender which occasionally gets in drunken - or sober - fights, and they are considered to be more likely to commit violent crimes for their own gain. While drugging someone's tea is not an overt way of harming them, it still conflicts with the traditionally peaceful preconception of women. This subversive theme is continued in the following lines of the verse.

The third line is the most straightforward line of the verse. Speaker A's musical aspirations were ended abruptly when speaker B stabbed him in his basement. The stabbing is an act which betrays the trust that A placed into B beforehand, which would fit the interpretation of her putting something in his tea. The basement often is the most secluded and isolated room of a house, which makes it a good place to stab someone without having to worry about witnesses. Speaker A does not mention whether the knife attack was severe or just superficial, but judging from the drug theme of the song, the motivation of speaker B probably was either in stealing his money or his personal stash of drugs. This has the function of emphasizing the lengths addicts will go to in order to to satisfy their cravings, no matter what crime or betrayal may be necessary to do so. In this line the subversion of traditional gender roles increases in intensity. The violence speaker B commits is now a lot more overt, since she uses a weapon to injure the
incapacitated speaker A, which leads to her probably being covered in blood in the process. Furthermore, this subverts the traditional ideal of a woman being a 'giver of life' by having speaker B become a 'bringer of death'.

Ambiguity returns to the verse in its fourth line which states that the stabbing happened while a "jaded, faded, junky nurse" was also present. One possible interpretation of this line is that said nurse is an accomplice, possibly also a drug addict and prostitute, of speaker B who helped her carry speaker A into his basement and/or to stab him. In this interpretation the "jaded, faded, junky nurse" is more of a derogatory slur used by A due to having been stabbed, than a very meaningful character description. Note further that in that case A does not direct any such slurs at B, who actually stabbed him, possibly hinting at some emotional connection between the two. An alternative interpretation of the line could be based on assuming that the connection of the nurse being less with the stabbing and more with the location. Following this interpretation, the nurse could be a drug-addicted acquaintance of speaker A who passed out in the basement after taking drugs, or, if "nurse" is taken literally, a drug dealing nurse who uses her position to steal and resell controlled substances from a hospital. The later explanation still leaves open the question of why she was present in the basement. One possible answer to this is that speaker A, alone or together with speaker B, killed her in order to steal the drugs she was carrying on her person. Due to the nurse not being mentioned at any later point, the second interpretation seems more probable. The subversion of traditional gender roles continues, this time concerning women's role as caretakers. Speaker B is said to leave Speaker A, who might be bleeding out, in the basement, thereby showing that she does not care about whether he lives or dies. Assuming that the nurse is still alive, this subversion applies to her too. Maybe even more so since, as a nurse, she is supposed to care for the injured. The point of this ongoing subversion of gender roles in the second verse is to display how drug use can change people. If we presume that the nurse is not an actual nurse but a drug addict, it especially emphasizes how drug users can be become so desensitized that they not even react to witnessing violent acts like stabbings. If we follow the second interpretation, this subversion shows how even people with a presumably stable life, such as nurses, might engage in criminal activities in order to gain access to drugs for personal use, or to sell them for personal profit.
3.3. Chorus and Fade-Out

Though, we all need someone we can feed on [Chorus]
Yeah and if you want it, you can feed on me, hey
Take my arm, take my leg
Oh baby don't you take my head

Yeah, we all need someone we can bleed on [Chorus]
Yeah but if you want it, well you can bleed on me
Yeah, we all need someone we can bleed on
Yeah yeah and if you want it baby why don't ya
You can bleed on me
All over, hoo

Get it on rider x 3
You can bleed all over me, yeah
Get it on rider, x 2
You can cream all over, you can come all over me, ah
Get it on rider ey
Let it out rider x 2
You can come all over me

The song ends with three different variations of the chorus. The meaning of the first variation changes depending on which speaker it is attributed to. If it is spoken by speaker A it would imply that despite being betrayed by a person he trusted he is willing to forgive them and continue to support them. This is signified by him telling speaker B to "feed" on him which at first might invoke the association of a predator - possibly even a vampire - feeding on his prey. However, assuming that A is the speaker of the chorus, offering someone else to feed on himself, calls up the image of willingly being a sacrifice for the other persons' benefit. The next two lines could then be interpreted to mean that he goes so far as to tell her that his feelings for her will still persist even if she stabs him again - arm and leg used as examples of body parts that are often not considered vital - as long as she does not kill him, denoted by telling her not to "take [his] head". On the other hand, if we assume that B is the speaker of this version of the chorus, this might represent a reconciliatory effort by her, possibly because regrets her earlier attack on speaker A. This would demonstrate how their unhealthy feelings of attachment are mutual. Furthermore, this cycle of violence and forgiveness also resembles the vicious cycle of drug use and guilt experienced by drug addicts who are trying to quit taking drugs. Considering
that speaker A was stabbed in the previous verse, he is in need of being helped up. Thus, the chorus is more likely to be spoken by speaker B. The lines about taking B's arm or leg, could then be seen to refer to either being helped up by her - a reconciliatory gesture - or to A pulling her down as a way to even the score between them.

In the second chorus of this section the focus shifts to one speaker offering the other to bleed on them. If one considers the second verse of the song, there is only one speaker that could be bleeding, namely speaker A as a result of being stabbed by speaker B. Consequently, speaker B offering A to bleed on her further reinforces that both have some sort of emotional connection with each other. This version of the chorus also contrasts with the one that occurs before the second verse, in which B offered A to ejaculate on her. Ejaculation is most commonly associated with pleasure while bleeding is often accompanied by pain. Together, they further emphasize the extremes within the relationship of the two characters. Pleasure and pain, intimacy and violence, love and hate are all diametrically opposed feelings featured in the song. Similar to blood and ejaculate, they function to strongly subvert the usual concept of a healthy relationship. According to Unterberger, the main theme of "Let It Bleed" is emotional dependency (cf. allmusic.com). While emotional dependency certainly is a strong theme of the song, as exemplified by the relationship between its two characters, it is not necessarily the song's main theme.

Another interpretation of the "bleed on me" and "cream on me" lines is that they are referring to menstrual blood. This is culturally subversive in multiple ways. First of all, numerous religions consider blood - and by extension menstruating women - to be impure or unclean. Secondly, bleeding is associated with injuries and diseases, and often considered repulsive, especially if the blood belongs to other people. As a result the strong social taboo concerning menstruation and discussions concerning it still consists today to some extent. The graphic menstrual imagery invoked by the lyrics in combination with the allusions to sexual intercourse strongly subvert this taboo.
Duality of feelings, however, is not the only thing referenced by the second chorus of this section. Thinking back to the artistic motif of the Pietà discussed in the interpretation of the first verse further parallels emerge. This begins with the offer in the chorus to "feed on" the speaker. If we assume that the chorus is spoken by speaker A, this can be interpreted to be similar to Jesus during the last supper, who told his disciples, including Judas, that the food and wine represent his body and blood, making the supper a gesture of community, pre-emptive forgiveness and redemption. If the same line is considered to be spoken by speaker B, however, it evokes images of motherhood related to infants feeding on breast milk for the first few months of their lives. This connects this version of the chorus to the first verse of the song - "my breasts, they will always be open" and to Mary as a mother figure, as well as subverting the traditional image of Mary through the sexual overtones of the lyrics. In a similar manner to how the recently crucified Jesus is leaning, and therefore also bleeding, on Mary, speaker A is presumably supported by and bleeding on B. Further similarities are that A is bleeding from at least one stab wound which resulted from being betrayed by a person he trusted. However, depending on the interpretation chosen, he still has a forgiving attitude towards them. So, while the mental image created by the chorus has a strong resemblance to the Pietà - if seen separately from the second verse, it also mirrors themes of care and sorrow - the main difference between the historical motif and the Rolling Stones lyrics is that speaker B was also the person who stabbed A in the first place. This strongly contrasts the theme of trust, and faith, in a better future, present in the Pietà, and replaces it with a more pessimistic, even realistic, outlook on the darker aspects of human nature, such as addiction, violence and greed. The likelihood - once again - of a restored relationship between the two speakers of the song sooner or later leading to a similarly violent, maybe even lethal, outcome because of the characters' drug addiction, further reinforces this pessimistic view by implying a cycle of reconciliation and misery as opposed to the religious view of enduring temporary pain order to receive eternal salvation.

The last chorus is simultaneously the end of the song and differs the most from the other instances. It begins by continuing the "bleeding" theme of the previous chorus but then switches to "cream on me" again before becoming even more in direct in terms of the language
used and the amount of ejaculation by switching to "come all over me". All of this is interspersed with the more direct imperatives "Get it on/Let it out rider". Most of the lines of the chorus reinforce the duality of pleasure and pain similar to how the second chorus in this section did. The frequent shouts between the chorus lines, however, can be seen to suggest that speaker B is currently engaged in intercourse with another person who - because of the repeated encouragements to ejaculate on B - is probably speaker A. This might mean that A, following the offer from the first chorus of this section, forgave B for stabbing him and that they have reconciled their relationship. Following this interpretation, B calling A 'rider' can also be explained by referring back to the first verse when speaker A says that B told him that there will always be a space in her parking lot, implying that A often parks there. While the majority of people drive cars, motorcycles have a long tradition of being a symbol for rebellion against mainstream culture (cf. Maxwell 1998: 107) which fits the image of the Rolling Stones. Motorcycles are also ridden, therefore 'rider' would fit as a description of the male character assuming he uses a motorcycle to get to the woman's parking lot. An alternate interpretation is possible if we follow the assumption that "parking lot" - as a tribute to Jagger's girlfriend - is actually a metaphor for speaker B's sexual organs. Since speaker A also 'parks' there, 'rider' might allude to sexual intercourse and function as an euphemism for a less clean version of 'lover'. These sexual themes subvert conservative attitudes towards sex commonly found in mainstream culture, by focusing on the ecstatic nature, and pleasure of sex. Overall, the last chorus connects with the beginning of the song by contrasting with the "lean on me" from the starting chorus and connecting with the subversive sexual themes of the first verse. It also reinforces the cyclical nature, and emotional effects of drug addiction that occur in the second verse.
3.4. Summary

With the strong themes of emotional dependency and the duality of the feelings between the two speakers of "Let It Bleed", the Rolling Stones capture the problems many of their young listeners were facing. As Cohen states, uncertainty and deviance from the traditional norms - in some cases accompanied by drug use - were central features of teenage culture in 1960s Britain (cf. 2002: 204). Under these circumstances and considering the rise of alternative life- and relationship-styles during the 'Peace and Love' era of the 60s, it can be assumed that many teenagers were struggling with their feelings concerning platonic, romantic and sexual relationships, their break-ups and other interpersonal connections they formed, and therefore were able to connect with the Stones' lyrics.

The theme of violence featured in the song can also be interpreted to have its roots in real-life events that many people observed and worried about. Mick Jagger states that the album Let It Bleed was created during a time filled with reports about the violence of the Vietnam War (cf. rollingstone.com). The influence this had on his creative process can also be seen in "Let It Bleed", for example in its bleak setting, which places a strong focus on violence and drugs. Similarly, the main act of violence in the song - speaker A being stabbed - occurs in a basement, which generates an atmosphere of claustrophobia and loneliness similar to that of the jungles of Vietnam. Furthermore, the violence of the song in combination with how it subverts the traditional preconception that women are not violent, shows how dangerous drug use can be. Especially members of mainstream culture might think that drug addiction and the violence to which it leads are only risks for other people and that it could not happen to them. The example of the nurse in the second verse and the unhealthy relationships between the speakers serve to remind the listener that even people from a respectable background might become addicted to drugs because of emotional reasons.

Lastly, the subversion of traditional norms, as exemplified by the comparison of the lyrics and their mental imagery with the themes of the Pietà. Speaker A is - by speaker B's offer of sympathy in the first verse - implied to visit her due to either his unhealthy longing for her or
other worldly sorrows. However, with him visiting speaker B not only for her sympathy but also for the drugs and sex she offers, the traditional values of the *Pietà* are subverted and criticized for being too far removed from reality. This criticism is emphasized by each chorus featuring the words "We all need someone [...]" implying that everyone could one day find themselves in a situation similar to that of the song and that most people already prefer to drown their sorrows in drugs, sex and unhealthy relationships instead of praying and trusting that things will get better. Seeing how speaker B ends up taking a similar position as Mary in the *Pietà* and can be interpreted to be a prostitute, the Stones might also possibly further subvert the *Pietà* by referencing the biblical character Mary Magdalene, who in the Gospel is a repentant prostitute. (cf. John 8:1-11 *English Standard Version*) Considering the events of the song this interpretation of speaker B could be seen as further criticism leveled against the advice to "go on and sin more" by portraying the extremes to which prostitution-funded drug addiction goes. This would also show that it is unrealistic to expect people to simply stop engaging in their 'sinful' behavior. "Let It Bleed" can therefore be seen to have a culturally subversive message calling traditional, culturally-dominant values into question and pointing out how they do not apply to reality.
4. Analysis of "Sympathy for the Devil"

"Sympathy for the Devil" by The Rolling Stones was originally released on their album *Beggar's Banquet*, side A, track one. The song was written by Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, and produced by Jimmy Miller. Jagger also performed the lead vocals, while Richards performed the guitar parts (electric and bass). The lyrics of the song are written from the perspective of the devil. This viewpoint was quite controversial given the time of publication of the song. The controversy, together with the song being played at the 1969 Altamont Free Concert, shortly before gun-wielding audience member Meredith Hunter was killed by Hell's Angels security personnel, caused some people and media-outlets to classify the Rolling Stones as evil devil worshippers (cf. Keith Richards: The Rolling Stone Interview). Despite of that, the song still sold very well and garnered critical acclaim, being placed on position 32 of the Rolling Stone magazine's list of 'The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time' (cf. Rolling Stone).

All lyrics quoted in this section are transcribed from: "Sympathy for the Devil" on *Beggar's Banquet (Remastered)*.

4.1. First Verse

Please allow me to introduce myself A
I'm a man of wealth and taste B (>B)
I've been around for a long, long years C
Stole many a man's soul and faith B (<B)

And I was 'round when Jesus Christ D
Had his moment of doubt and pain E (>F)
Made damn sure that Pilate F
Washed his hands and sealed his fate F

Uncharacteristically for a rock song, "Sympathy for the Devil" has a samba rhythm, starting out with maracas, drums and background vocals, which gives the impression of a jungle background. This generates a dual image of pleasant south-sea culture but also of the unknown,

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1 < and > indicate analeptic (<) and proleptic (>) assonances.
sublime environment of the jungle. The piano sets in softly together with the start of the lyrics, adding an additional melodic element to them. The first verse starts using the ballad rhyme scheme ABCB before continuing with DEFF. The second and fourth lines are connected via an assonance, which makes the introductory paragraph appear closer to natural conversation. The amount of assonances increases in the second paragraph of the verse and emphasize the F rhyme. This draws attention to the story of Jesus' crucifixion, because the words the assonances apply to - "pain", "Pilate" and "fate" - are important parts in it.

The first paragraph of the first verse consists of a self-introduction of the speaker. From the choice of words in the first line it can be assumed that the speaker is a polite person. Furthermore, in the following lines the speaker states that he is wealthy, tasteful and old. This brings the image of an older gentleman to mind. The last line, however, already hints at the ominous character of the speaker which serves to lead into the next paragraph of the verse. Simultaneously, the sophisticated image projected by the speaker is an aspect members of the 1960s mod subculture can associate with due to their, according to Hebdige, desire for a refined appearance, partly expressed by wearing formal clothing such as suits and dress shoes (cf. 1979: 52). However, mods also identified strongly with their working class background (cf. Hebdige 1979: 2-53), therefore a rich, older man also would have been associated with members of previous generations, who were often more conservative and opposed to youth culture. This generates tension between the speaker and the contemporary audience of the song making the listeners curious about what is to follow.

The second paragraph of the verse emphasizes the age of the speaker by having him talk about how he was present, and involved in, the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The tendency of the speaker to influence people towards taking 'evil' actions is also shown with the example of Pilate who sentenced Christ to death by crucifixion. The reason this exact event from the New Testament was chosen over, for example, Satan's attempt to tempt Christ with promises of power, or the betrayal of Christ by Judas is most likely the connection to The Master and Margarita, in which Pilate sentencing Jesus to death is also an element of the story (cf. Bulgakov 1967: 12).
4.2. Second Verse

I stuck around St. Petersburg
When I saw it was a time for a change
Killed the czar and his ministers
Anastasia screamed in vain
I rode a tank
Held a general's rank
When the blitzkrieg raged
And the bodies stank

As the second verse starts the piano takes a more prominent place in the foreground, denoting that the introductory first verse is over. With the chorus ending on a rhyme, this verse starting with ABCB provides some measure of continuance. Of most interest in this verse is the second paragraph's rhyme scheme, DDED. The second paragraph deals with the second World War and the masculine, perfect end rhymes featured in the paragraph might be interpreted to emulate the sound of a tank's main gun firing to further support the story told in the lyrics. The assonances in this verse emphasize the words "change", "vain" and "raged". This can be interpreted to highlight the agenda of the speaker (change), the helplessness of his victims (vain), and the destructive power of his actions (raged). Furthermore, similar to the assonances in the first verse, these assonances occur between word containing the [ei] sound. The assonances in the first verse - pain, Pilate and fate - are also about things the speaker caused or affected. Thus, the first and second verse are connected by various results of the speaker's actions, further emphasizing his power.

The second verse also shows signs of inspiration by The Master and Margarita, with the first paragraph featuring another Russian city at the beginning of the 19th century and therefore being close to the timeframe the novel's main story takes place in. In the first paragraph the speaker talks about his involvement in the Russian revolutions of 1917, the resulting death of the imperial Russian family and, later on, the formation of the Soviet Union. The paragraph
ends with a reference to the popular myth that Anastasia, one of the czar's daughters, evaded the execution.

While this might seem like just one of many historical massacres, deeper meaning can be found in the choice of the Russian revolution through closer analysis. By taking part in the killing of the imperial Russian family the speaker does not only upset the social order in the Russian Empire but also defies God. Many Christian monarchs across Europe based their right to rule on the concept of the divine right of kings, which - according to the *OED Second Edition* - was "a right conferred by or based on the ordinance or appointment of God. [...] that claimed according to the doctrine that (legitimate) kings derive their power from God alone, unlimited by any rights on the part of their subjects." ("divine" 1989: 893 2.) Therefore, violent revolution resulting in regicide also subverts an order that is believed to have been put in place by God. While the UK is a parliamentary monarchy in which the power of the monarch is limited by law, the majority of citizens still look favorably upon the royal family. The lyrics referencing a revolution that started with the killing of the reigning dynasty can therefore be seen as subverting the concept of tradition-based, continued loyalty to the monarch and his/her family. Additionally, the choice of the death of the imperial Russian family during the Bolshevik revolution for this verse serves to emphasize the negative stereotype of the evil, 'godless communists' - which due to the cold war was very common at the time the song was published (cf. Aiello 2005) - by connecting them directly to the devil. This allusion to communist clichés of the 1960s can be interpreted to add additional controversy to the song, possibly provoking conservative moral guardians in the process.

The second paragraph of the verse, however, moves further forward in time to the WWII. This can be derived from the mention of the German military doctrine of 'Blitzkrieg', which was based on the rapid deployment of tanks in eastern Europe. While "stinking bodies" can occur on any battlefield, the specific context of the WWII and the speaker's tendency to be involved in especially tragic murders makes it likely that the last line is alluding to the holocaust as well.
The lines of the second paragraph work together in portraying the speaker as someone who actively takes part in spreading chaos by participating in tank battles, but also as someone who schemes in the background, giving orders to others so that they should enact large-scale atrocities on his behalf. The verse therefore continues the theme of the speaker being a manipulator, as was established in the previous verse when the speaker stated that he ensured that Pilate condemned Jesus to death. The explicit mention of the speaker holding the rank of a general can be interpreted as him giving the soldiers serving under him an easy way to ignore their conscience. Similar to how Pilate used the ritual washing of his hand to cast feelings of guilt from himself, the soldiers are given the option to claim they were 'just following orders' received from a higher authority. The portrayal of the speaker riding a tank is at first glance somewhat out of line with his image as a manipulator; however, the dehumanized design of a tank causes the violence exerted by it to be seen less as the work of one person than that of an inhuman beast, also closely fitting numerous depictions of the devil. Furthermore, seeing how a crew of several people is often needed to operate a tank, there is still some opportunity for the speaker to function primarily as a manipulator by taking the role of the commander of a battalion of tanks.

However, while the second paragraph's main function is to further elaborate the character of the speaker by emphasizing his role as a manipulator who revels in causing atrocities, the connections drawn to WWII fulfill an especially provocative role. Many members of the older generation that made up 1960s mainstream culture lived through, or grew up, during the war. Some might have fought in the war, encountering German forces on the battlefield. Still, even those who remained at home possibly felt the impact of the war since the UK was the target of multiple German bombing raids and late-war missile attacks. Thus, connecting the speaker with the German war-machine puts him in an antagonistic position to the mainstream culture and reinforces the other subversive statements made by him.
### 4.3. Third Verse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Initial Rhyme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I watched with glee</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While your kings and queens</td>
<td>A (&lt;A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fought for ten decades</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For the gods they made</td>
<td>B (&lt;B)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I shouted out, &quot;Who killed the Kennedys?&quot;</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When after all it was you and me</td>
<td>C (&lt;C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let me please introduce myself</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm a man of wealth and taste</td>
<td>E (&gt;E)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And I laid traps for troubadours</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who get killed before they reached Bombay</td>
<td>E (&lt;E)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this verse onwards the memorable background vocals singing "woo, woo" start. Howie (cf. www.reasonotorock.com) describes them as adding a spectral element to the music. They also add to the previously mentioned jungle atmosphere by giving the impression of unseen voices chanting from somewhere close by. Furthermore the "woo, woo" can also be interpreted as the interrogative "who?" which can lead to the more eerie interpretation of a choir of disembodied souls emphasizing the infernal nature of the speaker and asking who he might be.

This verse features several assonances. In the first two lines they emphasize the joy the speaker feels by watching monarchs fight, which highlights how he manipulates people in power to make the common population suffer. The assonance between "decades" and "made" draws attention to the length of the wars and the artificial reasons they were fought for. This might allude to many lives having been wasted in these wars for little to no reason. Another assonance occurs between "kings", "Kennedys" and "me", which forms a connection between absolutist monarchs and present-day politicians, showing that neither are safe from the speaker's actions. Upon examination of the verse's rhyme scheme - AABBC - the A, B and C rhymes noticeably stands out. The three rhyming 'couplets' of assonances in the first six lines, together with the intensifying music and added background vocals signal that the song is on the way to approaching its musical and thematic climax, which follows in the fourth verse. The second paragraph, on the other hand, can be interpreted as to support the speaker's moving from recounting his tales back to addressing the listener directly.
In the first paragraph of the third verse the speaker is referencing not one, but two different occasions on which he meddled with human affairs, which are very wide apart from each other time-wise. This increased frequency follows the increase in tempo of the song which has been noted above. The verse begins with the speaker expressing his happiness about watching humanity fight wars. Since the specific timeframe of ten decades equals 100 years, it is possible that the speaker refers to the Hundred Years War. According to the *OED Second Edition* the Hundred Years War was "the intermittent war between England and France from 1337 to 1453, arising out of claims of the English Kings to the French Crown." ("Hundred Years War" 1989: 491 c.) Because of the length of the war, multiple generations fought in it. Therefore, some of the soldiers lived their whole lives without ever knowing what peace is, rendering this an especially tragic war. This time there is no hint that the speaker might have caused the fighting in the first place. That might be a reference to how humans can commit evil acts of their own free will. The second line, in which the speaker claims that royalty fought for gods they created themselves, also supports the idea that he was not directly involved with them. Additionally, since some of these rulers likely fought in the name of Christianity, such as in the crusades, for example, the line can also be seen as supporting an atheistic view of no god being real, or as criticism of organized religion. This can be considered very subversive of 1960s mainstream culture which, especially in the US, highly valued religion. Another possibly interpretation of the line is that the gods are not actual deities but rather abstract ideals, such as wealth, power and dynastic prestige, that are worshipped and fought for. In this case, the lyrics would subvert consumerism and materialistic ideals which also started to become more widespread during the 1960s. Alternatively, it is a possibility that the speaker has set the events leading to the different wars fought by monarchs into motion a long time ago and now just watches the outcome.

The third and the fourth line of the first paragraph refer to the assassinations of US-President John F. Kennedy and his brother senator Robert F. Kennedy. While their respective assassins were caught shortly after committing the crime, John F. Kennedy's assassination, due to the higher profile of the victim, is still frequently the subject of conspiracy theories. These theories claim that various organizations, ranging from the mafia over the CIA to Soviet operatives,
were the driving force behind his death (cf. Wrone 1972: 25). While the assassination of his brother Robert Kennedy is less well-known, there still are some conspiracy theories about a second shooter being involved in the killing. So by asking who killed the Kennedys the speaker actively helped the spread of these conspiracy theories, furthering cynicism and distrust towards the government and thereby interfering with the social order.

The statement in the following fourth line is ambiguous in that it is unclear whom exactly the speaker is referring to by 'you'. The first choice that presents itself is that the listener is the addressee. However, the overwhelming majority of listeners most likely will not feel that they were somehow involved in the deaths of the Kennedys. Therefore, the 'you' should rather be interpreted as referring to the average human who, under the right circumstances, can commit crimes with a lasting impact on society.

Considering the high popularity of president John F. Kennedy at the time of his assassination and the general distrust towards the communist Soviets at the time, the contents of this verse can be compared to the Bolshevik revolution mentioned in the second verse. In both cases the cultural subversiveness of the lyrics is derived from the disturbance of social order caused by the killing of heads of state. The third verse, however, implies that such abrupt change can also happen in the Western world and that anyone is capable of inciting it. This further subverts mainstream culture's emphasis on established traditions such as patriotic loyalty towards the heads of state.

At the beginning of the second paragraph the introductory lines of the first verse are repeated, which reminds the listener of the first verse. This, together with the chorus being repeated twice after the verse, connects the information about the speaker from the beginning with what the listener learned about him during the last verses. Furthermore, the song's central questions about the identity of the speaker is emphasized, which serves to generate additional curiosity before the speaker tells the listener what his name is.
This is followed by two of the more obscure lines of the songs concerning the killing of troubadours on their way to Bombay. According to the *OED Second Edition* troubadours, originally were composers and performers during the middle ages (cf. "Troubadour" 1989: 973). However as Beaumont (cf. 2012: 17) states, in "Sympathy for the Devil", 'troubadours' most likely refers to members of the hippie-subculture who took the land route to Bombay and were killed during the course of robberies, drug deals gone bad and other acts of crime. Following this interpretation, the lines can be seen as ironizing towards the 'peace and love' counterculture. There certainly is some irony in being killed by criminals for their own materialistic gain while on a spiritual voyage, and presumably trusting that all the locals will be kind and peaceful. This trust, based on ideological naiveté, is subverted by contrasting it with the reality that criminals and violently selfish people exist in all cultures. There is additional, situative irony to this subversion of counterculture since, as already mentioned, "Sympathy for the Devil" was played at the Altamont free concert which, as stated by Moynihan and Söderlind, came to be considered to mark the end of the 'peace and love' -based subculture (cf. 1998: 3).

It is also possible to interpret these two lines as forming a subtle connection to the first verse. The choice of the antiquated "troubadours" for the travelers can be seen as point to the superhuman age of the speaker, who "has been around for a long, long year", and killing them before they reach their destination, which they presumably have been happily looking forward to for quite some time, can be interpreted as effectively "stealing their soul and faith."

This reference not only stands out due to its obscurity but also because, compared to the other atrocities the speaker has claimed to have been involved in, it is a relatively minor act of evil which has little effect on the world at large and is more of a personal tragedy for the family and friends of the troubadours. A possible interpretation of the intention behind this reference is to make the actions of the speaker seem more personal to the listener. The wars, revolutions and assassinations mentioned earlier in the song are things for which the average listener - or at least the average American, since there have not been any wars on US ground since the civil war - lacks corresponding real-life experience. However, by including murders committed by
'average' criminals in the list of things the speaker is responsible for, the perceived threat of suddenly becoming the victim of one of his machinations increases considerably.

4.4. Fourth Verse

Just as every cop is a criminal A (>C / >A)
And all the sinners saints B (<A/ >B)
As heads is tails B
Just call me Lucifer C (<C)
'Cause I'm in need of some restraint B (<B)

So if you meet me D
Have some courtesy D
Have some sympathy D
and some taste E (<B)
Use all your well-learned politesse F
Or I'll lay your soul to waste, E (<B)

The fourth verse is preceded by a break in the form of an electric guitar solo by Keith Richards. This is one of the most memorable parts of the song and also gives the listener time to reflect on the information given in the previous verses and the central question concerning the identity of the speaker. Overall the jungle atmosphere invoked by the samba rhythm and the background vocals has also historically been associated with stereotypical savages: primitive people who live in huts or on trees, worship multiple gods of nature, have moral values at odds with Christianity and possibly practice cannibalism or blood sacrifices. Additionally, in 1968 the US were still engaged in the Vietnam War. Many young men who had been drafted returned with post-traumatic stress disorder due to fighting Vietcong guerilla forces in the Vietnamese jungles. To them, the jungle likely was a form of hell on earth. Thus the musical arrangement of the song adds further controversial elements to its themes. Bowie (cf. www.reasonstorock.com) states that the way the sound slowly fades out at the end of the song gives the impression that it is moving away, towards the next listener, leaving the current one to think about the words of the speaker in silence.

The first paragraph of the fourth verse starts with a list of antonyms which the speaker states are actually the same. The assonances in the first paragraph emphasize the different antonyms
in the lyrics. This is done by creating connections between them. For example, the assonance between "criminal" and "sinners" links the two terms and differentiates them from "saints" and "tails", which are also linked by an assonance. Therefore, the listener is encouraged to compare these antonyms more thoroughly in an effort to interpret the speaker's claim that they are the same. In the case of police officers and criminals, as well as with sinners and saints it can still be argued that no human is perfectly good or evil, but instead always has a balance of these two qualities in him which occasionally favors one over the other. Similarly, while heads and tails are the diametrically opposite sides of a coin they still exist in unity. Even if one is face up the other is still present on its back, waiting to become visible as a possible result of the next coin toss. This references the duality of good and evil, the one being necessary for the existence of the other and vice versa. It is also another possible reference to *The Master and Margarita*, which at the beginning of the book features a quote by the character Mephistopheles talking to the protagonist of Goethe's *Faust*:

'Say at last--who art thou?  
That Power I serve  
Which wills forever evil  
Yet does forever good.'  
(Goethe, as cited in Bulgakov: 1967: 5)

The above quote is also about the necessary duality of good and evil. While it is difficult to interpret, Mephistopheles seems to point out that, due to the inevitable connection between good and evil, the effects of evil deeds will always be alleviated by good effects. He proceeds to describe his nature in more detail, which together with its applicability to "Sympathy for the Devil", will be looked at in more detail in the next section.

This quote also bears resemblance to the lyrics of the song in several ways. In the first verse, the speaker explains how he ensured that Jesus would be sentenced to death. Indirectly causing the death of the savior of mankind obviously is an evil act. However, through his death, Jesus freed mankind of the original sin, saving them from eternal damnation in the process. Thus, the speaker's evil act ultimately had a good effect. Applying this argument to the lines in which the speaker overthrows monarchies is somewhat more difficult. While revolutions often involve
considerable bloodshed, they usually have the goal to replace an absolutist monarchy with a more democratic form of government. This does not always succeed, and the people living in a former monarchy might not necessarily be in a better situation than before. Still, there is the potential of a beneficial outcome. From the perspective of an immortal being like the devil, the period of violent power struggles that often follows a revolution might seem rather short compared to the more peace that follows once the country becomes a stable democracy. The concept of evil acts leading to potentially good results subverts traditional ideas of good and evil being mutually exclusive.

Following this, the next two lines give an answer to the central question asked by the chorus concerning the name of the speaker. He tells the listener to "Just call [him] Lucifer" because he needs some form of restraint. This implies that he might hold some additional titles related to him being the ruler of hell. Another interpretation is that his actual infernal name might be too difficult for humans to pronounce, similarly to the name of god, which according to some occultists consists of 72 letters (cf. Agrippa 1993: 538). A possible reason for this casual offer to call the speaker Lucifer might be the intention to appear more human by not insisting on any additional titles or longer names he might have. The speaker's name being Lucifer, instead of 'Satan', 'the devil', 'Beelzebub' or another synonym for the devil, connects to the theme of duality between good and evil by being one of the best known names of the devil but also, according to the *OED Second Edition*, denoting him as "the rebel archangel [...]" (cf. Lucifer. 1989: 81 2). Thus, similar to the heads and tails of a coin, he too has experienced both extremes of the good-evil spectrum, which apparently led him to the conclusion that there is little difference between the two.

Finally, the speaker concludes the reveal of his name with a threat directed towards the listener. Casting away his casual "Just call me Lucifer" attitude from the first paragraph, he now insists on a certain measure of respect and good manners the listener should display if he ever meets the speaker. This quick change in the mood of the speaker can be seen to refer back to the opening premise that he is a "man of wealth and taste" and then summarizes his potential to do evil with a final threat of bringing eternal damnation upon the listener's soul.
4.5. Chorus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pleased to meet you</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hope you guess my name</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>But what's puzzling you</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the nature of my game</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Chorus occurs after every verse and is repeated twice after the third verse. Its rhyme scheme is ABAB, consisting of an identical rhyme (A) and one perfect rhyme (B). This simplicity helps increase the memorability of the chorus and establishes it as the hook of the song. The chorus stays the same for most of the song, with the exception of occasional interjections such as "oh yeah" and the added "woo, woo" background vocals starting after the second verse. When the chorus loops after the third verse the "puzzling" is replaced with "confusing", emphasizing that the listener is still unsure about the speaker's intentions.

As Howie (cf. www.reasontorock.com) points out, it is possible to interpret the song as being about how the devil, and evil in general, is not always easily recognizable and may often appear as someone else in an effort to deceive people. The last two lines of the chorus in particular can be interpreted to mean that the devil's intention is to confuse people about the distinction between good and evil.

Personally, I have come to a different interpretation of the chorus. "But what's puzzling you is the nature of my game" could also be interpreted as the speaker noting that the listener does not know why the speaker did all the atrocious things he mentions in the song. This interpretation can partly be derived from the lyrics themselves. The "But" with which the line starts would not strictly be necessary if it were intended to express the purpose behind the speaker's actions. However, its presence would make more sense if it is seen as establishing a contrast to the previous line. The speaker hopes that the listener has already guessed his name, but notes that he is still confused about the real intentions and underlying motives of the speaker.
As established in the section on the fourth verse the devil in the song and his opinions on good and evil display some parallels to Mephistopheles in Goethe's Faust. Similar to the listener, the protagonist, Faust, is also confused about Mephistopheles' nature and asks him what he is, to which he responds as follows:

I am the Spirit that Denies!
And justly so: for all things, from the Void
Called forth, deserve to be destroyed:
'Twere better, then, were naught created.
Thus, all which you as Sin have rated,—
Destruction,—aught with Evil blent,—
That is my proper element.
(Goethe 1808: 54-55).

In this excerpt Mephistopheles states that he is evil for evil's sake. There is also a nihilistic element to his explanation since he tells Faust that he would prefer it if nothing would be created. The speaker does not directly mention his motives in the song. However, considering his tendency to overthrow existing systems of order and to cause, or take part in wars, as well as the fact that he is the devil, his motivation is likely also based on him being personified evil. This, together with the speaker's penchant for causing chaos, might provide insight into why the speaker requests sympathy from the listener.

Despite its title, "Sympathy for the Devil", the song never makes it clear why the listener is supposed to feel sympathetic towards the devil. In the prologue of Faust, Mephistopheles asks God for permission to tempt Faust towards evil (cf. Goethe 1808: 14), which implies that he would not be able to tempt him without it. This idea of the devil being weaker than God is central to Christianity. While the speaker of the song does not seem to require divine permission to commit evil acts, his power is likely to have some limits because else he would have already plunged the world into anarchy. According to Christian theology, Jesus will one day return to earth, judge the living and the dead, followed by their souls spending eternity either in heaven or in hell. They speaker can be expected to know this, therefore, he also knows that no matter how many souls he claims for himself or how much destruction he wrought, he will ultimately spend eternity in the knowledge that he cannot harm those souls who made it to
heaven. This is a quite depressing situation and a possible reason for why the listener is supposed to feel sympathy for the devil.

4.6. Summary

For the time of its release, "Sympathy for the Devil" contains numerous culturally subversive elements. First and foremost, there is the title of the song and the identity of its speaker which clash with Christian morals and values. Then there are the actions recounted in the song which, for a majority, aim at upsetting or destroying established traditional systems of order, spreading chaos in their stead. Throughout the song the devil serves as the primary agent of subversion, but there is more to this: He also delights in causing destruction for its own sake. This points to a very hedonistic lifestyle which subverts the more self-sacrificing, austere values of the previous generation which grew up during the second world war. Lastly, there is the equivilisation of traditionally opposed groups such as police officers and criminals. All of this is supported by the wild, 'jungle' atmosphere generated by the music and the background vocals.

However, under this provocative surface-image the song asks some complex philosophical questions, about our perception of good and evil. One of these questions is whether the major events mentioned in the song, such as the Russian Revolution and the second World War, were the work of one purely evil force scheming behind the scenes, or of 'normal' people blindly following ideologies. Another implied question is to what degree good and evil are interconnected and whether one can exist without the other.

Ultimately, the devil of the song can be interpreted not as a sentient, malevolent entity causing mayhem in our world, but as the personification of the human potential to do evil, either intentionally and actively or through doing nothing and letting evil happen. Similar to how there are no one-sided coins, humans cannot be divided into purely good and purely evil people. The people and acts portrayed in the first three verses are, for the majority of listeners,
geographically and/or temporally removed from the song's 1968 audience, they are 'the other', but with the paragraph about the Kennedys' assassination the song reminds the listeners that they are people like 'you and me'. The song's central message is one of introspection. It is about recognizing this destructive potential in oneself and other people, and treating it with the appropriate amount of respect in order to be able to differentiate good and evil so that one might consciously do good, instead of denying this potential for evil and possibly damning one's own soul. To put it with an old proverb, 'the road to hell is paved with good intentions.'

5. Analysis of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction"

"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" by The Rolling Stones was originally released in 1965 on their album Out Of Our Heads. The song enjoyed great commercial success at its release, achieving top position in the charts of multiple countries such as the US, UK and Germany, as well as being voted second place on Rolling Stone magazine's list of "The Greatest 500 Songs of all Time" (Rolling Stone).

One of the central themes of the song, as already alluded to by its title, is the speaker feeling a general dissatisfaction, in regard to multiple facets of his life. However, later the song also brings up the topic of sexual frustration, which is a culturally subversive theme. In a similar manner, the song's themes of anti-consumerism and anti-authoritarianism also oppose the materialistic values, as well as, the political values of 1960s mainstream culture. Accomplished TV and radio personality, Paul Gambaccini, said about the song: "The lyrics to this were truly threatening to an older audience. This song was perceived as an attack on the status quo." (Cf. Sold on Song.) Therefore, the song has a great amount of culturally subversive potential, making it a prime candidate for analysis.

All lyrics quoted in this section are transcribed from: "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" on Out Of Our Heads.
5.1. **Chorus and First Verse**

"(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" begins with the chorus, which largely remains the same throughout the song except for some minor alterations. These alterations take the form of adding "I can't get no, oh, no, no, no" and "hey, hey, hey, that's what I say" to emphasize that the speaker does not receive the satisfaction he desires, and that he keeps telling people about it. The rhymes (AABC and DEFGG) in the chorus and the first verse are reduced. The chorus starts with the repetitive identical rhyme of "satisfaction" while the first verse ends on a full rhyme. This can be seen as thematically linking the first two chorus lines with the last two lines of the first verse, thus subliminally connecting the dissatisfaction felt by the speaker to the lack of interesting stimuli. Another variation of the chorus occurs before the third verse, when a line is replaced, which will be analysed in the section concerning the third verse. In terms of content, the speaker tells us in the chorus that he is unsatisfied, and so far has not had any luck trying to change this. The nature of the satisfaction he is looking for is unclear, but the possibilities range from sexual over economic to general satisfaction in life. Most iterations of the chorus therefore do not directly subvert mainstream culture, but instead provide the motivation of the speaker, and many young members of 1960s subcultures, to question and subvert it.

The first verse starts with the speaker talking about what he feels and perceives when he is driving in his car. However, the speaker does not mention any specific destination he is driving to, because it is an everyday activity not bound to a specific destination. He might be trying to pass time or combat his boredom by driving around aimlessly in the hope of finding new
exciting places or interesting people on the road. This can be interpreted as an expression of the speaker's inner restlessness, which might either be the result, or the cause of his inability to get satisfaction. Building on this interpretation, the first line of the verse - in a similar manner to the chorus - is likely intended to empathically connect with the restlessness many members of youth culture felt at the time. Furthermore, to be able to pass one's time by driving around aimlessly one has first to be able to afford a car and pay the associated fuel costs. This was clearly easier during the post-war economic upswing of the 1960s than during the 1940s, when the price of fuel and many other consumer goods, partly due to rationing, increased (cf. Keezer 1943: 271-274) and driving aimlessly on one's own, just to avoid feeling bored, was looked down upon. Therefore, the line also has some slightly subversive potential directed against the austerity-based cultural values of the older generation, in favor of personal gratification.

In the second line of the first verse, however, the speaker's attempt at combating his restlessness is suddenly interrupted by a radio broadcast. Of note in this line is the use of the definite article to describe the man on the radio. It is not just 'a man' - as opposed to the one on the television in the second verse - but "the man" who is trying to influence the speaker. According to the ODE "the man [is a term for] a person in authority; such persons collectively;" (1989: 286 s). The masculine singular is used because many positions of authority, especially in the 1960s, would have been filled with older men from an upper-class background, or have an older man as their figurehead. Therefore, 'the man' is also strongly associated, and in some cases even synonymous, with mainstream culture.

The authority of 'the man' and, by extension, those parts of mainstream culture that consider people in positions of authority to be role models and value obedience towards them, is subverted in the rest of the first verse. In the following three lines the speaker is very vague about what exactly 'the man' said on the radio. He mentions that 'the man' talked much and with the apparent intent of appealing to the speaker, but failed due to the speaker considering his words to be useless. A possible reason for the speaker being so vague about what 'the man' said is that he is driving, thinking about his unsatisfying life, considering the speech given by 'the man' to be useless, therefore not even bothering to remember his exact words. This quick
dismissal of what 'the man' said shows the speaker's disregard towards authorities which try to convince him of their point of view. There are multiple possibilities of what might be the content of the speech on the radio. There is the possibility that it is a commercial advert, with 'the man' representing the upper class whose wealth often enables them to exert political influence via lobbying. However, while commercials could qualify as useless information - since their main goal is to increase someone else's profit - they usually present some uses of the advertised product to the listener so the latter does not have to rely solely on their imagination. The more likely interpretation is that either a political advert or political news are playing on the radio. In both cases the radio presenter would either be close to, or talking about matters concerning 'the man'. Political adverts also try to inspire people to vote for the party or person they advertise, while political news would present some of the government's recent accomplishments. Either of those options could be seen as trying to spark the speaker's imagination in favor of making him think positively about a certain party or the future of his country under the current government. The speaker, however, is too busy with his own immediate personal issues to think about politics, become politically engaged or even interested. This can be interpreted as subverting the cultural ideal of the belief that politicians are working for the benefit of the people by showing how they cannot relate to the issues of the ordinary, younger citizen and cannot get them interested in politics.

While the speaker's car provides him with the freedom to travel around the country any time and any way he likes, it should also be noted that, despite of that freedom, the speaker does not gain the satisfaction he seeks. This opens up the possibility of another interpretation based on the song's subverting the materialistic and consumerist values of 1960s mainstream culture. While the speaker might be driving around in the hope of finding an interesting event to take part in or hoping to make some new friends on the road, there is no guarantee that he is going to be successful. However, even if his active search proves futile, there is still a passive benefit to it: the speaker is seen in his car. As noted by Scott and Vaz, cars - due to the independent mobility they afford their owner - have a long history as a status symbol, especially amongst young adults (cf. 1963: 330). By driving around the speaker displays his style and his economic ability to afford a car. Some people might even stop and admire it, which would allow the
speaker to feel good about himself, thereby deriving satisfaction from his boosted self-confidence. Furthermore - looking forward to the contents of the third verse - the speaker might also hope to impress women with his car, who might see him as more desirable based on the independence and wealth his car signifies. However, since the speaker remains unsatisfied - driving around only to get bored by a radio broadcast - the verse might be seen as critical of people who accept the materialistic ideal of buying status symbols instead of relying on their own personality.

5.2. Second Verse

[Chorus]

When I'm watchin' my tv
and a man comes on and tells me
How white my shirts can be
But, he can't be a man
'cause he doesn't smoke
The same cigarettes as me

[Verse 2]

Comparing the structures of the second and the first verse reveals a great amount of similarity between them. In the first line the speaker again describes himself being in the middle of an activity. Compared to the first verse the activity, namely watching TV, is a lot more passive than driving around in a car. On its own, the speaker's TV consumption seems to be portrayed as a neutral action. However, similar to the first verse, the speaker remains unsatisfied.

According to Bain, TV ownership became more common in the UK during the 1950s (cf. 1962: 163-164), which means that many 1960s adolescents grew up occasionally watching TV and likely continued to do so as a means to alleviate their boredom and restlessness. This, combined with the great influence mainstream culture had on TV programming in the 1960s - partly due to there being only four channels to choose from of which only one was privately funded (cf. Bain 1962: 146) - enables a negative interpretation of TV consumption as a leisure activity.

While television was not the only electronic entertainment medium in the 1960s - film and radio having been invented earlier in the 20th century - it was the most passive one. The reason
why watching TV is more passive than, for example, listening to the radio is that, due to its visual component, greater attention is required to follow what is happening on the screen. Therefore, it is difficult to do other tasks without missing details of the program, contrary to radio broadcasts, which often become background noise for listeners engaged in household chores. Due to the near-constant stream of content it provides, TV also invites its viewers to keep watching for extended periods of time, as opposed to movie screenings which have a set duration. Additionally, since TV is usually watched at home, either alone - as seems to be the case with the speaker - or in the company of one's family, it lacks the social component of watching a movie at the theater as part of a larger audience. The smaller social component of watching TV and its passive nature make its audience more likely to keep watching for extended periods of time and to be less critical of the content presented.

Having detailed the passivity of TV consumption, it is also of importance to look at the content that vies for the watcher's attention. While TV broadcasts cover a great range of genres, they are usually interrupted and separated by advertisements, which try to communicate as much information as possible, as memorably as possible, during their short runtime. Thus, advertisements spread consumerism among their passive audiences, who, as exemplified by the speaker, do not necessarily gain long-lasting satisfaction from buying the advertised products. Criticism concerning advertisements and the consumerism associated with them becomes more apparent in the rest of the verse.

Continuing with the similarities to the first verse, the speaker's activity is, again, interrupted by a man who wants to exert his influence over him. This time, however, it is 'a' man, not 'the man' and, judging from the third line, it is most likely an actor in a TV advertisement for a laundry detergent. Since the fourth line starts with "But", it can be assumed that the speaker was, at first, interested in the advertised product until he noticed that the actor presenting the product was smoking a different brand of cigarettes than the speaker himself. This causes the speaker to lose interest in the product because, to him, the actor in the advertisement is not a man, or more precisely, not a 'real' man as defined by the tobacco company which produces the cigarettes the speaker favors. Based on these lines, it appears that the speaker considers his identity to be
strongly related to the products he consumes. The speaker also applies this connection between consumption of products and identity to other people, regarding those who do not consume the same products he consumes as 'worse' or at least 'less trustworthy' people, as is the case with the actor in the advert. Furthermore, he does not question this system of assigning value to people, even if it conflicts with previous information, again exemplified by the advertisement's presenter, who is considered a man until his choice of cigarettes is brought up. This probably limits the size of the speaker's social circle and does not contribute to his gaining the satisfaction he seeks. The speaker's preconceptions likely originate from watching hours of advertisements during numerous previous TV-watching sessions. Thus, the verse can be interpreted as subverting the materialistic and consumerist aspects of mainstream culture, specifically the use and influence of advertising on audiences, by showing how it divides people. TV serves as a medium for the advertisements - and therefore consumerist parts of mainstream culture - to reach the speaker, who, due to passively watching TV, is more receptive towards them. The speaker's acceptance of consumerist values probably causes him to spend more time in front of the TV in order to stay informed on news about the brands he identifies with. This circle of passivity and consumerism, as indicated by the chorus, puts further obstacles between the speaker and the satisfaction he seeks.

Another point in favor of this interpretation is that the Rolling Stones also had other songs criticising the effects of advertisements and consumerism on people. One example is "Mother's Little Helper", which was released in 1966, one year after "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction", as part of the album *Aftermath*. "Mother's Little Helper" revolves around the eponymous tranquilizing drug, which is addictive, has the potential to cause a lethal overdose, and was marketed to 1960s housewives as a way to deal with the stress of everyday household chores (cf. Metzl 2003: 240-241). The adverts were often based on the premise that taking these drugs will make the user a better housewife who can ensure that her husband is happy. As a corollary, housewives who do not use drugs are not 'ideal' women, which is similar to how the actor in the second verse of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" is not seen as a man by the speaker because he smokes the 'wrong' brand of cigarettes. "Mother's Little Helper" also features some lines that sound like the catchphrase for an advert, for example "running for the shelter of a mother's little
helper", and notes the tragic effects that taking increasing amounts of those pills can have. Furthermore, some of the newer commercial products, such as instant cake and frozen steaks, which would have been advertised on television at the time, are also portrayed negatively. Considering that the mother in "Mother's Little Helper" tries to feel satisfied by taking increasing amounts of drugs, because advertisements told her so, the speaker's attempt to gain satisfaction via watching TV in "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" is likely also doomed to fail.

Another reason for this subversive stance concerning consumerism might be found by looking at 1960s youth culture. According to Cohen, commercial entities quickly realized that the mods and rockers were an untapped market for further consumer goods sales (cf. 2002: 157). Soon, products and services custom-tailored to members of those youth cultures - which were especially focused on the mod movement - appeared, trying to appeal to them with things such as specialized entertainment venues, clothing articles (cf. 2002: 157-158), and later on even magazines and TV shows (cf. 2002: 212). In a way, the advertising for these products can be considered an attempt by commercial enterprises to subvert these youth cultures. This subversion worked by shifting the subculture's focus from a shared working-class background and rebellion against the values of mainstream culture towards owning the newest mod accessories, following the most recent mod trend, being seen at the hippest mod club and learning about all those things via advertisements. In order to afford this consumption-centered lifestyle, one needs a steady income, which, in turn, is easier to gain by at least appearing to conform to mainstream culture to increase one's employability. The second verse of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" can be interpreted as an attack on this aspect of consumer culture, with the intention of showing that an identity based on consuming products that are praised in advertisements does not equal to personal happiness.

The second verse features an AAABCA rhyme scheme which consists of full rhymes, interrupted by two non-rhyming lines. Notable about these lines is, that they concern the speaker as not being able to identify with the man in the advertisement due to their different choice in cigarettes. The sudden disassociation of the speaker with the advert interrupts the speaker's passive TV consumption in a similar manner to how the fourth and fifth lines
interrupt the - until then consistent - rhyme scheme of the verse. This serves to reinforce the disassociation of the speaker with the man in the advertisement and emphasizes the subversive effects generated by it.

5.3. Third Verse

I can't get no, oh, no, no, no  
Hey, hey, hey that's what I say  
I can't get no satisfaction,  
I can't get girl reaction  
'Cause I try and I try and I try and I try  
I can't get no, I can't get no

A  
B  
C  
C  
D  
A

When I'm ridin' round the world  
And I'm doin' this and I'm signin' that  
And I'm tryin' to make some girl  
Who tells me baby, better come back maybe next week  
Can't you see I'm on a losing streak  

E  
F  
E  
G  
G

[Chorus]

Since the chorus that precedes the third verse only changes one line from "I can't get no satisfaction" to "I can't get no girl reaction", the rhyme scheme remains the same but now contains a full rhyme. The third verse features an EFEGG rhyme scheme. Of the two full rhymes contained in this verse, the first one is especially notable. Rhyming "girl" and "world" is very popular in pop-songwriting. Some people even call it the "most overused rhyme", pointing to a considerable number of songs that utilize it (cf. jmush 2009). A possible reason for the rhyme being used in the third verse is that it comes to mind easily because of its status as a stock rhyme. However, considering that the first two lines of the verse can be interpreted to refer to the busy life of a touring band, the use of this very popular rhyme can also be seen to reinforce the image of the speaker being a band member.

As mentioned previously, the version of the chorus before the third verse deviates from the others. The line "I can't get no girl reaction" is added to the chorus, linking the speaker's dissatisfaction to his inability to attract women. The attempts at trying to get satisfaction mentioned in the chorus therefore likely refers to his attempts at getting closer to women,
which end in him being disregarded or rebuffed by them. While the speaker might also be interested in a relationship, it is implied that he is primarily looking for sexual satisfaction. This very open approach to sexual relations subverts conservative mainstream cultural values focused on avoiding pre-marital sex. The emphasis the speaker puts on achieving sexual satisfaction points to him not planning to wait until marriage, nor necessarily limiting himself to only one partner. This subversion is further expanded on in the third verse.

The third verse's beginning again resembles the first verse. Instead of driving a car, however, the speaker is now traveling around the world using unspecified means of transportation. As the second line reveals, he now also has specific destinations he travels to instead of just driving around. This extensive traveling in combination with "doin' this" and "signin' that" makes it possible to interpret the speaker in this verse as representing either Mick Jagger or the Rolling Stones, because successful bands are often associated with touring the world, engaging in extravagant activities and signing autographs for fans as well as business deals with recording companies. In this case the verse would show that even fame does not guarantee satisfaction. Another, more general interpretation is that the third verse features a jump ahead in time. The speaker has grown older and has more responsibilities, which is signified by traveling a lot - possibly due to working for an international enterprise - and signing documents. Important documents such as work contracts, tax forms, insurance policies and mortgage contracts among others, need to be signed, and due to the responsibilities associated with them, the signing becomes a symbol of being an adult.

In either case, the speaker is still looking for sexual satisfaction, as hinted at by the remaining lines of the verse. In the third line, the speaker states that he is "trying to make some girl". According to the *OED Second Edition* "make" can also mean "A (sexual) conquest; (spec) a woman of easy virtue." (1989: 234 11.) The line therefore subverts conservative sexual norms by emphasizing how the speaker is primarily looking for easily obtainable sex. This line was censored when the Rolling Stones performed "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" on the American TV-show *Shindig!* in 1965 (RollStoneYP 2011: 3:00), possibly due to the director thinking that such an open allusion to sexuality was too culturally subversive to be shown on TV. In a later
interview, however, Mick Jagger stated that "They didn't understand the dirtiest line" (cf. Rothman 2015), referring to the last two lines of the verse.

These last two lines of the verse refer to a woman rejecting the advances of the speaker and telling him to come back after a week has passed because she is "on a losing streak". A very probable reason for the speaker's rejection is that the woman is on her menstrual period. This is supported by periods usually lasting around a week and having the potential to be quite painful, giving the woman two good reasons to put off intercourse with the speaker to next week. Being "on a losing streak" also seems to be a plausible euphemism for menstruation, because of the pain and duration associated with it. Mick Jagger also described this part of the verse with: "It's just life. That's what really happens to girls. Why shouldn't people write about it?" (cf. Rothman 2015), very strongly implying that these lines are referring to the female period and also showing Jagger's intent of subverting the taboo associated with menstruation with this song. The long established social and religious stigma that forms the basis for the culturally subversive aspects of references to menstruation has already been examined in the section of "Let it Bleed". It is also possible that - in a similar manner to the speaker of "Let it Bleed" - the speaker of "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" actually would not mind having intercourse with a woman on her period, because of his considerable sexual frustration. The speaker, therefore, might indeed see that the woman is "on a losing streak" but willfully chooses to ignore it, thereby displaying the subversive attitude towards the taboo of menstruation the Rolling Stones want to spread with this song.

5.4. Summary

In "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" the Rolling Stones capture the Zeitgeist of 1960s youth culture. Themes of restlessness, trying to find one's place in the world, and longing for sexual relationships are combined with anti-authoritarianism and anti-consumerism. The politics and consumption-based approaches towards finding one's identity are either ignored - as is the case with 'the man' on the radio - or portrayed as absurd, as with the sudden change of opinion about the actor in the TV advert once the speaker realizes that he smokes a different cigarette brand.
The straight dismissal of the message 'the man' wants to impart on the speaker via radio broadcast subverts mainstream culture's claims to importance by never even considering them. Especially political parties want to convince people that only they have the best solutions for the problems of the nation in order to be elected. By considering these kinds of political adverts "useless information", individuality and making up one's own mind are emphasized in opposition to conforming to the views of established parties which are rooted in mainstream culture.

The absurd portrayal of the effects advertisements have on the people who watch them also serves to subvert the consumerist parts of mainstream culture. At the time, commercial enterprises were often thought of as putting their consumer's best interest over their desire to increase their profits. In the song, however, advertisements are shown as dividing people by reducing them to the products they consume and the brands they sport. Associating with people based on one's own opinion about them, and not on what specific goods they consume is the implied way to subvert consumerist aspects of mainstream culture promoted on the TV.

During the first two verses, the speaker tries to find satisfaction by driving around in his car and watching TV respectively. While driving a car is the more active activity, the speaker is still alone inside the car, isolated from his surroundings. In a similar manner, the speaker appears to be alone as he watches TV. The listener learns in the chorus that neither of these activities helped the speaker feel more satisfied. Ultimately, the speaker sees the way to resolve his dissatisfaction not in the buying of consumer goods but in human contact. While he still remains unsatisfied in the chorus at the end of the song, the speaker now at least has an outlook on feeling better next week, once he can spend time with his girlfriend. While the speaker is primarily looking for sexual companionship, the solution the song provides for the dissatisfaction many adolescents at the time were feeling can also be generalized as forming communities with other, like-minded people.
6. Conclusion

To conclude, while the themes of the examined lyrics might seem simple at a casual glance, a closer reading shows that the underlying subversive elements are quite complex and cover a wide range of subjects. A superficial reading of "Let It Bleed", for example, could give one the impression that it is just about sex, drugs and violence. However, more thorough analysis reveals that its themes of drug addiction and unhealthy interpersonal relationships subvert mainstream culture by pointing out that everyone could be affected by them. In combination with its sexual themes the song also subverts traditional values such as abstinence and piety by emphasizing how everyone has problems and worries which they drown out by engaging in physical pleasures.

The subversive elements in "Sympathy for the Devil" are more philosophical in nature. The central question of the song, whether absolute good or absolute evil exist, is posed by Lucifer himself. Lucifer, as spoken by the speaker, tells the listener how he likes to spread chaos and overthrow societal order. Many of the subversive elements present in the lyrics serve to reinforce the malice behind these acts. The question of whether morality is black and white is answered by comparing good and evil to the two sides of a coin, emphasizing how the potential for both is present in humans. Unlike the random outcome of a coin flip, humans have the ability to choose between good and evil actions. The song also contains references to Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* and Goethe's *Faust*, showing that, despite their rowdy image, the Stones were better educated than members of mainstream culture might have expected them to be.

The song that best exemplifies complex subversive themes underlying simple lyrics is "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction". Superficially, the speaker complains about the lack of satisfaction he feels in his life, apparently being bored by radio and TV shows and frustrated by his inability to find women who are sexually interested in him. A closer reading of the lyrics shows that they do not only represent how young people try to find their place in the world. The lyrics subvert established authorities' claims to importance and the way commercial advertisements affect
their audiences. In addition, the lyrics can also be interpreted to be critical of modern entertainment media, specifically TV, and the passive consumption encouraged by it. This shows how the Stones incorporate economic and political concerns into their lyrics. They thereby expand the scope of their subversion from traditional ideals of mainstream culture to new, potentially harmful, values such as consumerism.

Personally, I think it is quite interesting that "Let It Bleed" and "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction" contain lines that can be interpreted as subverting the social stigma associated with menstruation. This is an important feminist topic, which shows that the Rolling Stones, despite their 'bad boy' image, cared about issues that primarily affected women. The range of subversive elements in the Stones' songs is further broadened by the inclusion of this topic.

While the Rolling Stones were never the center of a moral panic comparable to, for example, the one focused on John Lennon's "more popular than Jesus" quote they still caused some controversy. In the UK the Stone's music was an influence on the mod subculture's lifestyle, capturing the rebellious feelings of many youths at the time. The explicit lyrics and subversive themes of their songs resulted in several cases of censorship by broadcasters who were worried about the reactions of their more conservative audience members. Lastly, the end of the 'peace and love' era is attributed to the Stones' performance at the Altamont Free Concert. While it might not have been their intention, they successfully subverted a whole subculture, which is an achievement only few can boast about.

Considering the lack of academic writings on the Rolling Stones, there is still a lot of potential for further research into their works. Songs like "Gimme Shelter", "Paint it, Black" and "Mother's little Helper" contain further material which subverts 1960s mainstream culture. Examining the occurrence of feminist themes in songs by the Rolling Stones would be another interesting research topic, because of the, previously mentioned, themes of menstruation and the idealized housewife as presented in advertisements.
7. Discography


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