

"Clay Pigeons"

By: Blaze Foley, Analysis by: Braedan Davidson

Type: Lyric Poem

I'm going down
to the grayhound station → symbolizes new beginnings, freedom
Gonna get a ticket to ride → Synecdoche?
Gonna find that lady Metaphor for starting over
with 2 or 3 kids used here as part of a whole
And sit down by her side (ticket to ride the bus)
And ride until the sun
comes up and down around me → Euphony
about 2 or 3 times Sure feels nice to
Smoking cigarettes in say out loud, at
the last seat least
Trying to hide my sorrow → mood of the
from the people I meet piece: Forlorn,
And Get Along with it all wistful
Go down where people say "y'all" → Starting over,
Sing a song with a little embracing change,
[change the shape that I'm in] challenging the
And get back in the game unknown
And start playing again

Legend

Alliteration	Metaphor
Assonance	Cliche
Euphony	Idiom
Consonance	Repetition
Euphony	Symbol
Metonymy	Rhyme
	Internal Rhyme

I'd like to stay
But I might have to go
to [start over again]
I might [go back down] to Texas
I might go somewhere that
I've never been
And get up in the morning
and go out at night
And I won't have to go home
Get used to being alone
[Change the words to the song]
And [start singing again]

← Break out of
old habits, shake
up the routine. Start
over.

I'm tired of running round
Looking for answers to questions
that I already know
[I could build me a castle
of memories
just to have somewhere to go
count the days and the nights
that it takes to get back
in the saddle again
Feed the pigeons same old
turn night into day
Start talking again
when I know what to say]

→ Extended metaphor
The author could let
himself be consumed
by his past

extended metaphor
He is choosing to slow
down and appreciate the
little things in life

Metaphor Turn his
sorrow into joy

↑
He hasn't figured it out yet
Leaves us on a cautiously
optimistic note

“Clay Pigeons” by Blaze Foley

Analysis by Braedan Davidson

Blaze Foley, renowned 1960's country artist, has a gripping, down-to-earth lyrical approach that feels conversational, while still exuding depth. His discography is a testament to the power of Americana Folk, and “Clay Pigeons” is his most recognizable song. The tone of this piece captures the moment of quiet clarity that comes after reaching an emotional low point. The narrator is clearly seeking a new start, as evidenced by the lines “i'd like to stay, but i might have to go to start over again”; he's felt the pull of the road, a common theme explored in the works of many of his beatnik and hippie counterparts, such as Jack Kerouac. Blaze stands out amongst his peers by staying true to his folksy roots, and forgoing the surreal, abstract approach adopted by many of his contemporaries at the time. The imagery he conveys in this poem would be familiar to anyone who's ever taken a Greyhound bus in the search of a fresh start: late nights, cigarettes, single mothers with a couple kids, the rise and fall of the sun on the passenger windows.

His use of cliches is sparing, but effective. ‘Get back in the game, and start playing again.’ These familiar phrases never feel corny in the context of the recording, which may simply be a testament to the sincerity he imbibes in his vocal performance. Blaze also extends these idioms and cliches with supporting lines, such as “count the days and the nights that it takes to get back in the saddle again”. This is a perfect example of the plain, conversational vibe of his lyrics.

The mood invoked to me as a reader is similar to the authors' intended tone: the optimism of rebirth, combined with a forlorn ode to those transformational, depressing milestones that

shape a young person's life. It's a song best appreciated in stillness; I've found myself reaching for it as a friend, usually after midnight, after very long, tiring days at work. Lines such as "smoking cigarettes in the last seat, trying to hide my sorrow from the people i meet, and get along with it all" directly communicate this mood to the reader. Even when he sprinkles in extended metaphors, such as the line "build me a castle of memories to have somewhere to go", his meaning is never obfuscated, and can be appreciated by even the most casual listener.

The theme, to me, is the feeling that change is always possible. The optimism that Blaze manages to embed in this song saves it from being another mopey ballad about how hard it is to be young. He doesn't solve anything: much of what he suggests as cures to the blues are things the narrator is only thinking of doing. Half-made plans for a better tomorrow; barely remembered blueprints in search of a direction. It's special to me, and I'm glad this has given me the opportunity to examine my relationship with the song.

(P.S - I've included the lyrics below, typed, in case my handwriting is hard to read. It's something that's been mentioned throughout my life, and I was a little bummed to find out my handwriting hasn't gotten much better in the 13 years since I graduated!!)

LYRICS:

I'm going down to the Greyhound station

Gonna get a ticket to ride

Find that big fat lady with two or three kids

And sit down by her side
And ride until the sun comes up and down
around me about two or three times
Smoking cigarettes in the last seat
Trying to hide my sorrow from the people I meet
And get along with it all
Go down where people say y'all
Sing a song with a friend
Change the shape that I'm in
And get back in the game
And start playing again

I'd like to stay but I might have to go to start over again
I might go back down to Texas
I might go somewhere that I never been
And get up in the morning and go out at night
And I won't have to go home
Get used to being alone
Change the words to this song
And start singing again

I'm tired of running round
Looking for answers to questions that I already know

I could build me a castle of memories

Just to have somewhere to go

Count the days and the nights that it takes

To get back in the saddle again

Feed the pigeons some clay