

# **“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