
PAUL SIMON & ARTHUR GARFUNKEL

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As the title of this article sits there, you might have already asked, "Who on the earth are these two guys?" Yeah, of course, you people's minds are always filled with those big names such as Issac Newton, Albert Einstein, T.-D. Lee, C.-N. Yang, L.-W. Yau..... etc., etc. Now, therefore, you people might as well to allow me to bring you out of the sophisticated world of Physics. Let's talk about something else, for instance, Simon and Garfunkel.

To make long story short, Simon and Garfunkel are popular musicians, successful pop musicians. (When I say popular music, certainly I am referring that of the United States of America, after all USA is the biggest pop music market in the whole world--- look at the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, they make "U.S. dollars".) They are successful in term of the conventional market value---they have sold millions and millions of records, their album prices are listed as \$5.95 a piece while usually should be \$4.95. However, I believe there's something more than this, it's not merely because of their popularity for you to dig their music. This is just the very reason that I'm writing this article.

First let me make it crystal-clear that I am not concerning their individual images which have casted over the pop music world. What I am gonna tell you is their songs, and since I simply cannot put the melody into words, my discussion here, consequently, will be restricted in the lyrics of their songs. Incidentally, Paul Simon himself is responsible for almost all the music and lyric of their songs.

The following is part of the lyric of their first smashing hit, entitled as "The Sounds of Silence":

In restless dreams I walked alone
thru' narrow streets and cobble stone
'neath the halo of a street lamp
I turned my collar to the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the flash
of a neon light
I touched the Sound of Silence.

I was is the campus of NTU when I first heard of this, which really gave me a great impact. Just imagine that you are walking down the so-called lover's path of NTU in a chilly but cozy night, the yellowish, dim light casts you from the lamp sitting on top of an old-fashioned lamp post under the plam tree, the half-full moon and stars are hanging over you, no one else is around.....

I have my books
and my poetry to protect me
I am shielded in my armour
Hiding in my room
Safe within my womb
I touch no one and no one touches me
I AM a Rock
I am an island.....

And a rock can feel no pain
And an island never cries.

My reaction to this (entitled: "I Am a Rock") when it first came to me is a kind of resonance phenomenon. At that time my ex-girl decided to walk away from me. I had my Modern Physics book but it failed to protect me---I did very, very lousy in professor Hsiu's final exam. Of course after all this situation was sort of making-believe and no longer exists now.

Born into society
A bank owner's child
He had everything a man could want
Power, great, style
.....
And I wish I could be
Oh I wish I could be
Richard Cory
.....
So my mind was filled with wonder
When the evening headlines read:
 'Richard Cory went home last night
 And put a bullet through his head.'

The story of this song---"Richard Cory"---will be longer: Paul Simon wrote this based on a poem by E. A. Robinson. Instead of using my own words, let me quote directly from an article about Sweden by Steven Kelman (The New Yorker; Dec. 26, 1970, pp. 36-48):The origin of the notion that the Swedes are an unhappy people lies, as far as I can tell, in what might be called the Richard Cory Fallacy (after the millionaire who kills himself in the poem by Edward Arlington Robinson). Since the Swedes seem to have everything ---not only money but clean cities, unspoiled nature, sexual freedom, and a month's paid vacation every year---they must be unhappy...." So, my friends, don't try to get everything! Indeed it is very terrible when you don't have anything, but it is equally troublesome if you've got everything already.

April come she will
 When streams are ripe and swelled with rain....
May she will stay
 Resting in my arms again....
June she'll change her tune
 in restless walks she'll prowl the night....
July she will fly
 and give no warning of her flight....
August die she must
 The autumn winds blow chilly and cold....
September I'll remember
 A love once new has now grown old.

The comment of this---"April Come She Will"---is short: " That's all ! "----to gals, not the song.

Hiding in a hiding place where no one ever goes
Put it in your pantry with your cup-cakes
It's a little secret just the Robinson's affair
Most of all you've got to hide it from the kids....

This is from a motion picture entitled "The Graduate"--- "Mrs. Robinson". The lyric doesn't appear to be very attractive and, worst of all, this movie, although an Oscar winner, was not allowed to be presented in front of the audience of ROC, largely due to its incompatibility with our great culture. I, therefore, am not going to give any specific description here. Maybe someday you will get the chance of watching it, or it might even appear on the TV screen, say, Sunday movie (How about that!). My experience was, from this song, I was able to add one additional word into my all-time-poor English vocabulary, namely, "cup-cakes". For some obvious reason, it is inconvenient for me to introduce the interpretation of this term to my honorable reader directly. But I believe that, with your genius imagination, it should be very easy for you to figure it out, particularly through the aid of those words like "where no one goes", to hide it from the kids", and so forth. Besides, it's rated "X".

I was thinking of conducting this article in sort of chronological way. But since we have already touched this somewhat subtle field, I might as well keep go on in order to avoid any discontinuity in the general taste of this article:

.....
Just a come-on from the whores
On Seventh Avenue
I do declare
There were times when I was so lonesome
I took some comfort there
La-la-la-la-la-la.... ("The Boxer")

Making love in the afternoon with Cecilia
Up in my bedroom
I got up to wash my face
When I come back to bed
Someone's taken my place....
("Cecilia")

The first one is in fact a candid self-confession of a boy from New York City, while the second one is really disgusting! Actually I was somehow disappointed with it.

The monkeys stand for honesty
Giraffes are insincere
And the elephants are kindly but
They're dumb
Orangutans are skeptical
Of changes in their cages
And the zookeeper is very fond of rum
zebras are reactionaries
Pigeons plot in secrecy
And hamsters turn on frequently
What a gas!.....

We are now "At the Zoo" for a change. Let's just see how many animal names you are able to recognize and how many of them you've actually seen before.

A patrol car passing by
Halted to a stop
Said officer MacDougal in dismay
"The force can't do a decent job

'Cause the kids got no respect
For the laws today (and blah blah blah!).....

"Save the life of my child" is the title of this one. As you probably have heard of something about it, the drug problem among young generation and teen-agers in USA is very serious. A great portion of the college kids are seeking being 'high' on something. Very fortunately, we don't have this problem in ROC, largely due to its unavailability.

Slow down, you move too fast
You got to make the morning last
Kicking down the cobble stones
Lookin' for fun and Feelin' Groovy

This one, "The 59th Street Song (Feelin' Groovy)" again reflects another aspect of USA's social problems. Allow me to be lazy once more by quoting from an article entitled "America the Inefficient" (Time; Mar. 23, 1970, pp. 72-80): ".....The trend of the times is echoed in Simon & Gargunkel's 'Feelin' Groovy': 'Slow down, you move too fast. You got to make the morning last...'. That is precisely the spirit that the first of the stopwatch-toting-efficiency experts, Frederick Winslow Taylor, condemned in 1911 as 'the greatest evil with which the working people are now afflicted.'....." You know what? I have a feeling that USA products of nowadays are similar to those Japanese ones some twenty years ago.

Are you going to Scarborough Fair
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme
Remember me to one who lives there
She once was a true love of mine.....

Sounds romantic, doesn't it? This is the main theme of "Scarborough Fair/Canticle". From the title of this song, however, you might be able to realize that this is actually a delicate interweaving of two songs! It took me whole lot of time to figure out the other part, which reads:

On the side of a hill in the deep forest green
Tracing of sparrow on snow crested brown
Blankets and bed-clothes the child of the mountain
Sleeps unaware of the clarion call
On the side of a hill a sprinkling of leaves
Washes the grave with silvery tears
A soldier cleans and polishes a gun
War bellows blazing in scarlet battalions
Generals order their soldiers to kill
And to fight for a cause they've long ago forgotten

What an anti-war message! For the American youngsters, they not only think the Vietnam War is something like fighting for a cause they've long ago forgotten, in fact they don't even know the cause in the first place.

From the moment of my birth
To the instant of my death
There are patterns I must follow
Just as I must breathe each breath....
Impaled on my wall
My eyes can dimly see
The pattern of my life

And the puzzle that is me

"Patterns"---quite a philosophical one. You see, through our lifetime---from the elementary school, junior high, senior high, then college, graduate school; and getting married, having children, working for someone else...etc., etc.---we certainly are conducting, or being conducted, our way of living under certain pattern. Sometimes you may sit on your ass and ask, "What are these all about?" and "What are all these for?" We surely can see the way our patterns are, one way or the other, but we might be cursing that we have been victimized by these patterns. What? You don't? At least I do. Let me just ask you why you are here in the Phys Department of NTU?

Sail on silvergirl
Sail on by
Your time has come to shine
All your dreams are on their way
See how they shine
If you need a friend
I'm sailing right behind
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will lay me down
Like a bridge over troubled water
I will ease your mind

I don't intend to drag you people too long, this is the last number---"Bridge over Troubled Water". Supposedly this should be a kind of heroic love song. But let's look at it in another way: We, this generation of Chinese people, are just in a stage of troubled water. Try to shine yourself, friends, no matter in a way of torch-light, a spot light, or even a candle light. Be a bridge, friends, lay yourself down, over this troubled water!

Note added in proof: This article is written based upon the following albums of Simon and Garfunkel:

Sounds of Silence---Columbia CS9269
Parsley, Sage, Rosemary and Thyme---Columbia CS9363
Bookends---Columbia KCS9529
Bridge Over Troubled Water---Columbia KCS9914

L.-W. Yau

International House, New York
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