

# *True Detective* as a Southern Gothic: A Study of Its Music-Lyrics

Divya Sharma

**Abstract**—Nic Pizzolatto's *True Detective* offers profound mythological and philosophical ramblings for audiences with literary sensibilities. An American Southern Gothic with its Bayou landscape of the Gulf Coast of Louisiana, where two detectives Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart begin investigating the isolated murder of Dora Lange, only to discover an entrenched network of perversion and corruption, offers an existential outlook. The proposed research paper shall attempt to investigate the pervasive themes of gothic and existentialism in the music of the first season of the series.

**Keywords**—Existentialism, Gothic, Music, Mythology, Philosophy.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**. BONE BURNETT'S selection of the opening soundtrack "Far From Any Road" by The Handsome Family builds the intended atmosphere for the story within minutes into the photographic double exposure style of the title sequence, created by the creative director Patrick Clair. The depiction of the Louisiana landscape of the 90s is not less than that of a wasteland, a stereotypical picture that finds place in the typical southern gothic. Even though the title track on this encounter comes across as a lone tale of Dora Lang—the young runaway prostitute, whose death Marty Hart and Rust Cohle, the two detectives of the Louisiana State Police Criminal Investigations Division investigate, its real design goes deeper than we can imagine then.

## II. EPISODE ONE

The very first scene of Dora Lang's corpse with antlers and twisted branch traps with a rapturous face expression, in spite of the physical torture may irk one's ecofeministic sensibilities further builds to compliment with Cohle's philosophical pessimistic banter. The "Long Bright Dark" therefore sets the philosophical cauldron boiling as Rust Cohle expounds:

I believe human consciousness is a tragic misstep in human evolution. We become too self aware. Nature created an aspect of nature separate from itself. The secretion of sensory experience and feelings, programmed with total assurance that we are each somebody, when in fact everybody is nobody. I think the honorable thing for our programming: stop reproducing. Walk hand in hand into extinction. One last midnight, brothers and sisters, opting out of a raw deal.

His outlook eventually expands towards nihilism, also a disposition of a great many existentialists.

Divya Sharma is a Post Doctoral Research Scholar at the University of Jammu, J&K, India (e-mail: divyasharma.ds0102@gmail.com).

The unsettling title track "Far From Any Road," originally from The Handsome Family's sixth studio album *Singing Bones* has the flavor of gothic running rather explicitly. An alternative country and Americana duo, The Handsome Family, consists of wife Rennie Sparks who wrote the lyrics of the song, and husband Brett Sparks who usually writes the music. The Handsome Family's style is a blend of traditional country, bluegrass, and murder ballads. The very three genres form the constitute of this song as well, singing away the ghastly murder of Dora Lang in a murder ballad that structurally has three parts, evident as the three parts of the song (even though the show was conceived way later than the genesis of this song), where in the first part typically recounts the details of a mythic or true crime—who the victim is, why the murderer decides to kill him or her, how the victim is lured to the murder site and the act itself, as in the given instance we see the first part of the song sung by a male voice—presumably that of the murderer, and for that matter even detective Rust Cohle as at a point in the shows his character is under scrutiny, and that the crime was mythic but yet it may have found its inspiration from true life as *Jezebel* questioned "Did a Horrifying Real Satanic Sex Abuse Case Inspire True Detective?" The first stanza of the song reads:

From the dusty May sun  
Her looming shadow grows  
Hidden in the branches of the poison creosote  
She twines her spines up slowly  
Towards the boiling sun  
And when I touched her skin  
My fingers ran with blood

The second part recounts the escape and capture of the murderer, as in the case under scrutiny, we find a female voice narrating her capture:

In the hushing dusk under a swollen silver moon  
I came walking with the wind to watch the cactus bloom  
And strange hands halted me, the looming shadows danced  
I fell down to the thorny brush and felt the trembling hands

And finally the ballad ends with the murderer in jail or on their way to the gallows, occasionally with a plea for the listener not to copy the evils committed by him as recounted by the singer. And so it happens in the soundtrack in its third and final part which narrates the eventual death that such a ghastly act brings for the victim as well as the murderer:

When the last light warms the rocks  
And the rattlesnakes unfold  
Mountain cats will come to drag away your bones

And rise with me forever  
Across the silent sand  
And the stars will be your eyes  
And the wind will be my hands

The bluegrass and the country music find roots in Southern America. The very music, therefore, is apt for the southern Louisiana setting that the drama projects. Detective Rust Cohle states, "This place is like someone's memory of a town—and the memory's fading."

The first episode reveals the gruesome murder of Dora Lang whose naked body is discovered under the tree within a burning cornfield, with ligation marks and multiple stab wounds, crowned with deer antlers bearing explicit occult overtones. A sight one imagines as one hears the title track. That the crime under investigation has a serial killer aspect to it is hinted at on the two detectives' visit to the shed of the house of Marie Fonteneau, who has been missing since five years before Dora's body was discovered. Here they find similar ritual indicative materials. That Hart and Cohle's visit here shall help bring about justice, in other words a judgment over the culprit, is foretold by the accompanying sound track "Sign of the Judgment" by McIntosh County Shouters.

But this is revealed after the testimony of Dora Lang's partner who reveals that Dora wanted to become a nun and had met a "king," a word that rather sounds ominous. A major track that this episode incorporates is from Bob Dylan's album *Freewheelin'* even though it was dropped. A blue folk album that has existential overtones, it also helps in the further development of the story. It is as if the song was written for the very purpose, even though originally composed in 1962.

So in the very first episode we see women being sacrificed, and animals being mutilated (the Minister, The Wire's Lester Freeman talks of mutilated animals)—in unpleasant occult/ritual suggesting patterns, within Southern American suburbs of Louisiana under the surveillance of a crime investigation department that seems to be dealing with existential issues of its own much to the likeness of its officers' personal lives.

Gothic writing can to some extent be seen as a venture into the unexplainable in order to find explanations or comfort per se from the angst that life entails within its hollowness. Existentialists believe religion is a drug that helps deal with life's meaninglessness and it also seems to drug man of his anthropocentric/andropocentric superiority complex which the show's pattern reflects rather tellingly.

The closing credits song "Young Men Dead" by The Black Angels also fits aptly encouraging a feeling to fight the evil at hand. The words are fitting of the undercurrent of the gothic within the story. One is reminded of the very murder site of Dora and the "Yellow King" in the lines:

And outta black a figures forms a soldier in disguise.  
With a drop of love, trying to set you free.

It is as if a continuation from the very first sight of the corpse with an expression of rapture. That rapture is what sets you "free" and the false notion that the "soldier in disguise" offers is like a "drop of love." An idea fully built through the mention of Teleos de lorca, a concocted 12th century mystic,

created in the light of Saint Francis Assisi, who considered himself the spouse of the Holy spirit, and in order to establish intimacy with the Divine would retreat to secluded paces and often experience "inspiration" in a manner quite beyond human reason. The rapture that is associated with Assisi's inspiration finds a recurring mention in the subsequent episodes, lending an atmosphere of mysticism.

### III. EPISODE TWO

The second episode "Seeing things" truly gives an insight into the real nature of things. The predominant current that flows through this episode is masculinity: the nature of how men try to control the world around. The hypocritical character of Hart brings this to the fore, while preaching the significance of family institution he completely overlooks his illicit relationship with his mistress explaining it as something that helps him "decompress." He may detest prostitution but this demeanor of traditional world values is a mere facade that is rendered to pieces, eventually as his family life is out in the open, and to Cohle. He tries to control every woman in his life—his wife, his daughters, and even his girlfriend. This sham is accentuated though the treatment of music that is assigned to the background. His talk with the men in the bar is set to the background score "Unfriendly Woman" by John Lee Hooker. Even though he explains his need for decompressing or infidelity as a result of the horrible nature of his work and the constant nagging from his wife the audience in a cathartic manner is made sensitive of the hokum of his argument in the face of his controlling patriarchal values. This shallowness is further built on with the track "One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer" that plays while he talks to his girlfriend on the payphone, indicating the need to find substitute pleasures. His discomfort with Cohle's discovery of his affair prompts him to physically assault Rust, pinning him to a locker. He expects his mistress to be available only to him. He even tries to stop her from moving around freely in the wake of the threat of the serial killer.

While there is no sign of a suspect through all this—Rust Cohle seems to be the only suspect emerging, given the difference in investigation manner given to Rust and Marty. Cohle's emotional state because of his daughter's death in an accident, his subsequent involvement in the HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area force) work during which he developed his hallucinations that come across as occult symbols to the viewer, and his pessimistic views, especially his comments about his daughter's early demise that, "Isn't that a beautiful way to go out? Painlessly as a happy child," to which the investigators Maynard Gilbough and Thomas Papania respond with hostility.

When Marty reaches the girl's apartment Vashti Bunyan's "Train Song" plays in the background. The music acts as a window inside her soul adding another existential layer. The meaninglessness and an ever receding point of love in the two's relationship is almost instantly hinted at, which is eventually made crystal clear through her statement, "I can't meet a nice man at home." But Marty seems oblivious almost cruelly individualistic enough to overlook her discontent.

Vashti Bunyan is known as “the Godmother of Freak Folk,” also known as the psychedelic folk, reflecting a heightened sensitivity. Freak folk artists recycled the 60s and 70s music and questioned values in the style of beatniks and hippies, but also offered an original world view and voice, and built mainly on the idea that everything is connected. Freak folk songs created hallucinogenic effects and its lyrics deal with rivers, seas, forests, paths, biological phenomena, and human bodies, just as in the Train Song we hear of a journey by train. The train metaphor renders a sense of longing. It is interesting to recall Freud’s siderodromophobia (fear of train travel) because he found the steam jets from the train as souls burning in hell. He said the rocking movement of the train reminded of the loss of his mother. The “Train Song” was released in May 1966 but did not receive much attention back then but the fact that Vashti Bunyan was deeply influenced by Bob Dylan’s *Freewheelin’* and her music finds place with his on the same platform say’s much of her achievement.

Even though the episode offers no sign of the suspect, detectives Marty Hart and Rust Cohle manage to find a lead to Dora Lang’s personal diary through Cohle’s roughing up of the two men at the shop accompanied by the “Sign of the Judgment” track that in itself indicates a step towards justice. This results in their driving to the Bunny Ranch to which C. J. Johnson’s score “You Better Run to the City of Refuge” is played. The Ranch is a city of refuge for the women there in the manner of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah in which perpetrator of manslaughter found shelter claiming the right to asylum. But almost simultaneously we find the idea refuted. One is prompted to think just as the African Americans employed gospel traditions to resist slavery in a clandestine way the Ranch offers women like Beth, an under-aged hooker, shelter from the world in which they suffer in the wake of masculinity. The Madam tells Marty, men don’t approve of prostitution because suddenly, “you don’t own it the way you thought you did.”

The other two tracks apart from the closing credits song “Kingdom of Heaven” by the 13th Floor Elevators that find place in the episode are Steve Earle’s “Meet Me in the Alleyway” that plays during Cohle’s investigation around the neighborhood and streets and Cuff the Duke’s “If I Live or Die,” while they drive around to locate the church. “Meet Me in the Alleyway” has overtones of ritual with mentions of “Mardi Gras,” “spirit,” and so on, that build the stage for the scene of the burnt church with the graffiti of a woman sacrifice. A deeper significance to this is the malicious human psychology that prompts such sacrifices, like a wound that festers the South, a metaphor for America, it stands for all that is the “melancholy malady” within America, which needs to be confronted, a message that comes rather tellingly with track “The Angry River” with the credits of the finale episode. The psychedelic sound of “If I Live or Die” offers an answer to the questions that the church scenes pose i.e. a proof of God and the heaven. The answer comes:

Here you are at my place within your glistening eyes  
I’m watching your reactions as the thing within you cries  
And I’m bringing you this message ‘cause I think it’s

time you knew

That the kingdom of heaven is within you

A “kingdom” that clearly sees all as equal. The stanza also reminds of the rapture that these corpses seem to have witnessed at the time of death, what Cohle describes as the “unmistakeable release” from the ‘presumption and dead will’ of the ‘dream’ that man sees as reality, in the “locked room” which is comprised of memories, pain, love, hate, and so on.

#### IV. EPISODE THREE

As Cohle and Hart investigate the drawings on the wall of the church in “The Locked Room,” Staples Singers’ “Stand By Me” plays in the background to foreground the idea of the help from God that all humanity seems to be in search, but there also lurks a feeling of doubt in its authenticity. Chole’s perception that the “locked room” holds the answer to the secret of human experience which is nothing but an illusion seems mere regurgitation of a rehearsed answer of convenience in 1995. Marty Hart bares his panic when he states, “For a guy who sees no point in existence, you fret about it an awful lot.” At another instance he points out the difference between Rust and himself: “The difference is that I know the difference between the idea and a fact. You are incapable of admitting doubt. Now that sounds like denial to me.” Even though a veil to doubt in 1995, in 2012 Cohle seems to have realized some truth in the idea, at the end of this dream he says is a “monster,” and we are left with the monstrous images of a man in gas-mask and underwear treading a field with a machete. One is reminded of the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers here, who talked of the ‘limit situations’ where one comes against a wall. Jaspers in the work *The Idea of the University* stated [1]:

The limits of science have always been the source of bitter disappointment when people expected something from science that it was not able to provide. Take the following examples: a man without faith seeking to find in science a substitute for his faith on which to build his life; a man unsatisfied by philosophy seeking an all-embracing universal truth in science; a spiritually shallow person growing aware of his own futility in the course of engaging in the endless reflections imposed by science. In every one of these cases, science begins as an object of blind idolatry and ends up as an object of hatred and contempt.

Disenchantment inevitably follows upon these and similar misconceptions. One question remains: What value can science possibly have when its limitations have become so painfully clear? (30)

Maggie and Marty try to bring some normalcy to Cohle’s life trying to set him with a friend, and while on the double date two tracks are played to the background, Buddy Miller’s “Does My Ring Burn Your Finger,” written in the bluegrass tradition, and Johnny Horton’s “I’m A One Woman Man,” both exhibiting a deep sense of existential angst, and a feeling of loss and betrayal looming all over, followed by Jo-El Sonnier’s two compositions for the following dance, reflective of the tradition of Louisiana, which in turn symbolizes

America and its traditions. The emotions that these tracks along with the visuals evoke qualify as elements that Cohle describes as the ingredients of the false “dream” that humans wrongly perceive as real. The episode provides evidence of Reverend Tuttle’s deep involvement, and the important lead of Reginald Ledoux apart from leaving us with the tantalizing shots of a ‘monster’ in a gasmask barely dressed stomping through a field with a machete, a typical gothic spectacle.

#### V.EPISODE FOUR

“Who Goes There” comprises the action that takes Rust and Cohle to Reggie Ledoux. Charlie reveals Ledoux’s involvement with a secret society, whose sign was a ‘spiral,’ the one that appeared on Dora’s corpse, and several others, including Rust’s visions. Charlie tells of a place down south where rich men went for devil worship. He talks of kids and animal sacrifices, and women, and children being murdered in a place called “Carcosa, and the Yellow King.” With this is laid a rich layer of mythology. To imagine a place like this in the midst of the Louisiana landscape sends a chill down the spine. Charlie also gives the name of Ledoux’s associate Tyrone Weems. On arriving at Tyrone Weems’ mother to interrogate her Bo Diddley’s “Bring It to Jerome” is played. Her testimony that Weems had left after a fight after selling her oven, and had been with a stripper come across as a story of the pain of everyday existence reflected in the song. Followed by Melvins’ “The Brain Center at Whipples” which too is an existential cry, whipples being a disease common among men which has neurological symptoms. “Illegal Business” by Boogie Down Productions from the album *By All Means Necessary* is a social commentary on the issues like drugs, AIDS, and violence. KRS-One regarded himself a teacher so the track anticipates the corruption and police links within drug scenarios. When Maggie leaves Marty after discovering his affair from Lisa, Marty tries to coax her into taking him back but we find him on Cohle’s couch instead and the two prepare to take down the Iron Crusaders Bikers Gang in order to track down the lead suspect Reggie Ledoux. While still in the bar after Marty’s vain attempt at saving his family, he tries to find some comfort in a friend, but Cohle tells him how his problems were none of his business, revealing his respect for Maggie and her daughters, while at the background we hear Blind Uncle Gaspard with “Sur Le Borde De L’Eau,” a typical Louisiana song (Cajun lyrics) reminding us that Marty’s troubles and those of Cohle are not just their own but stand as a trope for all of the United States. Lucinda Williams “Are You Alright” through Rusty’s meticulous preparations in his kitchen and the evidence locker room sounds rather an ominous cry of all women, be it his lost wife and daughters, of whom Rust here stands as a champion, or be it Maggie for whom Marty seems absent through the operation, and also the voice of a motherland for its children. Cohle talks to Maggie at a diner, where he tries to explain her in his rather pessimistic philosophy again that the man woman drama is not supposed to work any way and it is important only because of the children but Maggie retorts saying what a good husband he would have made, to which he seems quite hurt, for a man

holding such a philosophy, evident from his walk. Though the scene we hear Slim Harpo’s “Rainin’ in My Heart,” like a cry of a penitent lover. The personal drama is followed by the public, that is, the biker gang operation. We hear four tracks through these scenes, followed by the credits song with the helicopter flyover. Melvins’ “History of Bad Men” played while Cohle walks into the bar looking for Ginger is as if he was chiding Marty into the situation, for he may have taken the character of Crash but his friend Marty was still within his emotional trap, and this out of depth state could cost them their lives. The irreverent awkward quirky approach that Marty exhibits while walking inside the biker bar looking for Rust is quite characteristic of Primus, whose track “American Life” plays to the background. The track in the situation is a dig at the hollowness of the concept of the American Dream. Marty knocks on the door to the back of the biker bar to the sounds of the Sleep’s “Holy Mountain,” sounds that create a sense of despair, dread, and impending doom. With it he seems to have heard the cry “Wake up you never looked so glum” from the “History of Bad Men,” but so has Cohle from his slumber of narcotic cover agent, as if:

Slumber killed by rays of the new red sun arising  
Dreamer awakens to spectral gaze of light rays shining

But the second stanza sounds echoes the waking up of the devil, the man with the gasmask and machete, probably Ledoux, the meth cook, to set souls like Lange “free” (the idea that reminds of the mystic Teleos de lorca reference), as an agent of the “reptile master.” The stanza reads:

I believe the signs of the reptile master

Sun bound space pod rising faster

Earth drenched in black under starless sky above

Man on the mountain sets free the holy dove

The starless sky drenched in black reminds of Lange’s scribbling on her diary from *The Yellow King*:

Strange is the night where black stars rise,

And strange moons circle through the skies,

But strange still is Lost Carcosa (Cassilda’s Song,

Act 1, Scene 2, from Robert W. Chambers’s anthology

*The King in Yellow* 1895)

In the work, the supernatural stories and characters share a common link, that of the mysterious play, *The King in Yellow* within these stories. Chambers hints only at the content of this play, when read in the stories, however, it turns the reader insane with the visions of the King in Yellow. At this point of the series Ledoux seems as the King in Yellow, the ‘sonic Titan’ but the fact that he was killed in the hero shot in 1995 that Marty and Cohle describe everyone, and the fact that there has been a fresh murder, leaves with the pertinent question of whodunit in the subsequent episode. But the music seems to be revealing it way before with Wu-Tang Clan’s “Clan in Da Front,” if one was to focus on the deep involvement of Reverend Tuttle, from the defunct schools to the charity for the police department, and his relationship with the governor. Finally as the credits roll we hear Grinderman’s “Honey Bee (Let’s Fly to Mars),” a perfect track to mark the drama and melodrama of the episode, and life.

## VI. EPISODE FIVE

“The Secret Life of All Fate” offers the viewer the insight into the supposed hero shot: Rust and Marty carrying the bodies of children from the dark woods, having found Ledoux through an informer. In the narrative, Reggie with an AK-47 opened heavy fire and is killed by Marty, while his associate was supposedly killed by one of their own booby traps, trying to escape. But as a viewer we know this story is a staged cover up for Marty’s murder of Ledoux, in a moment of rage on discovering the two children in a traumatized pathetic state behind a steel door. The two enjoy hero worship and peace in their lives for a few years following this, but share a common restlessness. While the narcissist Marty seems stressing over aging, Rust is obsessed about the Yellow King.

The opening scene depicts Rust and Ginger, his hostage, sitting in a bar waiting for Ledoux, and in the bar plays “Casey’s Last Ride,” and one hears another deep echo of the existential state of humanity. “Casey” could be any of these men within their lives:

Casey joins the hollow sound of silent people walking down

The stairway to the subway in the shadows down below  
Following their footsteps through the neon-darkened corridors

Of silent desperation, never speaking to a soul

But DeWall’s comment that Cohle has eyes that are “corrosive,” and that he had “a shadow” over him sets the ball for the shows focus on Rust as a prime suspect after Tuttle’s death and the new Lake Charles murder in the manner of Lange. Cohle seems to have taken the devil’s path, one feels, through the lines:

The poison air he’s breathing has the dirty smell of dying

‘cause it’s never seen the sunshine and it’s never felt the rain

And just as Chole puts all he’s got on the line for his obsession of getting to the root of the Lange murder, ignoring the losses he has to endure emotionally, bodily, career wise, friendship, even his life, he appears to be marching towards his own extinction he preaches everyone, but there is a redeeming hero like quality to it. The song fits aptly:

Bit Casey minds the arrows and ignores the fatal

Echoes  
Of the clinking of the turnstiles and the rattle of his chains.

Cohle’s personal tragedy finds an echo:

...Casey drinks his pint of bitter

Never glancing in the mirror at the people passing by  
Then he stumbles as he’s leaving and he wonders if the reason

Is the beer that’s in his belly or the tear that’s in his eye.

The episode tries to build a closing in on Cohle as the Yellow King or at least as a prime suspect but the audience is sufficiently convinced otherwise, in spite of his contempt of humanity and ramblings like “time is a circle,” his absence of years, and his reputation of a skilled confession drawing detective in the department. But his skill seems based on the

belief that modern existentialist Soren Kierkegaard offered that through God and in God man finds freedom from the tension and discontent which in turn provides peace of mind and spiritual serenity. The idea rings the following statement by Kierkegaard in the mind [2]:

God creates out of nothing. Wonderful you say. Yes, to be sure, but he does what is still more wonderful: he makes saints out of sinners. (59)

On the personal front mean while in the lives of the two detectives, we witness a few years of peace and harmony prevail, but dwindling since the Lake Charles case has emerged. Marty’s defunct household had found some stability after the Ledoux incident because Maggie had softened after the “hero shot” and we find him on the road to recovery when skating with his daughters to the background track “Tired of Waiting for You” by the Kinks, explaining his state of his guilt and despair after committing a mistake. The reflective track song accompanied by guitar aptly portrays the personality of Marty, and his emotional state. Maggie tells him, “You used to be a good man.” Cohle too is restless before the TV screen as Laurine surfs through channels in the typical television studies way of presenting gender division (women seek pleasure in trivial while men find domesticity confining). The episode ends with Bosnian Rainbows’ “Eli” as the credits roll. Eli was the teacher/carer to Prophet Samuel, meaning ascension in Hebrew. The track’s focus on the missing of the prophet is a metaphor for the missing years of Chole, even Marty. An important development of this episode is the reference of Teleos de lorca by Reverend Theroit, now out of ministry he’s turned a drunkard because of his lost faith in God whose only presence he said he experienced was silence. This and the Wellsprings program mention that lands Rust suspended again hints to the deep rootedness and the enormity of the criminal circuit the detectives are after.

## VII. EPISODE SIX

The “Haunted Houses” offers an insight into the falling out of the duo’s partnership and an account of Cohle’s absence. Marty had another affair, we learn and Maggie had revenge sex with his partner. So while Rust’s house has been haunted for years because of his loss of his daughter and wife, and subsequently his failure at relationships and crime of all sorts, Marty too bears the heat of existence. He may have a thing for the “wild” and when his daughter does the same things it becomes unbearable. His absence as a father in their lives has been a reason he eventually realizes. As the years have gone by Marty seems more preoccupied with his thinning hair than his daughters, he craves youth. He seems a rather uncomfortable dad on a tampon duty. This becomes clear as he walks toward the Fox and Hound bar to Waylon Jennings’ “Waymore’s Blues.” Outside the bar, in an ironic incident played to the background of Bobby Charles’ “Les Champs Elysee,” Marty meets Beth, the child prostitute he slipped hundred dollars at the Bunny Ranch for a better life, and ends up having sex with her. A common lyrics translation of the song in English reads:

It was enough talking to you

For taming you

The song exhibits the prejudices of this world that can offer women only male champions like Marty. His hollowness and that of the world is further brought forth with the track "Everyman Needs a Companion" by Father John Misty.

The other key tracks on the episode are Glenn Gould's "Goldberg Variations; BWV 988; Aria" heard when Chole talks to Kelly Rita, the catatonic girl rescued from behind the steel door, and she whispers of the giant with scars before she screams hysterically. The graveness of this scene is evident from the use of the aria. After suspension Rust takes his work home where we hear Ike and Tina Turner's "Too Many Tears in My Heart," expressing the Maggie's crumbling marriage and Cohle's vulnerability in the face of authority, when Maggie visits him complaining of Marty's infidelity, after a failed attempt to sleep with a stranger enacted to the background of Emmylon Harris's "The Good Book." Maggie seduces him to the "Core Chant" by Meredith Monk, suggesting a dark ominous sort of justice, the falling out fight hence follows and the episode ends as the credits roll to the "Sign of the Judgment," in the female voice of Cassandra Wilson suggesting that Maggie has been avenged.

#### VIII. EPISODE SEVEN

"After You've Gone" qualifies as the penultimate episode, for it resolves the central mystery of the scared giant man with green ears, associated with the Mardi Gras celebrations at the town of Erath, that sounds like a rather distorted name for earth, with happens to be the ancestral town of the Tuttle clan that practically runs the entire state. After the fight Marty continued with his job for a few years but eventually quit after he witnessed a charred carcass of a microwaved baby and Rust spent eight years in Alaska. But the two reunite after all this time as bad men fighting bad men. On further investigating they discover of Sam Tuttle, Billy Lee Tuttle's father who had many illegitimate children and a grandson with a scared face from Sam Tuttle's "other family" the Childress family, from his former worker Ms. Delores, who suffers from dementia but recognizes the Carcosa drawings. "Rejoice," she says. "Death is not the end." This may seem like a liberating narrative for some but we learn how it is only a facade to cover up the distorted face of humanity symbolized in the scar faced illegitimate son of the Tuttle clan, marked by deep corruption of the state, where officers like Steve Geraci prosper, thanks to their botching up of evidence for the Tuttle clan.

The episode open with Cassandra Wilson's "Sign of the Judgment" and quickly moves on the "Angel of the Morning" by Juice Newton that suggests Cohles resolve to track down the Yellow King, but for which he needs his old partner's help, and for which he later shows his collected evidence to convince him. The lyrics go:

There'll be no strings to bind your hands  
Not if my love can't bind your heart  
There's no need to take a stand  
For it was I who chose to start

The yellow light that seems to dominate all evil things within the series also finds an ominous echo in the line:

"Maybe the sun's light will be dim." Apart from this gothic touch one can trace the idea of existentialism in the lyrics:

If morning echoes say we've sinned  
Well, it was what I wanted now

And if we're victims of the night  
I won't be blinded by the light

Cohle's figure on the hospital bed after minor recovery looks like that of Christ after Crucifixion, the echo of the "morning angel" here almost anticipates it. Through these investigations, especially that of the hooker Toby Boelert we hear School of the Seven Bells' "Trance Figure" which seems to aptly fit with Toby's description of his childhood experience of abuse as something Toby calls a 'dream,' which had men with animal heads and where Toby could not move, but he leaves an important lead that adds to authenticate the identity of the scared man as the scared monster. "All things are visualizations," the song reflects and Toby seems to agree but the fact that all such drama is mere facade and such means are employed because it makes the cover up effective is also suggested in the lyrics:

What visualizations makes you the most effective  
If gods and idols are vessels that house our intensions  
most certainly

Through Cohle's investigations it seems he has earned a friend Robert, the man who owns the bar and had lost his son in 1985. When Rust introduces Marty to him we hear the Gregg Allman's "Floating Bridge" at the background which sounds like the ritual killing of his son, one almost imagines him through it, being bathed put "five minutes underwater when I was hid," praying to God to be taken "on dry land" with "hands thrown up." And of how he would have drank the "a gallon of muddy water" through the struggle. The lines like,

Now, they dried me off, they laid me on the bed  
Don't like muddy water running through my head and,  
Now, the people standin' on the bridge was screamin'  
and cryin'

.....  
Lord, I thought sure that I was dyin'

send a chill down one's spine, especially after having partially witnessed the occult tape that Cohle steals from Billy Lee Tuttle. Another major track is the "Red Light (Featuring Ravenbird)" by Vincent and Mr. Green played while Hart and Cohle walk up to Ms. Delores's house. Rest two tracks that find space on the episode are Black Rebel Motorcycle Club with "Fault Line" that plays while Rust and Cohle talk about the Marie Fontenot case at the bar, suggesting the "rising tide" that shall drown all evil, receiving the judgment standing at the 'father's door' while taking on 'living evil,' and Richard and Linda Thompson's "Did She Jump or Was She Pushed" that brilliantly captures the nature of Maggi's decision out of despair and disappointment because of being "pushed" murderously, followed by the credits to the music of Townes Van Zandt's "Lungs" immediately after the shot of the lawnmower, who is the scared man himself. The track is suggestive of the sacrifices for selfish reasons.

The first stanza sounds like the voice of the Yellow King

talking to his sacrifice:

Won't you lend your lungs to me?  
Mine are collapsin'  
Plant my feet and bitterly breath  
Up the time that's passin' and to his clan,  
Seal the river at its mouth  
Take the water prisoner  
Fill the sky with screams and cries  
Bathe in fiery answers

The lines "Jesus was an only son/And love his only concept" symbolizes the Christ-opposing nature of the Carcosa sacrifices that are the inheritance, and religion of the Tuttles, and the Childresses, clearly not the 'only son' in their case.

#### IX. EPISODE EIGHT

To the rather grim pessimistic preceding episodes the finale episode "Form and Void" brings a feeling of positivity or even happiness, in the manner of Camus's philosophy through the myth of Sisyphus, where there is hope. Rust and Cohle track down the lawnmower Errol, the giant with green ears and manage to kill him, and though they get seriously injured in the process, there is a certain amount of healing on the level of the soul. Rust's walk through the Carcosa made him see things that make him believe in the possibility of something beyond death, and he imagines it be his daughter and wife—everything he loved once. But this little light is contained in a vast gulf of darkness that Errol symbolizes, he is like the darkness that fills the sky leaving little space for the stars which Rust nostalgically remembers along with the stories he liked to imagine under the Alaska sky.

Sartre the hierophant of modern existentialism expressed the vision that man is born in a void, a mud. He is granted the liberty to remain there in a passive existence, a semi-conscious state, scarcely aware of himself—like Marty or he may choose to come out and experience "angoisse" (metaphysical and moral anguish) to get a sense of the absurdity of his predicament here on earth. He may, in the process, suffer despair like Rust and in a way even Marty, but he will drag himself out of the mud and exist, exercising his power of choice (creating what Sartre called an "authentic existence"), to give meaning to his existence, as Chole does, creating a structure for his existence and helping society. Distinguishing man from inanimate objects Sartre stated:

Man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world--and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. [3]

The tracks on the episode are the title track "Far From Any Road," and the credits track "Angry River" specially created for the purpose, by the Oscar winning musician T. Bone Burnett himself, offering an allegorical commentary on the state of things in United States, through the metaphor of the South. Burnett stated:

The show...takes a good, hard look at who we are right now, in a very profound way...I live in Los Angeles, and

I recently took a drive through the middle of the country, and I was stunned by what I saw. In places that had once had purpose, all that's left is a pawnshop, next to a gun shop, next door to a motel, next door to a gas station, with a Walmart right outside of the town. There are people working three jobs just to get by and having to take methamphetamines to do it. That's the middle of the country, and that's plague that's spreading outwards. We're not seeing it, and these are the things that you see in the show. It's making a strong statement,... [4]

Lincoln Michel's comment [5] further validates the point: The long-standing Southern feeling of loss is spreading out—like the kudzu vines that have made their way into Northern and Midwestern states across America. You can see it in the primal whine of the Tea Party and in the fretting of academicians.

China is taking over, or India is, or Russia, or we are simply an Empire in decline with the rot spreading from the inside.

#### X. CONCLUSION

The series qualifies as a typical southern gothic, offering a commentary on the social vices through its employment of the grotesque landscape, unusual, ironic and supernatural events, the looming sense of the place, corpses, imprisonments, violence, freakishness, a reclusive knight and his cringe inducing partner, the innocent dead daughter, and so on, as does its music. "In the South, the sense of loss and ruin is combated with the faint whispers that 'the South will rise again' ..." [5]. And even though Onion, a few years ago ran an article "South Postpones Rising Again For Another Year," Southern culture does rise again and again, sometimes with its Southern hip-hop with rappers like David Banner, and sometimes, with a TV series like True Detective.

T. Bone Burnett's choice of music is brilliant it reflects his love for the detective genre. A common link running through his choice is that in spite of being brilliant these tracks could not make it big. It seems T. Burnett has given them a chance at a new life.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Jaspers, Karl. *The Idea of the University*. University of Michigan: P. Owen, 1965. 2nd ed. Google Book Search. Web. 3 Feb. 2015.
- [2] Kierkegaard, Soren. *The Soul of Kierkegaard: Selections from his Journals*. Ed. Alexander Dru. New York: Dover, 2012. Print.
- [3] <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm>
- [4] Suebsaeng, Asawin. "How he Chooses Music For 'True Detective.'" *Mother Jones*. Jan. 24, 2014. Web. Jan. 7, 2015. <http://www.motherjones.com/mixedmedia/2014/01/t-bone-burnett-true-detective-hbo-music-songs>
- [5] Michel, Lincoln. "Lush Rot: Flannery O' Conner, True Detective, Southern Hip-Hop, and the Gnarled Roots of Southern Gothic." *Guernica Magazine*. March 17, 2014. Web. <http://www.guernicamag.com/daily/lincoln-michel-lush-rot>