Identifying and Analyzing the Poetic Qualities of

The Beatles’ Lyrics from 1965–1970

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Abstract:
The purpose of this paper is to analyze and identify the poetic elements of The Beatles’ lyrics from 1965 to 1970. The primary goal is to demonstrate that the band’s lyrics are serious poetry, not merely performance. I will review scholarly books and articles about The Beatles’ role in popular culture and literature, as well as use my knowledge of poetry to interpret the findings of my close analysis of individual Beatles’ songs. The Beatles considered themselves artists, not just performers, and John Lennon even claimed that real poets like Shakespeare were his true competition, not pop musicians. This will serve as my starting point in looking at the lyrics as poetry. Some studies indicate the words of The Beatles’ songs became more complicated as the 1960s progressed due to the growing importance of language among the band’s writers. Such attention to language clearly suggests the acceptability of analyzing The Beatles’ lyrics as poetry.
Introduction

As an expression of human emotion, behavior, and thought, poetry is an art form where the poet uses words as the medium with which to illustrate his mental canvas. The use of carefully crafted language conveys the voice of a poet and transcends the common utility as a medium for literal communication. A poet's voice can be expressed through imagery, rhyme, meter, symbols, metaphors, diction, and sounds. Songwriters, like poets, use such elements in the lyrics of their music and deserve equal recognition and acclaim for doing so successfully. The Beatles, leaders of the musical British Invasion of the 1960s, attracted millions of fans with their infectious backbeat and rhythm. However, the poetic spirit of the lyrics in their albums from 1965 to 1970 is the group's greatest contribution to popular culture. This study examines this quality of The Beatles' lyrics, presenting the band's lyrics as poetry, not merely performance.

In this study I analyze the lyrics of songs written by John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison, recorded by The Beatles on albums released from 1965 to 1970. The albums examined in this study are Rubber Soul, Revolver, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, The Beatles [White Album], Magical Mystery Tour, Abbey Road, and Let It Be. Yellow Submarine has been excluded because it is merely a compilation of songs from previous albums; no new songs were added. I omitted Let It Be...Naked, released in 2003, because the music was altered, although the lyrics remain the same. Singles released apart from albums, such as "Hey Jude" and "You Know My Name, Look Up the Number," are not included based on my decision that songs released together on an album reflect unity and singles fall outside of such accord. Because Ringo Starr wrote only two songs with and for The Beatles, his songs are not included in this study. Also omitted are songs written by the band for other bands, songs previously recorded by other
artists and covered by The Beatles, and songs without lyrics, such as “Flying” from the Magical Mystery Tour soundtrack.

Because the focus of this study is on words, it is important to ensure the lyrics I analyze are correct. Past misinterpretations made public have led to much unnecessary confusion and will be avoided in this analysis. Because of such erroneous interpretations, the lyrics I use in my research come from one source, *The Beatles Illustrated Lyrics*, edited by Alan Aldridge. I selected this source because the book was first published in 1969, allowing Aldridge time to correct any mistakes, and therefore, ensuring the most accurate lyrics.

For this study of lyrics from 1965 to 1970, I distributed the albums among three periods: pre-psychedelic, psychedelic, and post-psychedelic. Pre-psychedelic albums include *Rubber Soul* (1965) and *Revolver* (1966); Psychedelic albums include *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), *Magical Mystery Tour* (1968), and *The Beatles [White Album]* (1968); and Post-psychedelic albums are *Abbey Road* (1969) and *Let It Be* (1970).

The lyrics of their pre-psychedelic period were heavily influenced by the band's use of marijuana and indicate a transition away from the conventionality and innocence of the pop music scene. The songs begin to critically discuss Christianity, the role of women in society, war, Eastern religion, the government, themselves, states of mind, free will, materialism, contemporary music, and even the tax system—unusual topics for a decade in which music mostly told heavily censored stories about romantic, teenage love. Although their message of the pre-psychedelic period began to break from the standard, the band members retained a sense of normality and safety by preserving physical conventionality. They remained clean-shaven and wore suits and ties during this stage of transition.
However, beads and kurtas soon replaced their conventional garb during The Beatles' psychedelic phase. During this time, The Beatles stopped touring and produced studio songs that were impossible to play live. Although it has been suggested that the lyrics of this stage reflect great loneliness, I contend that the opposite is true; deep friendships and romantic relationships marked this period and prove so in my results. The songs of this time present a new spirit of togetherness, replacing the one of the previous generation, "peer togetherness" replaced the "family togetherness" of the 1950s.

The togetherness of The Beatles' generation soon dissolved during the post-psychedelic years. During the final years of The Beatles, each member busied himself with individual projects, coming together only to record. George delved further into Eastern religion and philosophy and focused on improving his writing without the help of John or Paul because they were actually stifling his writing capabilities. John became more radical and involved in politics, reflected in a majority of his songs until 1975 and centered his focus on his new wife Yoko Ono, and as a result began working on side projects with her as part of the avant-garde movement. Paul stepped up as the unspoken leader of The Beatles during this period, managing the group's finances. He also made a failed attempt to convince the band to return to live performances and concerts, consciously unaware that the band was actually dissolving. Paul also worked on side projects, such as writing scores for film soundtracks. Because of the individual nature of the works of the post-psychedelic period of The Beatles' career, the lyrics of each member are analyzed independently and presented separately within the chapter.

By the conclusion of this study, I would like to answer the following question: Why should the lyrics of The Beatles' songs from 1965–1970 be analyzed as poetry? The songs of the band have not been discussed as a serious literary contribution, and before that can be done, it is
crucial to establish why it can be done. I would like to present The Beatles’ songs as equally important in value to established poets’ writings.

I believe it is reasonable to analyze the lyrics of The Beatles as poetry because the members of the group feel they should be considered as more than mere performers. They express the belief that they are artists whose ideas are important in defining the mindset of the twentieth century. Aside from any literary contributions, The Beatles were highly influential culturally, instrumentally, and aesthetically. They impacted the world so greatly that it is important to discuss their music as more than just fun pop melodies.

Pre-Psychedelic Period

After their initial peak from 1964 to early 1966, during which they released two feature films and several albums, The Beatles began to realize the power and influence of their music on their listeners. Beginning with the release of Rubber Soul (1965) and continuing onto Revolver (1966), the pre-psychedelic albums, the songs written mark a turning point because they focus more on the lyrics and the message they present. Rubber Soul is marked by songs in which Lennon writes a message and lyrics containing sexual references hidden behind the Beatles’ innocent image. Revolver demonstrates the changes begun on Rubber Soul and contains lyrics that defy convention and discuss 1960s’ culture.

Theme of Christianity

As The Beatles entered their pre-psychedelic phase, their founding member Lennon grew more preoccupied with the influence of his words and began to write songs in which he presents a message to his listeners. The first of these is “Girl” in which Lennon makes a comment about aspects of Christianity. Lennon disagreed with the Christian notion that one must suffer before
experiencing pleasure, epitomized by the pain Jesus Christ endured before his followers were allowed redemption. He expresses this the moment he sings:

Was she told when she was young that pain
Would lead to pleasure?
Did she understand it when they said
That a man must break his back to earn his
Day of leisure,
Will she still believe it when he's dead? (Aldridge 175)

Lennon sings of a girl who believes in receiving pain before pleasure and cynically concludes by asking if such a belief will continue to be valid once the suffering leads to death instead. With this, Lennon expresses his condemnation of this Christian concept in a subtle manner.

Expanded Concept of Love

Until the release of Rubber Soul, most Beatles songs were about immature romantic love. However, 1965 marked the band members’ changing, growing concept of love, particularly Lennon’s new preoccupation with unconditional love of humanity, reflected in his lyrics of this period. One song that demonstrates the transition away from romantic love is “The Word.”

In the beginning I misunderstood,
But now I’ve got it the word is good. (Aldridge 24)

Lennon sings that he misunderstood his initial idea of love, but his current concept of it is correct.

Such changing concept of love is again represented in “In My Life,” a nostalgic look at Lennon’s childhood friends and what initially appears to be a better time.

There are places I remember
All my life, though some have changed,
Some forever, not for better,
Some have gone and some remain
All these places had their moments…

In my life I’ve loved them all. (Aldridge 30)

This first stanza expresses John’s love for his past. However, as he continues, Lennon’s tone shifts, indicated by beginning the next line with a “but,” and he discusses his present relationships.

But of all these friends and lovers,
There is no one compared with you,
And these mem’ries lose their meaning
When I think of love as something new
Though I know I’ll never lose affection
For people and things that went before…

In my life I’ll love you more. (Aldridge 30)

These lyrics express the irrelevance of his past relationships and love compared to that of the present. Now John thinks of “love as something new,” indicating his changing idea of love, demonstrating optimism associated with such change.

Themes of Social Criticism

Lennon also began thinking about his position on the behaviors of members of society, reflected in “Nowhere Man.” The song, a pessimistic view of his contemporaries, sings of a Nowhere Man in his Nowhere Land making Nowhere Plans. This indicates bleakness, and the theme continues as John continues his song.

Doesn’t have a point of view,
Knows not where he’s going to,
Isn’t he a bit like you and me? (Aldridge 60)

Until now the audience has looked down upon the Nowhere Man and has seen him as someone one should not aspire to be, and the listener is left to wonder about the identity of the Nowhere Man. However, by asking, “Isn’t he a bit like you and me?” Lennon pushes his pessimistic attitude toward the listener; “he” suddenly becomes “you and me,” Lennon included, and the audience adopts the persona of the man that they had previously looked down on.

Lennon’s contempt for the Nowhere Man is furthered by his diction. The Nowhere Man’s actions occur in the present tense in weak verbs (verbs that end in “ing,” “doesn’t have,” “knows not,” etc.), and, although the world is at his command, his behaviors are his weakness. Lennon also makes demands of the Nowhere Man, which serve as a warning to all Nowhere Men to change their behavior. This warning is Lennon’s message within the song.

*Themes of Sexuality*

Also, while in their pre-psychedelic phase, The Beatles’ lyrics changed in that they expressed sexuality. However, such sexuality was softened by the innocence of the band’s image and pop music sound. Such a shift is shown in “Drive My Car,” a song about an aspiring star who hires a chauffeur despite not owning a car. The retention of some innocence is evident when the aspiring star tells the prospective chauffeur that until she purchases a car he “can do something in between” and that she “can show [him] a better time” (Aldridge 24). Suggestive of sexual intercourse, these lines show a change in The Beatles’ lyrical subject content while maintaining an innocent image by singing that only suggests intercourse.

The sexual innuendo of “Drive My Car” is furthered when the band sings, “Beep beep mm, beep beep yeh!” (Aldridge 24). It has been suggested that these lines are a sexual onomatopoeia, emulating the sound of two people having sex in a car; the space of the car, so
small that they repeatedly bump into the horn and yell, "yeh," expressing pleasure. This demonstrates a more mature subject content, but it is still innocent because it is not blatant.

Much less innocent, "Norwegian Wood" is about an extramarital affair between Lennon and another woman who owned an apartment furnished with fashionable Norwegian wood. Unlike previous songs, this one sings of true sexual relations and is entirely about sex, not just a few lines.

Ambiguity marks the dominating presentation of sexuality. The first uncertainty occurs with Lennon's lines, "I was alone,/this bird had flown" (Aldridge 73). Upon closer examination, the listener realizes that the bird's identity is unidentifiable. One possibility is that it refers to the girl because in England a "bird" is a slang term for a girl. In this sense the line simply states that Lennon's lover has left, possibly for work. However, another possibility exists; the bird that has flown could represent John's penis, a popular slang term, adding to the already heavy innuendo. In this sense, Lennon recalls that he has already committed the sexual act, and it is made even worse in that he is now alone in a tub.

The ambiguity of Lennon's lyrics continues in the final lines of "Norwegian Wood."

So I lit a fire,

Isn't it good?

Norwegian Wood. (Aldridge 73)

The fire John lights could possibly be one in a fireplace. If this is so, it could be suggested that after realizing the implications of his relationship, John accepts his behavior and relaxes before the warmth of a fire. However, because he concludes by mentioning the woman's furniture, the fire possibly could be one Lennon sets to the furniture. This meaning suggests that John, after
realizing the implications of his relationship, attempts to escape the results by destroying any physical memory of it by doing away with the girl’s distinguishing factor.

These qualities on The Beatles’ *Rubber Soul* album are important because they indicate the growing importance of lyrics as well as the members’ growth as people. During the pre-psychedelic period, the band begins to retreat from the early, safe image and adopts a slightly less innocent, more mature personality. The beginning phases of their maturity grew throughout the band’s existence and continued on their next album, *Revolver*. This album is marked by a more blatant move from their previous image.

*Themes of Defying Conventionality*

One such move is The Beatles’ defiance of convention, first done on “Taxman.” The song’s lyrics discuss the British tax system, an odd subject for a song. Harrison’s song is also odd because George takes the persona of himself and the taxman. At one point he sings:

If you drive a car, I’ll tax the street,

If you try to sit, I’ll tax your seat,

If you take a walk, I’ll tax your feet. (Aldridge 69)

In earlier Beatles songs, the members sang their lyrics as themselves, a character, or a narrator. However, by becoming two separate people within one song, The Beatles show their defiance of customs and signal that they are entering a period in which it is acceptable to not make complete sense with their lyrics.

Harrison relieves the seriousness of the subject content with wit. He warns that his “advice for those who die,/Declare the pennies on your eyes” (Aldridge 69). In the past pennies would be placed upon the eyes of the deceased in order to keep their eyes closed, and by suggesting that one declare those pennies, Harrison cleverly expresses his harsh criticism of taxes.
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The defiance of convention continues in “Tomorrow Never Knows,” which discusses states of mind. John’s inspiration was *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, indicating the band’s growing Indian influence, and the song’s music is different because it consists of only one chord, C. Lyrically the song is different because it presents the closest thing to the experience of an LSD trip in words.

Turn off your mind relax and float downstream,

It is not dying, it is not dying,

Lay down all thought surrender to the void,

It is shining, it is shining. (Aldridge 121)

Pschedelic Period

While the pre-psychedelic period marked The Beatles’ lyrics’ movement away from convention, the psychedelic phase marked the group’s retreat from and eventual redefinition of convention. The group began wearing ornate, colorful outfits, growing even longer hairstyles and facial hair, and practicing the teachings of Eastern religion.

*Themes of Peer Togetherness*

They also began producing music solely in the studio and quit playing before live audiences as they had been doing for nearly a decade. Because of this, scholars have suggested that the psychedelic period was a lonely one for The Beatles, and the lyrics on the albums of this time, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967), and *Beatles [White Album]* (1968), indicate their feelings of isolation. Discussing the lyrics of *Sgt. Pepper* in *Beowulf to Beatles & Beyond*, scholar David Pichaske suggests, “Two things are important: the band is lonely, and it is performing [The Beatles are pretending not to be The Beatles]. Perhaps the two are interrelated: performers are generally lonely people, lonely people perform when they
pretend not to be lonely and in an attempt to escape their loneliness” (Pichaske 522). Pichaske also suggests that the line in “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band (Reprise)” which sings, “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely,” actually means “Sgt. Pepper is lonely,” emphasized by its repetition.

However, Sgt. Pepper’s band, The Beatles, is anything but lonely. Despite the album’s bleak title that initially evokes feelings of isolation, its songs’ lyrics actually present and celebrate a feeling of togetherness felt during the psychedelic era. Where the previous generation had found a sense of togetherness within the family unit, the new generation of the psychedelic 60s found true togetherness in peers, where like minds were free to express and escape (whether unnaturally through drugs, naturally through transcendental meditation, or, even, creatively through the creation of an alter ego band—all methods tried by The Beatles). As a group, The Beatles had plenty of new friends with which to do so: Jimi Hendrix, The Beach Boys, and so on. Individually, each member had a companion, too: John met Yoko, Paul found Linda, and George still had Patti. Sgt. Pepper presents the expression of emotion resulting from these bonds, rather than feelings of loneliness.

The opening track on Sgt. Pepper introduces Paul’s fictional band. First, The Beatles introduce themselves, followed by members of the Sgt. Pepper’s band. Invitations to “Sit back and let the evening go” and the assurance that the show will be “certainly a thrill” create a sense of comfort and familiarity. Although this unknown band is about to play some songs you don’t know, you feel welcomed and the desire to stay.

Along with introducing The Beatles’ new persona, “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band” introduces the late 1960s idea of “peer togetherness.” Although the fictional band belongs to a Lonely Hearts Club, it, in fact, thrives on the bonds with many people. One of the most important of these bonds is with the audience. The band sings, “We’d like to take you home with
us/We’d like to take you home” (Aldridge 97). The irony of this line is that The Beatles are, in fact, home with the audience the moment these words are sung. After purchasing the record the audience takes the band home with them where the group succeeds in exchanging ideas freely among peers. Unlike the unruly live performances, the performance on the record within the home allows the audience to listen to the lyrics more carefully because they are not drowned by screeches of teenage girls. Thus, more emphasis is placed on the message, not the image. By allowing themselves to be taken home and heard, The Beatles are, in some form, together with their peers.

The idea of friendship is carried on into the next track, “With a Little Help From My Friends,” in which Ringo, taking the alias Billy Shears, sings optimistically of his ability to “get by” because of friends (Aldridge 128). Written by Paul and John as a kids’ sing-along for Ringo, the entire song reflects the “peer togetherness” of the period.

The ultimate example of the new direction of the togetherness of the late 60s is expressed in Harrison’s “Within You Without You,” written by Harrison in the company of friends while tripping on LSD, freely exchanging ideas.

We were talking—about the space between us all
And the people—who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion
Never glimpse the truth—then it’s far too late—when they pass away. (Aldridge 137). The song reflects George’s growing interest in Eastern religion and expresses his notion that “We’re all one. The realization of human love reciprocated is such a gas. It’s a good vibration which makes you feel good…” (Turner 130). The message of the song is clear: “We’re all one,” and “With our love we could save the world” (Aldridge 137). However, the people presenting the message are equally as important. Harrison recorded the song with a group of Indian musicians, a
small-scale unification of Western and Eastern minds. Because of the language barrier, representatives of both sides found it difficult to communicate and write the score, but they managed it successfully. Ultimately, this represents the possibility of the unification and understanding of colliding cultures without the need for war. Ultimately, this was the message The Beatles wanted to present to the world, one of reality-based togetherness, not ideal-based.

The feeling of escape toward peer togetherness is continued on Magical Mystery Tour, the soundtrack to a movie in which a group of people share crazy adventures in Pepperland aboard a magical bus. The opening tracks demonstrate such an escape:

Roll up—Roll up for the Mystery Tour.

Roll up—Roll up for the Mystery Tour.

(roll up) and that’s an invitation

Roll up for the Mystery Tour

(roll up) to make a reservation

Roll up for the Mystery Tour. (Aldridge 70)

Within the song The Beatles’ peers, their listeners, are invited to escape into a world of fantasy with the band and the “satisfaction [is] guaranteed” (Aldridge 70).

Breaking Up

However, the second half of the psychedelic period marks a shift in attitude; the songs of the late psychedelic period indicate a movement away from togetherness and the beginning hints that The Beatles were breaking up.

The Beatles [White Album] demonstrates the breakup of the unity of the early psychedelic stage. Each Beatle began to write songs independently on this album, many times in separate rooms, and only united in order to record. However, The Beatles were not completely broken up
as they participated in events together. They traveled to India as a group, where *The Beatles* [White Album] was written. Even though their lyrics on this album begin to indicate that the members were drifting apart, they were nevertheless “together as long-standing friends, able to fool around with their acoustic guitars” (Turner 149).

“Glass Onion” is Lennon’s expression of disillusionment with intellectuals and their examination of art. Lennon realized he could no longer connect creatively with his peers because they viewed art differently, and, discussing interpretations of his lyrics, John said, “I do it for me first. Whatever people make of it afterwards is valid, but it doesn’t necessarily have to correspond to my thoughts about it, OK? This goes for anyone’s ‘creations,’ art, poetry, song, etc. The mystery … that is built around all forms of art needs smashing anyway” (Turner 152). Out of this sentiment Lennon wrote “Glass Onion” in which he includes lines and images from various enigmatic Beatles’ songs.

Although, considering Lennon’s opinion of the lyrics, that this song should not be closely scrutinized, as a whole it indicates the beginning of the severing of peer togetherness.

Written after reading the phrase in a magazine, “Happiness is a Warm Gun” continues to demonstrate the late psychedelic period’s shift. While writing the song John began associating the gun with his feelings for Yoko, and it soon came to symbolize his penis. “If it was a song about anybody, it was a song about Yoko. She was the girl he held in his arms, the girl who was so smart that she didn’t miss a trick and the one he always called Mother—in this case, Mother Superior” (Turner 157).

As a song inspired by Yoko, it demonstrates the shift from unity because it shows John’s focus on subjects outside of The Beatles. However, this same shift is furthered because the string of random images was created with the help of Derek Taylor, Neil Aspinall, and Pete Shotten, not
McCartney. This clearly indicates a lack of togetherness present at the opening of the psychedelic stage and the beginning of the drifting apart continued into The Beatles' post-psychedelic years.

Paul also indicated a shift from togetherness through his lyrics, most notably in “Martha My Dear,” about his crumbling relationship with Jane Asher. Paul sings to a girl, pleading that she stay with him.

Martha my dear though I spend my days in conversation

Please

Remember me Martha my love

Don’t forget me Martha my dear. (Aldridge 33)

Paul is clearly writing on his own about his own experiences and emotions, indicating The Beatles' movement away from togetherness. However, like the other songs indicating this direction, the break from unity is only in the beginning stages; McCartney wrote “Martha My Dear” in India while with his band mates, and although the song is about a relationship outside The Beatles, it is important to note that McCartney reverted to The Beatles for catharsis. Complete disunity is not present, but such direction is. And, as the psychedelic years came to an end and The Beatles transitioned into their post-psychedelic period, each member drifted further apart and began pursuing individual interests, reflected in the lyrics.

Post-Psychedelic Period

As The Beatles transitioned from the psychedelic period into their final post-psychedelic period, one theme arose and became present through the end: individualism. The group no longer wrote as a group but merely performed as one in the studio for the purpose of putting out another album. Each Beatle pursued his own interests; John delved further into politics and his promotions for peace, the avant-garde, and Yoko Ono. Paul stepped up as the unspoken leader of the band,
managing The Beatles’ finances, worked on side projects, such as writing scores for film soundtracks, and retreated often to the countryside with Linda Eastman. George studied Eastern religions and philosophy and worked on writing songs without John and Paul’s assistance.

Lennon’s Individualism

Lyrically, Lennon’s music became simpler as he found art in the simplicity of words. By Abbey Road, Lennon used such simple language for art in “I Want You (She’s So Heavy).” Dismissed by many critics as an indication of the abomination of popular music, Lennon considered it a beautiful love song to Yoko and an “economy of language” (Turner 192).

I want you
I want you so bad
I want you,
I want you so bad

It’s driving me mad, it’s driving me mad. (Aldridge 236)

Repeated six times throughout, this is all Lennon sings, breaking once to say that “She’s so Heavy/Heavy, heavy, heavy” (Aldridge 236). Expressing his passion for Yoko and reflecting his growing interest in the avant-garde movement introduced to him by Yoko, “I Want You (She’s So Heavy)” demonstrates John’s ability to use simplicity to convey the complex quality of life; love and passion—complex emotions not easily understood—have been the subject of poems for centuries. However, Lennon’s “economy of language” has expressed his emotion in the easiest manner possible. Lennon has nothing more he wants to, or could, say (Turner 192).

Though Lennon demonstrated a shift to simplicity, words became increasingly important to John. He often wrote his lyrics as poetry first, adding music much later. Written after an
The Beatles argument with his wife Cynthia, “Across the Universe” (Let It Be) demonstrates the importance of language to Lennon. The song describes the process of creative expression.

Words are flying out like endless rain into a paper cup,
They slither while, they pass, they slip away across the universe.
Pools of sorrow, waves of joy are drifting through my open mind,
Possessing and caressing me.
Jai Guru De Va Om
Nothing’s gonna change my world
Nothing’s gonna change my world. (Aldridge 186)

The passive verbs throughout (flowing, drifting, possessing, caressing, etc.) create a gentle feeling and make the song flow as endlessly as John’s words. The repetition of the “s” sound creates a similar feel; when Lennon sings of “Pools of sorrow, waves of joy,” the lyrics slide off the tongue pleasantly, again, just as John’s thoughts come out of his mind.

McCartney’s Individualism

McCartney’s lyrics during The Beatles’ post-psychedelic phase are riddled with sentiments of optimism and, similar to Lennon’s, attempt to return to his roots. However, whereas Lennon’s return to simpler times was achieved through excessive simplicity of language, McCartney’s was achieved through songs with maternal images as a source of respite and lyrics that discuss the freedom of nature and creative expression versus the constrictions of the city and finances, something at the top of Paul’s mind since the death of their manager Brian Epstein in 1967.

“I’ve Got a Feeling” (Let It Be), a song comprised of two unfinished songs, one by McCartney and one by Lennon, exemplifies Paul’s post-psychedelic optimism. McCartney’s half tells of his inability to contain his love for Linda with an embellished honesty contrasting Lennon’s
crude honesty. He sings for two stanzas that he has “got a feeling, a feeling [he] can’t hide” with a simplicity almost mirroring Lennon’s language of the period (Aldridge 189). However, his final stanza sings:

All these years I’ve been wandering around,

Wondering how come nobody told me

All that I was looking for was somebody who looked like you.

(Aldridge 189)

More important than the simplicity of his diction is McCartney’s expressed happiness at finding the love for which he has been wandering around searching for years and the unrestrictive nature of expressing such uncontainable emotion; such freedom contrasts with his life as a Beatle, full of rules and the necessity to maintain a likeable public image at all times.

McCartney also retreats to simplicity through images of his mother, first done in “Let It Be” (Let It Be). During his time of despair at the realization of his band’s unquestionable collapse, McCartney wrote “Let It Be” after a dream in which his long-deceased mother Mary appeared and “[spoke] words of wisdom” to her famous son: Let it be (Aldridge 204).

When I find myself in times of trouble

Mother Mary comes to me

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be.

And in my hour of darkness

She is standing right in front of me

Speaking words of wisdom, let it be. (Aldridge 204)

During his hour of darkness, literally, night time during his dream, and figuratively, during the breakup of The Beatles, McCartney reverted to a simpler time, his childhood and the comfort of
his mother’s helpful advice. Ultimately, “Let It Be” is the expression of hope at the acceptance of The Beatles’ fate resulting from advice from mother to son, then, as a published song, from Paul to his fans.

Maternal images are again discussed in “Get Back” (Let It Be). After repeatedly advising Jojo, “a man who thought he was a loner,” and Loretta Martin, a girl who “thought she was a woman but she was another man,” to “get back to where [they] once belonged,” they are told:

Your mother’s waiting for you
Wearing her high-heel shoes
And her low-neck sweater...
Get back, get back
Get back to where you once belonged. (Aldridge 145)

The message to the youths is to return home to their awaiting mother. However, mother has changed; she now wears high-heeled shoes and low-necked sweaters, different from the wholesome, happy-housewife image associated with mothers of the past. Such a change reveals her imperfection as well as that, although you can return home to the comfort of your mother, you can never really “get back to where you once belonged”; it has changed and no longer exists (Aldridge 145).

Harrison’s Individualism

Harrison’s repertoire of songs during the post-psychedelic period, although much smaller than Lennon’s and McCartney’s, nonetheless demonstrates the direction of his life. “I Me Mine” (Let It Be) delves into Harrison’s focus on Eastern religion and his opinion that the world should be less preoccupied with their ego. Living in the west, Harrison only hears people talk
unashamedly of themselves, and as many times as the words “I,” “Me,” and “Mine” are sung, by the end of the song the listener feels as tired of hearing them as Harrison does.

Conclusion

With this study I believe I have validated The Beatles’ music from 1965 to 1970 as an important contribution to the compendium of literature. Their songs result from as much mental deliberation and creativity as works more openly accepted as poetry. Relatively, I also hope to have proven that The Beatles’ works are important for their lyrical content, not merely the musical content.

The objective of this study has been achieved, firstly, through the demonstration of a sense of continuity among the writing of The Beatles. For example, the band members consistently wrote songs with the same themes, content, and emotion throughout each period of their writing. Each Beatle also transitioned through the time periods simultaneously. Secondly, the importance each Beatle placed into his writing demonstrates the achievement of the goal of this study. Each one wrote music with the mentality that it was poetry, not just a pop-culture marketing tool, and worked hard to perfect the words of each song. From 1965 to the present, each Beatle has been quoted discussing the content of their lyrics and their significance more than their songs’ musical scores. Therefore, with these points in consideration, The Beatles transform from pop-culture icons to literary figures worthy of scholarly research.
Works Cited


