

The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: Post Grads and Bibliographies

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News of the new MA programme devised at Liverpool Hope University by this writer broke to the world's media in March 2009. The MA *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society* attracted an enormous amount of press and public attention; after all, it was the first such degree programme in the world that, working within the academic inter-disciplinarity of popular music studies, concentrated upon the Beatles and Liverpool. For approximately 20 years previously, there existed a body of work that placed popular music studies as a whole into a growing academic framework. Writers such as Frith, Laing, Longhurst, Negus, Shuker *et al* had given the popular music researcher important texts to consider (see appendix (i): 'Selected Popular Music Studies Texts'). However, while there were also literally thousands of books, journal articles and newspaper items concerning the Beatles during that time, few were "academic", as such, and amongst those that were, several tended to use out-moded methods of musical and literary analysis.

So, there was dire need for an academic post-graduate programme dedicated to providing students with a decoding tool to understand many of the writings surrounding the roots and flowerings of the Beatles, the importance of these seminal artists (and the City of Liverpool) in commercial and contemporary life, and their links with key concepts concerning how popular music can be studied. The MA programme was therefore designed to examine the significance and impact of the music of the Beatles in the construction of identities, audiences, ethnicities and industries, and localities; by doing so it would suggest ways to understand popular music as a social practice, and how popular music could be marshalled as a discursive evocation of place. Furthermore, in a consideration of popular music as a text, semiotic studies would be employed, and examined for its effectiveness as an alternative mode of music analysis.

The study of the City of Liverpool and its relationship with the Beatles and their music was long overdue. Several serious academic texts concerned with popular music, place and identity (e.g. Connell & Gibson (2002), Inglis [ed.] 2000, Longhurst (2007), Stokes [ed.]

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(1994), etc.) provided scholarly and comprehensive overviews of such popular music complexities, however the new taught programme set out to examine a more specific area of study within this broader academic popular music framework: the cultural geography of Liverpool and its association with the popular music of the 1960s. Serious research-based issues existed such as: how rhetoric surrounding locality quickly establishes itself around Liverpool and the Beatles; how certain local popular music narratives have been marginalised or largely ignored (including those involving the Beatles - who are at times considered ‘too popular’ to be studied); why many ‘locally produced’ vanity-style Beatles-related books existed; how Beatles tourism issues surrounding locality, place and space are hierarchical; all of these issues (and more) required deeper examination.² Sara Cohen (1991, 1994, 2005, 2007, etc) had already suggested that such factors were/are related to larger questions concerning how everyday praxis can re-link with modern cultural products and expressions. It was, in part, as a response to Cohen’s inspirational work that the MA programme was developed.

How popular ‘art’ (or as this writer prefers to suggest ‘teknik’) can be defined and studied in rational, cognitive and normative terms, rather than via a “mystery”, a connoisseurship, or a series of brightly-coloured lantern slides of the musical “unknowable”, continues to be at the nexus of all such enquiries. So, the central focus of the programme was to be an academic understanding of the worlds in which the Beatles emerged and how those worlds were reflected, contested, supported and negated by and through the creativity, the pervading “presence” and status of the Beatles, and their music. Participating students would be called to research, investigate and present subject matter reflecting all of these issues. They would be asked to interrogate such concerns as locality and place, music in everyday life, and music tourism in the city, and to historically consider popular music activity in and around Liverpool. By doing so, they would also create sustainable research for scholars of the future.

After a rigorous validation programme at Liverpool Hope University, news about the course reached the press during the spring semester of 2009. For over two months pandemonium ensued at Liverpool Hope’s Department of Music as the world’s media focused attention on the new programme. Most writers with even a modicum of understanding of the complexities of popular culture supported the MA; a handful (who, in

² For example how one Liverpool appeared to “produce” this group in one era and how another Liverpool appeared to exploit very specific historical narratives of the group; also how Beatles-related tourism in Liverpool has developed via several specific entrepreneurial activities.

the process displayed their rootedness in the bourgeois enlightenment, together with an ignorance of how *any* significant study empowers the individual) did not. Eminent writer Ray Connolly was accurate in his estimation of the contents of the programme. Part of Connolly's article for the *Daily Mail* included the following statement:

Curiously what is often overlooked is the subliminal influence of the BBC Light Programme on the Beatles' music. The BBC may have had little time for rock and roll in the Fifties (you had to listen to Radio Luxembourg for that), but what it did was present the nation with a solid grounding in a wide variety of popular music from arias by Puccini to show tunes and jazz—not least by way of Sunday's Two Way Family Favourites, a programme that virtually the entire country listened to. For a boy as musical as the young Paul McCartney these various influences would blossom eventually in a dozen or more classic Beatle hits from 'Yesterday' and 'When I'm Sixty Four', to 'Eleanor Rigby', 'Penny Lane', 'Lady Madonna' and 'Let It Be'. Indeed part of what made the Beatles so exceptional, and so particularly British, was the dazzling array of styles they demonstrated as the Sixties wore on, from Goon Show surrealistic imagery to calypsos, from waltzes to hurdy-gurdy fairground sounds. So another wedge of my course would be to show how the Beatles took American rock and roll, welded it into the British experience and then sold it back to America and the world, often containing images of Liverpool. Students would be asked to provide examples.³

Beatles biographer Hunter Davies also remarked:

I don't know what's taken Liverpool Hope University so long. Serious, academic study of the Beatles has been going on at colleges and universities all over the world, for almost 30 years. Originally it was dopey little campuses in the US that started offering Beatles modules, but then gradually bigger, better places followed suit.⁴

Such observations (and more besides) provided evidence that there were many who considered all Popular culture, with its kinetic sumptuousness, worthy of serious study.

On a personal level, a topical 21st century academic debate had also directly spurred-on the development of the MA programme. There had been recent claims from the more “formal” branch of musicology that Popular Music Studies merely existed within the remit of all “musicology”. This claim effectively debarred not only my own post-graduate qualifications in Popular Music Studies, but also suggested that I had effectively been wasting my time for the previous 20 years. But when I first applied to study an MA at the Institute of Popular Music at the University of Liverpool I had decided not to study “music”, but “popular music”. Such pronouncements therefore were questioning my entire *raison d'être* for being involved in academic life. It seemed to me that a game of catch-up, thinly disguised as discourse, had emerged from those who had previously written-off popular

³ Connolly, Ray (2009), 'Beatleology', *Daily Mail Online*, updated 7th March.

⁴ Davies, Hunter (2009), 'From Me To University', *The Guardian*, 4th March.

music methods and approaches in the first place. Now, it appeared, there was common methodological ground. Via the creation of a new post-graduate programme, such issues invited this writer to re-consider not only his own credentials as a Popular Music Studies scholar, but also why in the 21st century certain musicologists had decided to appropriate popular music (and what was historically specific about that appropriation).

Musicologist Richard Middleton (1990) had long ago suggested there were at least three areas where formal musicology had failed to take account of its own hierarchical terms of reference especially when inappropriately applied to the popular: the value-laden uses made of terminology, the problems with unsuitable methodology (particularly the use of notation), and the out-moded ideology that supports the uses of musicology in the reproduction of tastes and hierarchies linked with powerful social groups. Middleton suggested that such hidebound methods could not convincingly deal with the popular because of a rootedness in concepts concerned with value. The act of making and listening to popular music (with all of the enunciative strategies that implies) cannot, he suggested, be merely reducible to a “knowledge” of a musical “language”, especially when that ‘language’ was at least partly non-applicable (how does one, for instance notate the growl of an overdriven guitar? And, perhaps more’s the point, why should one wish to?).

Studies of everyday life and its associations with popular music activities (singing, reading, writing, talking, walking etc) suggest that *relationships* determine their terms (not the reverse): each individual is a locus for incoherent, contradictory and pluralistic communications. Perhaps while certain musicologists concern themselves with a kind of singular “methodology-as-truth” approach, they are convincing themselves that they “know” the past via their own pre-chosen methods, and that such methods can indeed appropriate music. As a historian of popular music I am markedly alarmed when particular concepts are deemed “givens”: obvious and (especially with regard to music) “timeless”. Via such clichés oxymorons frequently emerge: the “popular”, generally, is discussed in relationship with time itself, that it is ephemeral or “here today and gone tomorrow” while, more specifically, the Beatles are considered to be “artists” that have transcended time: “timeless”. This language is not only contradictory, but perhaps unwittingly deeply ironic, for all writings and readings are as imprisoned in time and space as their subject matters.

Through the development of the MA programme, and a concomitant reconsideration of the methodological thoroughness of Popular Music Studies, I was re-invigorated and once again encouraged that the historical knowledge of popular music can never be based upon a

limited, singular discipline, especially when that discipline, according to Brian Longhurst⁵ (2007) “uses value laden terms”. The temporal linearity implicit in score-based analysis of popular music should always be cut by an element of the lateral. In this way affiliations, which do not presuppose the overconfidence of a proleptic pronouncement (i.e. that this is the way to do it, and it should always be this way), are relentlessly proposed. Popular music is a spatial horizon, across which affiliations and disaffiliations may occur; therefore a *range* of criteria for choosing how one studies popular music must be approximated. By doing so, we can clearly see that all meanings given to music are kinetic though time and space.

So, the traditions according to which popular culture attempts to define itself are not singular, but eclectic. The result is that historically the popular is gloriously “directionless” and amorphous. Via Popular Music Studies, itinerant meanings can be scrutinised for their inherent contextual authenticities and values. Popular Music Studies uses interdisciplinarity in an attempt to understand the complexities of the sound picture, helping us in the process to question “givens” in society. Indeed, Popular Music Studies helps us to turn issues primarily concerned with musical, political, aesthetic, ethical and cultural worth into discourses. We appropriate, rearticulate and give new meanings to the generative structures of music. These exist within a syntagmatic framework of connotations that refract, not reflect, and continue to ask questions about politicised values and authentications. Naturally, any interdisciplinarity suggesting widely distributed instructions is by implication challenging! However via an on-going consideration of such varied methods and approaches, this writer continues to hope that the materials brought together by the MA programme at Liverpool Hope University will enable in the years to come, further rigorous re-considerations of our world, our value judgements, and how we use the word “art” (not to mention equally meticulous research concerning the historical placement of the Beatles).

What is an Annotated Beatles Bibliography?

I received my first 486 PC in 1994, rented to me courtesy of Radio Rentals TV hire shop in Chester, and I quickly began transferring my hitherto hand-written Beatles bibliography to this new digital source. As an insatiable Beatles reader, this bibliographic

⁵ LONGHURST, Brian (r.2007), *Popular Music & Society*, Cambridge: Polity, p.150. Longhurst goes on to state such musicological terms are: “not used in a neutral fashion [...] In [Richard] Middleton’s view, a term like melody suggests something to be valued, whereas tune might suggest an everyday banal form”. [*ibid*]

process had commenced for me years previously. It had always been selective, not always utterly accurate, and had always been linked to my own specific research interests. For example, I had not included record reviews, I had seldom included interview materials, and I had collated only a few newspaper articles: of interest to me only if from a local, or a music business perspective⁶. After the plans for *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society* MA had been ratified by Liverpool Hope University, it occurred to me that this stuff would not only be useful to the first student cohort, but was also in need of annotation; and so this project began in earnest in 2010. I was joined in the task by two post-graduate students. Both had been part of that first 2009-2010 MA cohort. Melissa Davis, an educator from Denver, Colorado and an equally voracious Beatles reader (but with far greater attention to detail than myself!), assisted in the annotating, editing and reading processes, whereas Angela Ballard, a Beatles-loving librarian from Wixford near Stratford-Upon-Avon, added a number of annotations to my own.

There is probably an element of forensic investigation to any annotated bibliography, for such annotations award the reader an account of research on a given topic. Like any bibliography, an annotated bibliography is an alphabetical list of research sources. However, in addition to bibliographic data, an annotated bibliography also provides where possible some assessment of value or relevance. Depending on one's research criteria, an annotated bibliography may be one stage in a larger research project, or it may be, as in this case, an independent project standing on its own. But although this annotated bibliography is comprehensive, it is by no means complete, for the quality and usefulness of any bibliography depends upon the selection of source materials. Defining the scope of research (in this case Beatles, and Liverpool-related texts concerned with popular culture and music) carefully so that the researcher can make reasonable judgments about what to use, is an essential part of the annotator's stock-in-trade. Consequently, although some texts might have been omitted in error (for which we apologise), others are absent for what we consider a lack of direct relevance. For example, even though they might contain myriad references and interviews with the Beatles or other Liverpool groups of the 1960s, most generic rock anthologies, etc from the past four decades have not been included. Similarly, although there are countless texts concerning the history of the city of Liverpool, only those which it has

⁶ For example, local newspaper responses to Lennon's death; pre and post-2008 European Capital of Culture items from the Liverpool-based press concerning Beatles tourism; *Variety* leaders concerning Beatles' US grosses, etc.

been judged relate to areas of popular discourse, or are recommended of use to Beatles researchers, are included.

When we consider each text we realise, evidently, that somebody actually wrote it, perhaps re-wrote it, that it was sourced, published, and even re-published to serve changing contextual demands. For example, published editions are, obviously, not always identical and revised texts indicate significant kinetic social and musical contexts. Wherever possible, these revisions are noted, for revisions suggest that authorial development and updating might have taken place. This realisation then invites the researcher to look further, not simply at the texts *per se* but also at the mores indicative in the texts. Texts are representations offered to the public as a result of relationships between certain kinds of rationality and imagination. They contain tentative suggestions mixed with pragmatic confirmations. There are processual tactics in a text that mark stages of both the writer's practical investigations and strategic ideological representations. This is where an accompanying annotation can aid the researcher, for it can clearly suggest that genres of writing are contextual, metaphorical, rhetorical, and theoretical. And, while many writings listed here might appear to concern themselves with genres and key personalities in popular music, they are also created and given succour by equally genre-based contextual *writing* networks. For example, it became increasingly clear, as collation proceeded, that a kind of "evolutionary narrative" of Beatles writing had re-combined, and at times unwittingly commented upon, earlier instances of its own literary genre and sub-genres. For example, divisions brought about by publishing economies of scale, a rock journalism "elite" (conversely an artisan-like inventiveness), local and fan-based publishing networks, etc are all apparent. Growing demographics, canons of national iconography, and the publishing requirements of multinational agencies have also placed Beatles writings into interesting historical subsets.

Subsets

Most Beatles texts between 1961 and 1968 (let us say from Bill Harry up until Hunter Davies) were aimed demographically at specific age groups, and perhaps even at a specific gender. However, from the Hunter Davies text-onwards, we see the Beatles being discussed in different terms and via different perhaps even utopian languages surrounding politics, the counter culture and progressive ideas concerning popular music. We see, in fact, a

“semiocracy” emerging around the Beatles concerning what might be described as an emerging “rock seriousness”. Following the dissolution of the group, the texts change once again as the “Beatles decade” of the ‘60s (t’was never thus, of course) becomes a historical “era” of authenticity that can no longer be recovered. In the UK subsequent popularities come to be compared and contrasted with the Beatles and in the British music press, artists such as David Bowie and Marc Bolan are weighed against the Beatles. John Lennon even “authorizes” David Bowie and Elton John, whereas Marc Bolan is “sanctioned” by Ringo Starr via the *Born To Boogie*⁷ movie. The solo ex-Beatles are of course also re-assessed against the by now canonic works of the Beatles.

Serialised part-work magazines, such as in the UK *The Story of Pop*, are published to catalogue and re-present the rock ‘n’ roll era to those who have come to take popular music evermore seriously. The appearance of this magazine in the early 1970s ties-in with not only immediately preceding popular music texts (such as those by Dave Laing (1968), Nik Cohn (1969), Richard Mabey (1969)), but also cultural commentaries by (e.g.) Stuart Hall and Paddy Whannell (1964), Jeff Nuttall (1968), and George Melly (1971), all of whom are by the late-1960s viewing popular culture as something worthy of study. Here, the implication is that important socio-cultural issues can be raised by and through a study of popular music. Not only was the music evidently of more importance than at first given credit, but so too were popular discourses surrounding (e.g.) fandom, subcultures, the generation gap, etc. These publications are, in turn, supported in the UK by TV and radio programmes and documentaries such as *Anatomy of Pop* (1971) and *All You Need is Love* (1976-onwards). UK Movies such as *That’ll Be The Day* (1973) and *Stardust* (1974) and US films such as *American Graffiti* (1973) contribute to the growing repertory status of rock ‘n’ roll.

During the 1970s the number of British and American published [post-] Beatles-related texts (articles, essays, books, etc) gathers pace, as discussions concerning the 1960s, the Beatles as originators, the *post hoc* activities of the former group members, all emerge from a new generation of rock writers who have grown-up during the 1950s and 1960s e.g. Lester Bangs, Peter Frame, Lenny Kaye, Greil Marcus, John Tober, Chris Welch, Jann

⁷ By 1972, the group *T Rex* was at the height of what came to be known in the UK press as ‘T-Rexstacy’; they had already enjoyed three UK Top 10 hits and their landmark 1971 album *Electric Warrior* was top of the album charts. Some UK music critics were declaring them to be “bigger than the Beatles”. To celebrate their success, group leader Marc Bolan agreed to play two performances at London’s Wembley Empire Pool. Both concerts were sell-outs and were captured on film by Ringo Starr, and released as the concert film *Born To Boogie*. The film is centered around the two live performances (with Ringo Starr and Elton John guest starring on two songs) and is interspersed with an acoustic set filmed at John Lennon’s mansion. There is also backstage footage of Bolan, together with a few surreal sequences of nuns and dwarves.

Wenner *et al.* This is in part brought about by a foregoing underground press in both countries, magazines such as in the US *Rolling Stone*, *Crawdaddy* and *Creem* and, in the UK *Let it Rock*, *Zig Zag*, together with the British “inkies”⁸ *Melody Maker* and *Sounds*. A growing literary gravitas envelopes the ex-members of the Beatles; calls for reunions become common, as if although there might be myriad worthy artists during the 1970s, they all somehow require “leadership”. In the UK progressive rock, jazz/rock, folk, and the singer-songwriters of the US West Coast tend to dominate such “serious rock journalism”, at least up until 1977, and Lennon and Harrison (but perhaps not McCartney or Starr), are awarded a level of cultural capital from such genre-based writing, being seen as more “upscale” musically (perhaps even intellectually) than not only their former colleagues, but also their own 1960s incarnations.

During the mid-to-late-1970s postmodern punk-based aesthetics come to some maturity, creating in the process a popular music literary re-evaluation of “early Beatles” music. The first three Beatles albums are regarded by writers such as in the UK Kris Needs and John Ingham, and in the US John Holmstrom and Legs McNeil, as “raw power” classics, partially leading as they did to the (by this time inspirational) US Garage music of the mid-1960s, thence Punk. Throughout this period, however, Wings are seldom awarded popular authenticity in the same way. The group is judged by the rock press to have a perhaps more mainstream appeal and a rather “less serious” pop (rather than rock) fan base, world-wide. Few significant pieces of writing concerning Paul McCartney appear, other than the usual fan-based biographical material, articles concerning his “patchy” output, reports of Wings’ tours, reunion speculations, and criticisms of him as something of a musical “lightweight”. John Lennon’s re-emergence into the popular music arena via, at first, a single (“Just Like Starting Over” – 24th October 1980), and then an album (*Double Fantasy* – 17th November 1980) – both initially considered by the UK music press to be somewhat lacking, musically – is shortly followed by his tragic death on 8th December 1980.

In the wake of Lennon’s death, such events, attitudes, judgemental values, and ideologies all contribute to the re-definition of Beatles literature once and for all, for the long-mythologised reunion can now no longer take place. A plethora of post-December 1980 texts

⁸ The expression “inkies” in relation to the British music press relates to newspapers such as *NME* (*New Musical Express*), *Disc* (later *Disc and Music Echo*), *Melody Maker* and (later) *Sounds*. These weekly newspapers were initially thinly disguised trade papers, but they evolved into important mouthpieces for music fans during times of rapid change. Their “inkie” tag came from that fact that they were produced exactly like a weekly newspaper (i.e. “hot off the presses”), and were printed on low quality newsprint, thus making one’s hands “inky” as the papers were read. These days, the only survivor is NME.

comes to create a certain kind of literary consistency which contributes to a particular *post facto* iconographic fusion each dependent for validation upon the other. A putative 1980s collectors' folklore, the creation of an increasingly authentic nether world of the 1960s and the pre-punk 1970s, and the imagery of John Lennon as a martyr are pitched against a ghastly present. Via a veritable superfluity of commodities (such as written texts), past eras become metaphoric historical "places" where one can almost "escape" the hideousness of the post-Lennon world.⁹ One might argue that subsequently (indeed right up to the present day) writers have continued to "compose" a culture of the 1960s, the Beatles and John Lennon, a spectacle linked to the principle of commodity fetishism: the domination of society by "things". The perceptible world is replaced by sets of "collective" and collectible images of the past: supposedly superior to the world from which, ironically, such images have almost imperceptibly emanated. As far as the written text is concerned, the "agreed" status of the receiver of this form of knowledge (as a fan, a connoisseur, a historian) contributes to at least a partial concealment of our status as a consumer, and via the crafty rhetoric of embodiment, foregrounds the reader as a phoney co-contributor. Such literary events are pulled together via the matrix of festivals, weekends, anniversaries, guest appearances, and collectors' fairs which deliver all of the ingredients required to sustain a prescriptive parallel universe.

Fragments

For the annotator, texts of such affirmative nostalgia-compounded-as folklore are of great interest. A continuum of technical crafts using similar techniques can be seen to have worked throughout all Beatles literature of the past thirty-or-so years. These historical narratives have been defined by systems with centralized authorial power (such as in the 1980s those at Pierian Press, *Beatlefan*, etc) and have been cemented via recognised vocabulary and syntax (particularly evident in the plethora of reference texts). The growing obsessive earnestness of collecting, together with incursions from academia have linked to authorize events, opinions, discographies, and memorabilia administered from within a field of not simply musical but linguistic systems. The presence and circulation of information from within such networks of users approves certain types of texts, particularly those that establish the Beatles as a "gift" to the world, and via interlocutors creates a contract by and

⁹ Correlatedly, it is also from this period that the pupa of Beatles tourism in Liverpool begins to gradually emerge – a difficult birth, indeed.

through these networks. The writers emerge as social actors in their own right, authenticating in very specific ways. For example, some attempt to give us insights concerning the Beatles as individuals and how they intermingled with other characters. Other writers merge their Beatles portrayals with contextual cultural histories, such as for example, political radicalism (or conversely consumer culture) during the 1960s. Of perhaps greatest interest for this writer is how such texts relate to the historian's demand for accuracy, and observing the regulating of these Beatles "fragments" continues to be of great historical significance.

For the popular music historian and ethnographer alike, "fragments" can be seen as a miscellany of activities relating (in our particular case) to the Beatles. But Lars Kaijser (2010)¹⁰ correctly states that such Beatles' fragments can tend to place a greater emphasis on the present, rather than the actual periods of time in which the group existed. For Kaijser, fragments are best viewed as synecdoches or metonyms: in other words they inescapably link to variable, larger (and at times potentially more interesting) contexts. These might be to the trend of Beatles narratives, or to the context-based rock discourses of authentication; they might be geographical dialogues of political significance, or representations of social changes (for example in Liverpool) during the late-20th century, etc. All such relational logics can be found in practically every Beatles/Lennon text, pre and post-John Lennon's death. So, while fragments help to engender historical worlds of their own, they are also publicly functional and contextual sources of reference. How fragments are synchronically and synecdochally ordered, and how they contribute to structuring the works of writers (how they can produce affects in the readers, etc), discloses a great deal about the contextual policies of entering the Beatles literary folklore equation.

Such texts are therefore part of an almost "archeological" field of enquiry, for fresh fragments can be brought to the table. For example, as with an archeological dig, items still crop up: a new photo, a new recollection, an old piece of music, a new book, etc. So, for the writers of Beatles histories there is almost a mythological definitive document from which questions and answers can be set forth and from which an author's sense of proportion and feelings for this given authority, and for presentation within that authority, can be determined. In effect, writing about the Beatles has become a "Biblical" pursuit and although a historical fragment might have emanated from the Beatles, it does not have to (in fact, cannot) stay the same. A certain "fragment configuration" takes place so that any "new" fragments "fit"

¹⁰ KAIJSER, Lars (2010), *Authority Among Fragments: Reflections on Representing the Beatles in a Tourist Setting*, in JARNIEWICZ, Jerzy and KWIATKOWSKA, Alina [eds.] (2010), *Fifty Years With The Beatles: The Impact of the Beatles on Contemporary Culture*, Lodz [Poland]: University Press.

within the ruling order of Beatles historiography. This literary homology serves, not only the aforementioned support network, but at times blinds the writer to any potential flexible creativity. There exists, therefore, an entire body of literary constraints, a set of conventions; precisely how each writer paraphrases Beatles images and imaginings and how authenticity is connoted is at the nexus of this enquiry into Beatles historiography.

Redaction Criticism

The term redaction criticism connotes the methods and approaches whereby a researcher investigates how an editor or author expresses an outlook by means of the arrangement and editing of pre-existing source materials. As suggested above, assertions that are woven into narratives concerning the Beatles are frequently tacitly directed to a Beatles historiographical canon, a way of doing things that represents authenticity. For example the work of Bob Spizer addresses the impact of the Beatles from the perspective of an authentic US record collector, whereas Pete Best's work attempts to address the absence of "authentic facts" in previous chronicles. Spencer Leigh likes the reader to consider the authenticity of British culture before the emergence of the Beatles, whereas Bob Neaverson considers the Beatles films to be authentic historical documents in their own right. The motivations of an author, therefore, can be connoted via their collection, arrangement, editing and modification of materials and in the composition of new materials, or the creation of new forms within the traditions of (say) other popular music narratives. Beatles-related writing can be seen as a kind of movement of strata, a play of spaces, where the reader's interests are acknowledged *by* the writer, not the other way around, making the text part of the "habitus" of Beatles fandom.

Research activity or inactivity is also detectable in several interesting ways. For example, the traditions from which the writer chooses to include or exclude can be spotted by an annotator who is able to perceive which pre-existing sources a writer incorporates into his work (common in Beatles texts). The annotator looks for patterns that will disclose a principle of selection and this principle of selection may be a clue to the political interests of the writer. How a writer organises materials chosen from the sources are also of great interest: the annotator considers how a writer arranges previously disparate ideas or re-arranges material from sources to suit his/her purposes. The annotator looks for patterns in

how a writer arranges materials into a discernible narrative structure (see, for example, the annotation of the Pattie Boyd text); such patterns may reveal the author's (or ghost author's) world view. If the intentions are to write an "ultimate" reference text, the annotator questions how such an activity is related to the interests or status of the writer (e.g. from a personally-held memorabilia collection, or as a voice of authority). The processual arrangement of a text can be examined to consider how the author might change the emphasis of certain aspects of Beatles history. Also the very arrangement of histories can be examined to consider how the overall structure of the text fits into the meaning and significance of the Beatles literary canon, or otherwise (e.g. see the Albert Goldman reference); all this is what might be described as "composition critical analysis".

Continuity across authors is also examined; where the same or a similar idea is repeated and/or modified (for example, concerning Brian Epstein's management skills), the probability increases that several authors feel that there remains a hitherto relatively unexplained aspect of the "Beatles story". Changes in meanings from original contexts are also noted. When it can be established that a writer alters or ignores contexts (for example, when Liverpool as a place is misinterpreted, generalised or glossed-over, reduced to stereotypes, and so on), the possibility that this change was redactionally motivated, is explored. The seams used to join together fragments of accepted Beatles materials also continue to be of great interest: for example, many Beatles photograph books create "transitions" from one fragment of history to another via the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy¹¹. The way that photographs are positioned in a text can be used to connect time and space via a linearity ("after this, came this") when, historically such connections should not necessarily be made. Further, the interests and purposes of the photographer/author can be estimated via such "transitions": that, say a "Beatles photographer" (e.g. Robert Freeman, Ian Wright, etc), might wish, not only to express the maxim that the "camera does not lie", but also to be regarded personally as indispensable to the Beatles' entourage at important moments in history.

Many of the aims are not only historiographical, but also sociological in the sense that authors can be seen to reflect, or even oppose, certain social constructions. But we hope not

¹¹ *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* is Latin: "After this therefore because of this". Events of type *A* happen immediately prior to events of type *B*. Therefore, events of type *A* cause events of type *B* and event *B* is somehow linked to event *A*. In the case of narratives via photographs, there is a fallacy that that all photographs of [e.g.] the Beatles are inextricably linked to each other and that an authentic narrative can be created via such a selected linear chronological chain. One problem is that photographs are taken by people who are usually not in the photographs, thereby creating a fallacious impression of continuity through their subjects' presence. Also that, of course, such linear narratives are historically untenable; yet still they predominate via photo books of the lives of the famous.

to be reductionistic: not all Beatles-related formulations are assumed to be tendentious or cloaks for a social apologetic. Our applications of the methodologies so far discussed also vary depending upon the annotators' views of the conformity of the text to the canon of Beatles histories. We do not believe that that past can be captured "as it really was", neither do we believe in an utter historical completeness. Therefore one application of our redaction-critical methods takes as its point of departure from the assumption that, for one reason or another, the text is relatively historically "reliable". With this assumption, the annotator is able to search for the redactional aims of a writer while also holding onto the historically-relational reliability of the text. However where all historical and contextual reliability of certain texts appears in doubt, the conclusion will be that author(s) may have falsified existing narratives to suit their own redactional purposes. In extreme cases, we may even conclude that little of what has been written reflects a historical reality, other than that which leads us towards the social history of the author.

The texts

Even the most cursory examination of the annotations when published will reveal dominance by American and American-based writers post-December, 1980. Further however, there is also a dominance of American mythologies of the variable histories of the Beatles. For example, that John Lennon was unquestionably "political" in the universal sense. That he was also uncontestably a "genius" of some sorts, and that his post-Beatles life was more historically "meaningful" than his existence during the Beatles "era". Further, that the British had oddly undervalued him. All of this is of course understandable: Lennon's death in the US not only produced a sense of collective rock guilt, but also moderated that guilt with a confidence concerning Lennon's chosen place of abode. Walter Podrazik informed Larry Kane (2005) that "the other Beatles had places in America, but John made it clear through his immigration struggle that America was his choice. He loved the freedoms and so desperately wanted to live here. In the view of many, John had become an American by his dedicated decision to fight to stay here"¹². This view, of course, runs contra to testimonies from both BBC broadcaster Andy Peebles and Liverpool-based friend of John Lennon Joe Flannery, who having both spoken to John shortly before his death, suggest that Lennon informed them

¹² Walter Podrazik to Larry Kane (2005), *Lennon Revealed*, Philadelphia: Running Press, pp. 124-125

independently that he was preparing to return home to the UK with, at the very least a tour in mind.

Therefore our annotations do at times suggest that such mythologies have led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the group not only as a British, but also Northern English, manifestation. The Beatles' specifically class-based Liverpoolian upbringing in a city geographically in the North-West of England, but not necessarily consistently delineated as such by its own inhabitants, has frequently been all-but ignored, or perhaps even wilfully misinterpreted by many writers in favour of the pervading stereotype which makes a cultural "claim" on, and displays a sense of ownership of John Lennon. What emerges from such texts is a prescription of the Beatles: everything appears in the right historical order, but is merely a simulacrum: a vague, tentative and shadowy resemblance. Such claims have therefore led to an indifference to British (and indeed German) readings of the Beatles, the milieu of popular cultures from which they emerged, and the cultural and critical regionalism and indigenous chauvinism that surrounded and effectively "produced" them as individuals. This perhaps more variegated and variable status of the group in the United Kingdom, and indeed their home city of Liverpool, has seldom been addressed fully by the canonic texts for fear of exposing the complexities and ambiguities of Beatles' reception. In the UK, the Beatles were part of a pre-existing attack on the status of art and culture in British and European society, they contributed to various processes that reconnected art and craft forms with the praxis of life. The responses of different British communities at different times, when mobilized by either provocation or empathy will always, therefore, remain of vital importance in our grasp of the Beatles' historical significance.

Perhaps the presence of so many published titles suggests that we are (and the Beatles were) partners with uncertainty: any "truth" behind the Beatles existence is something to be challenged; perhaps, too, the word truth is actually a self-referential figure of speech that is incapable of assessing our world, let alone the Beatles' brief appearance in it. One fact does appear to be clear: the Beatles and the 1960s have been turned into some kind of historical Disneyland: an allegory of consumer society, rather than a historical representation of praxis within the same; the Beatles are a site of absolute iconism (rather than, say, an authentic upshot of British post-war society). Under these almost Biblical circumstances, many texts listed here inform us that fans must agree to behave like other fans, exponents of different sensibilities are ostracised. According to this matrix, if a fan pays the admission he/she can have an abundance of the reconstructed "truth" via chronicle-ised,

rather than thematic, codes. For this writer, three broad outcomes can be seen to have followed.

The first upshot of this litany of affirmation is the failure and then non-appearance of anything resembling a Beatles discourse. If, as has been suggested, Beatles books are far from autonomous entities, then the Beatles themselves are now cult objects, wholly integrated into a social institution certainly not of their making and probably unrecognisable to them (see Ringo Starr's more recent comments on Madryn Street and Liverpool). Such literature is being gradually compounded into a collectively agreed craft after the fashion of a sacral art. As such, the religiosity of this literary pantheon immediately begins to show through. The modes of reception are institutionalized as are collective responses to deities. Such Beatles texts are not "meaningless" (far from it), but their meaning does not appear any longer to exist via linguistics or historical narratives, but in other forms of devout symbolism such as counter-cultural beatification.

Another corollary of this seemingly unending plethora of repeatable Beatles writings is that the relational character of the Beatles litany exists in a form that permits generalizations to continue. A litany has a precisely defined function in that it serves the glory of the name and the continuation of aggrandised and glorified portrayal. This is reminiscent to this writer of the historical renderings of Renaissance courtly "art" where the artist is represented as a special individual, and knowledge of that art's "true" nature is restricted only to a special few. Beatles and Lennon writings have developed this consciousness of the unique and ironically the Beatles are not even at the heart of these images. Instead the locus of attention surrounds the increasing formalization of each homily concerning the group. Definitions are presented in a set of relational logics that embrace a form of reality as expressed only via the self-understanding of narrowly defined parameters, presented by an equally narrow group of individuals. Consider within these pages the vast amount of texts written by such a limited amount of writers: such writing is not heterogeneous, it is not plural and it is not, essentially, historical. The visages of the Beatles present self-referential portrayals by a self-appointed aristocracy. This "new classicism" of course contributes little-nothing to open up any conceptualization of objectivity and in fact negates individual *reception* – one of the most fundamental avenues in our understanding of all popular cultural products.

A third consequence of the plethora of analogous Beatles texts is via the consideration that the Beatles literary aristocracy only presents the Beatles' "art" according to the matrix adopted by its own concepts of value. Any differing contemporary social identities partially created by, through or in opposition to the Beatles are deemed untenable (for example those who do not care for the musical outpourings of the group, or for the quotients of nostalgia created by such images of the Beatles and the 1960s). Such nostalgia actually points to an exhaustion of the cultural resources and creativity of their own presentations, for the possibility of new and unexpected discoveries and arguments are usually denied. But this is not the end of the story, for another stratum concerns the hagiographic tendency of all Beatles texts: that the very word "Beatles" can be construed as an essentialist metaphor for timeless authenticity. This mythic and transcendental notion of an almost God-like art actually creates a kind of esoteric, poetic, magical meme that places the Beatles outwith popular music and detaches the group from society. It is a conveniently static representation in a world of kinetic craft. Since the MA programme began, one or two students have suggested to this writer that the Beatles are now a "genre", but nothing could be less appropriate, for genres are passionately contested; in this case, the Beatles are unequivocal.

In such representations ambiguity is rejected, ambivalence is disregarded, certainty is re-enforced and a framework is created that makes experience credible only in relation to the already known – the intellectual pretensions of the inner circle, the satisfaction of the residual need for the creation of a tradition that represents the icon of "the Beatles". However historically, the Beatles took flight in Britain in a year (1963) of new political trajectories: they helped to publicly represent the onward march of "progressive" ideas (with whatever more precise political inflection its individual adherents chose to add to it). But over time they were left behind by different eras symbolised by the deaths of one (and then another) of the group's members, to which many writers reacted by becoming embattled, uncertain and protectionist. Such historical events provide writers with a blithe self-image: they are arbiters of political truth, and cheerleaders for a collective nostalgia. Here we witness writers acting as individuals, but within a detectable order: an Ayn Rand-style self-stabilizing system, within which historical hubris plays a significant part. There is a subconscious consensus overvalued as a discourse where "emic" meanings have subsumed those of the "etic". When writing about popular culture reaches such stages of self-absorption, praxis (the very condition that characterises the way that popular music functions in society, in the first place) ceases to be reflected.

One such example of this historical “emic” veneering concerns the John Lennon texts. Here we can see that “Lennon Studies” have evolved somewhat separately from “Beatles Studies”. This is one inevitable consequence of Lennon’s early death in the United States, and has resulted in not only a historical neglect of other Beatles (and perhaps a relegation of their later musical outputs as non-canonic, in comparison to that of Lennon), but also acute oversimplification, brought about via the process of legends turning into cultural symbols. Legends can survive as living narratives as long as they contain three essential elements: firstly, legends must contain a strong, yet basic story appeal; secondly they must have some kind of foundation in reality, and thirdly they must contain meaningful messages or morals. Lennon’s “story” is not only engrossing but also “true”, and so it (or “he”) can ostensibly teach us valuable lessons. Perhaps one of the most enduring Lennon texts is that of Jon Wiener, who makes a great plea for Lennon’s “political” character. However, in order to construct this political animal, the author accepts one important, but inaccurate given: that Lennon’s upbringing was basically “working class”; as James McGrath (2010) suggests: “Had Wiener referred to the origins of McCartney, Harrison or (especially) Starr, the complexity of class in post-war Britain would have been more apparent, as would be that of Lennon’s upbringing”.¹³ Such fragments simply have to be omitted because they cannot be formatted to the writer’s pre-determined images of John Lennon (unlike, perhaps, those that have been assiduously but conformatively pieced together).

What, one might ask, of the rash of British publications post-Lennon’s death? From which particular inspirational font do such sources spring? These tend to have very specific agendas and can perhaps be divided roughly into four unequal sections. Firstly, those stemming from that collection of Beatles *literati* who developed their skills writing for British popular music magazines and journals of the late-1970s and the 1980s (hence the inclusion in this bibliography of several British popular music magazine articles concerning the Beatles by Andy Davis, Peter Doggett, Mark Lewisohn, and Spencer Leigh). As in the United States, these recognised writers have usually attempted to produce chronicles, and it is along such plane projections that one might place the work of Mark Lewisohn. But chronicles are strategic in that their creators tend to assume that eras can be circumscribed by minutae-based linear documentation. The presence of such systems implies one can accurately inform the reader “how it was”. This can be highly problematic for the historian, for such works

¹³ McGrath, James (2010), Cutting up a Glass Onion: Reading the Beatles’ History and Legacy, in JARNIOWICS, Jerzy and KWIATKOWSKA, Alina [eds.] (2010), *Fifty Years With The Beatles: The Impact of the Beatles on Contemporary Culture*, Lodz [Poland]: University Press, p.314.

serve as a basis for a didactic rationality where any potential for writerly tactics emanating from the reader is reduced to practically nil. Few gaps, silences are ever exposed, spaces for arguments or interpretations are restricted, and polymorphic readings of differing but significant contexts are denied – there are in fact few joyfully erratic discoveries: we have, instead, the physical and literary attestation of a victory for authorial space over thematic variance.

Secondly, there are writers who, perhaps feeling left out of history have resorted to the minor publisher-cum-vanity publication (e.g. Roy Adams, Alf Bicknell, Sam Leach) to, as it were, “level the historical playing field”. As unrecognised producers and poets of their own narratives, the signifying practices of such writers consist of trajectories that obey interesting logics and diatribes. For example, although such vanity texts are composed within knowable vocabularies, they remain loyal to their previously proscribed status. Each writer traces out *their* interests and *their* desires in the name of the Beatles and as such, they are often perceived not to have been captured by the publishing systems, having been created by some kind of “do-it-yourself” *bricolage* of resourcefulness. Usually this also means that such editions have avoided the presence of an editor or sub-editor, and so can be recognised by a consummate lack of expurgation in the formal sense, thus creating literature that is often considered “beneath” the strata of “authorized” Beatles literature. However, many such texts have enormous value, for they often deal in the hidden histories that most interest historians, such as those to do with locality, genre, race, gender and fandom. On the other hand, some can prove to be rather less that historically sustaining, recalling, for example, conversations from over 40 years ago verbatim.

There are also guides and histories of Liverpool, Merseybeat and “Beatles venues”; for example those presented by Ron Jones, Ray O’Brien, and David Bedford. Such guides and histories predominantly offer white narratives with little consideration of other cultural points of view. Indeed the subject of race in Liverpool and how it affected the Beatles from a UK socio-political perspective is largely ignored. Black Liverpoolians are often at least partially written out of such narratives, despite Liverpool being home to Britain's oldest Black communities, dating to at least the 1730s. The roles played by Black Liverpoolians in the musical life of the city have been made in spite of constant struggles for social recognition – indeed survival. At times the city has economically, politically, and institutionally cared very little for the existence of its Black population. Historically for some Black Liverpoolians, the creative and performing arts have been vital components in acts of

contingence and individual agency. It is clear that economic, political, and social circumstances have created possibilities among Black Liverpudlians to help enact what for other Liverpudlians might be merely basic forms of social activities. Creative acts of singing, dancing, playing musical instruments, creating groups, theatre productions, entertaining family members, church attendance have emerged holding great symbolic value for those involved (the Pavillion Theatre on Lodge Lane in Liverpool 8 is one such “Merseybeat” venue with a long and complex pre-history). But such acts and places have not been fully dealt with by the usual Beatles and Liverpool-based music histories, many of which have been created with more recent broader motivations in mind i.e. to recycle such “interesting” historical periods into objects of tourist consumption.

A few academic Beatles-related texts have emanated from the generation of 1990s and 21st century Popular Music Studies researchers. These have materialized from those who largely wish to develop contextual academic studies around not only the Beatles, but also their audiences, and places of significance (Peter Atkinson, Sara Cohen, Ian Inglis, Kevin MacManus, James McGrath, and perhaps this writer). These researchers attempt to offer different perspectives on the Beatles, as each posits the group within several living issues in history. For example, Sara Cohen is particularly strong on how popular music authenticities in Liverpool are contested, and how the rhetoric of place needs to be understood as a series of complex social constructions. Cohen suggests that Liverpool as a “music city” requires deep investigation, for such research might perhaps remove, or at least challenge, stereotypes such as Merseybeat.

Atkinson and Inglis, on the other hand, are fascinated by how the new British media systems of the post-WWII era, such as Independent Television, helped bring to the attention of the public evidence of a critical regionalism across the United Kingdom which was represented, rather than instigated, by such personalities as the Beatles. Naturally, all of these works are as exclusive as they are inclusive, for such is the nature of closely focused academic research. Nevertheless, a jigsaw of affect, rather than a network of confirmation, is suggested via this kind of “dense” or “thick” research¹⁴. A little duplication of information between texts will inevitably appear across such studies from time to time, but by and large, as a consequence of each academic ploughing a necessarily solitary furrow, we now have a

¹⁴ It should also be noted that there is a long tradition of Finnish academic popular music analysis, and a good deal of this centres around the works of Beatles. Such texts are mostly musicological and some can be found listed in this bibliography; many, however, use rather out-moded and inappropriate forms of musicology, but all are of interest.

series of historiographical questions and ambiguities to consider concerning the histories of and around the Beatles, rather than the usual set of “stock” deliveries – which can only be a good thing.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is perhaps briefly worth mentioning the growing ruck of cyberspace Beatles novels, “Slash Beatles” and “real person fiction” (RPF) websites, some of which are annotated in this work, for this craft has quietly developed during the long era of the IT revolution. At times they can be entertaining, and at other times more than a little bizarre but all are of historiographical interest to the annotator. Here, we are perhaps witnessing the growth of a new historiography without recourse to either fact or place. Here, too, we have ironic interpolations of previously supposed objective propositions. For example, a fictionalised gay relationship between John and Paul where the latter buys the former a Valentine’s gift, questions by its very presence those hitherto dry, unexplained, and relatively “anti-social”¹⁵ chronologies via which the Beatles *literati* offer their “subjects” sustenance. Here, all previous directives of myth are re-mythologised for different modes of re-consumption. It is via such unambiguously fictional works that we can witness one of the most authentic fractures of the Beatles myth in our rapidly changing world of image and information culture, for surely the imagination is where our authenticities are primarily sited.

Perhaps, too, Pierre Bourdieu’s notions of cultural capital and field/area are worth considering for any annotator of all such popular literature. One should certainly view the written liturgy of the Beatles and Merseybeat as existing within an arena where different agents constantly strive for recognition. To have authority is to recognise, but also to select, and as we select we also de-select. What has emerged from this survey of literature is that Beatles writing is evidently a social process, and part of an entangled configuration of authority. Beatles historiography is also part of a play of seemingly authorized fantasies designed not only to magnetise the ordained, but to also perpetuate tenets. As the Beatles literary tide tumbles and disperses through time and space, amongst its waters work myriad isolated drops that form as historical and contextual metonyms. Such drops no longer have a recognisable singularity and are, instead, part of an affirmation of indefinite (indeed fictional) citation, one of the other, *ad infinitum*.

¹⁵ ‘Anti-social’ in the ‘emic’ sense: ie that few outside the hermetically sealed Beatles fan-base actually read this stuff.