

STRATEGIC INTERTEXTUALITY IN THREE OF JOHN LENNON'S LATE BEATLES SONGS*

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This article will focus on an aspect of the Beatles' compositional practice that I believe merits further attention, one that helps to define their late style (that is, from the groundbreaking album *Revolver* [1966] onwards) and which has had a profound influence on all subsequent composers of popular music: namely, their method of drawing on the resources of pre-existing music (or lyrics, or both) when writing and recording new songs. This may at first seem entirely obvious, especially since nowadays such a practice has been adopted routinely by many songwriters and producers, and is in fact the prevailing compositional strategy within certain pop and rock genres, rap being probably the most blatant example. Many rap artists are well known for their so-called "rap versions," as Tim Hughes has described them, in which a distinctive element of a pre-existing song is lifted out of its original context—typically via digital sampling—and used as the foundation upon which a new song is built.¹ Will Smith's hit "Wild Wild West" (1999), for example, is composed around a sample of the bass-driven main groove from Stevie Wonder's funk classic "I Wish" (1976); and Eminem's hit "Like Toy Soldiers"

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¹ Tim Hughes, "'Now' Sandwiches: The Use of Quotation in Rap Music," paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Music Theory, Atlanta, November 1999. For an interesting discussion on the practice of sampling and its hermeneutic implications, see David Metzger, *Quotation and Cultural Meaning in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), Chapter 5, "Sampling and Thievery."

(2005) imports not only the title but a sample of the entire chorus from Martika's bubblegum smash "Toy Soldiers" (1989).²

Such musical borrowings are by no means limited to rap, however. There are literally hundreds of other pop and rock songs I could cite, but a brief analysis of Janet Jackson's top-five single "Someone to Call My Lover" (2001) will serve to illustrate my point.³ The song opens with a four-bar acoustic guitar riff—based harmonically on alternating D major and G major seventh chords—that is immediately recognizable as the signature riff from America's soft-rock classic "Ventura Highway" (1972); this riff is then continuously looped to form the main accompaniment for the entire song.⁴ The vocal melody that Ms. Jackson sings in her trademark velvet during the verses and chorus, over the "Ventura Highway" accompaniment, is newly composed; but in the choruses, as her quest for "someone to call her lover" assumes greater urgency, a familiar tune—played in a bell-like synthesizer timbre—emerges in counterpoint to the other parts. This tune is none other than the famous theme from Erik Satie's character piece for piano, *Gymnopédie* No. 1 (1888), transformed from $\frac{3}{4}$ into $\frac{4}{4}$ so as to fit the groove of the new song.

Figure 1 shows Satie's original version of the *Gymnopédie* theme, followed by a simplified transcription illustrating how this theme is metrically transformed as it is layered into the

² Taking a cue from the musicians themselves, the term "groove" has now become common parlance in popular music studies. Elsewhere, I have defined *groove* as "the tapestry of riffs—usually played by the drums, bass, rhythm guitar and/or keyboard in some combination—that work together to create the distinctive rhythmic/harmonic backdrop which identifies a song." See Mark Spicer, "(Ac)cumulative Form in Pop-Rock Music," *twentieth-century music* 1/1 (2004), 30.

³ "Someone to Call My Lover" was the second single from Janet Jackson's album *All For You* (2001). The song peaked at #3 on *Billboard's* Hot 100 in August 2001.

⁴ Rather than sampling the "Ventura Highway" riff from the original recording, as is customary, the riff was re-recorded by America especially for the new song. Ms. Jackson seems to be particularly fond of using quotations from classic early-1970s songs in her recordings: Joni Mitchell's "Big Yellow Taxi" (1970) was sampled for the titular hook of "Got Till It's Gone" (from *The Velvet Rope* [1997]); and elsewhere on the *All For You* album, Carly Simon's "You're So Vain" (1972) is quoted in the chorus of "Son of a Gun (I Betcha Think This Song is About You)" (and Simon even makes a guest vocal appearance on the recording).

FIGURE 1. Satie, *Gymnopédie* No. 1, main theme

(a) Original version

G maj⁷
(IV) D maj⁷
I G maj⁷
IV D maj⁷
I)

(b) Metrically transformed, as heard in the chorus of Janet Jackson's "Someone to Call My Lover"

D maj⁷
(I) G maj⁷
IV)

groove during the choruses of "Someone to Call My Lover." As we can see from the notated example, fitting the *Gymnopédie* theme into the new meter was simply a matter of adding an extra quarter note's duration to the rest or note that sounds on each downbeat.⁵ What is also interesting is the fact that Satie's original key of D major is retained. In fact, like the signature riff from "Ventura Highway," the *Gymnopédie* theme is also based harmonically on an oscillating two-chord vamp of D major and G major seventh chords, although Satie's original vamp

⁵ This is actually not the first time that *Gymnopédie* No. 1 has been appropriated by a pop or rock artist. The U.S. jazz-rock group Blood, Sweat, & Tears used the tune as the basis for their "Variations on a Theme by Erik Satie," the opening track on their self-titled second LP (1969). One might say then that the metric transformation of the tune in "Someone to Call My Lover" comments on Blood, Sweat, & Tears as well as Satie.

begins with the G major seventh chord rather than the D major seventh (hence, IV–I rather than I–IV), and alternates the chords every bar rather than every other bar. Nevertheless, I strongly suspect it was these uncannily similar harmonic profiles that prompted Janet’s longtime producers and songwriting partners, Jimmy Jam and Terry Lewis, to consider merging together the *Gymnopédie* theme and the “Ventura Highway” riff in the first place. With the addition of a bouncy electronic hip-hop drumbeat, all of these varied components somehow work in tandem with one another to create an overall groove that is delightful and thoroughly infectious.

In *Generation X*, the novel that helped to define popular culture in the 1990s, Douglas Coupland coins the term “decade blending” to describe a prevailing trend in recent fashion involving “the indiscriminate combination of two or more items from various decades to create a personal mood.”⁶ The compositional strategy for “Someone to Call My Lover” could be interpreted then as a kind of *musical* decade blending: a classical warhorse from the 1880s is combined with a classic pop song from the 1970s, and the resultant “mood” is cloaked in the rhythms of today’s dance music. Such decade blending—or indeed, any such recycling of pre-existing material in the service of creating a new work—is of course exactly what we have come to expect of artistic creation in our postmodern age.⁷ Postmodern art, as Graham Allen has defined it, is art that “rejects notions of originality . . . and cultivates a willfully derivative and intertextual approach.”⁸ This frequently involves what those in cultural studies (borrowing a term

⁶ Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991), 15.

⁷ Another wonderful (though somewhat absurd) example of postmodern decade blending is represented by Baz Luhrmann’s film *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). The story is set in the late 1890s, with most of the action taking place at the notorious Paris nightclub of the film’s title. While the costuming and sets are clearly meant to evoke the period in question, the music makes no similar attempt to recreate the style of *fin-de-siècle* French cabaret. The characters instead perform well-known pop and rock hits of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s—such as Elton John’s “Your Song” (1970), the Police’s “Roxanne” (1978), Madonna’s “Like a Virgin” (1984), and Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” (1991)—each drastically reworked so as to capture the spirit of a 1940s Broadway musical.

⁸ Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 217.

from anthropology) have described as “bricolage,” which Jean-François Lyotard defines as “the multiple quotation of elements taken from earlier styles or periods, classical or modern.”⁹ While the Beatles were certainly not the only pop and rock composers in the latter half of the 1960s to adopt this postmodern ideal in the course of writing new songs, I would argue that what makes the Beatles so significant is that they were the first to employ bricolage as a *consistent* feature of their compositional practice.¹⁰

This brings us then to the notion of intertextuality, a concept that has become quite attractive for musicologists and music theorists over the past two decades. Drawing from ideas in literary criticism, the central premise behind musical intertextuality is, in short, that compositions acquire meaning not in and of themselves, but through their relationship to a potentially infinite universe of other works.¹¹ For the music analyst, perhaps the greatest advantage of an intertextual approach is that it allows us to step beyond the formalist ideal of analyzing pieces entirely from within. As Kevin Korsyn has put it, “[o]nce we abandon the idea of pieces as closed entities, then

⁹ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Explained* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 76. In his watershed study of youth culture in post-World War II Britain, Dick Hebdige uses the term “bricolage” in the anthropological sense to describe how British youths have constructed their styles *visually* over the past few decades by wrestling objects or fashions from their original contexts and imbuing them with new meaning: for example, the teddy boys’ “theft and transformation of the Edwardian style revived in the early 1950s by Savile Row for wealthy young men” (104), or the punks’ use of safety pins as jewelry and tea kettles as handbags. See his *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Methuen, 1979), 102–12.

¹⁰ It should come as no surprise that the Beatles’ practice of bricolage paralleled—and perhaps even helped to spark—a similar trend among art-music composers in the late 1960s, as evinced by such “quotation pieces” as Lukas Foss’s *Baroque Variations* (1967) and Luciano Berio’s *Symphonia* (1968). For a detailed study of this phenomenon, see Lisa Robinson, “Mahler and Postmodern Intertextuality” (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1994). A useful summary of the use of quotation and collage by later twentieth-century composers is provided in Robert P. Morgan, *Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Norton, 1991), 410–16.

¹¹ Building upon the ideas of French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, the term “intertextuality” was coined by French semiotician Julia Kristeva in her writings of the late 1960s, and quickly became probably the most influential idea in literary criticism during the 1970s and early 1980s, particularly in North America (so much so in fact that it is now considered something of a cliché among literary critics). For an extremely lucid and useful survey of the origins and history of the term, see Allen, *Intertextuality*, especially 8–60; see also Manfred Pfister, “How Postmodern is Intertextuality?” in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (New York and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 207–24.

the distinction between what is inside and what is outside the piece breaks down, and compositions become knots of intertextual forces.”¹²

Despite their growing appeal, studies in musical intertextuality have so far been rather narrow in scope. There are some notable exceptions, to be sure—John Covach’s essays on the Rutles and Spinal Tap, for example, and Serge Lacasse’s recent work toward developing a typology of intertextuality for recorded popular music¹³—yet it seems that many, if not most, of these intertextual studies have focused on compositions culled from the canon of nineteenth-century tonal masterworks. This is due in no small part to the widespread application of literary critic Harold Bloom’s theory of the “anxiety of influence” to music, a theory that seems especially appropriate when applied to the works of many nineteenth-century composers.¹⁴ Johannes Brahms evokes the consummate image of a nineteenth-century composer who strove to find an individual voice for himself, while constantly wrestling with the fear that his own works were

¹² Kevin Korsyn, review of *Wordless Rhetoric: Musical Form and the Metaphor of the Oration* by Mark Evan Bonds, *Music Theory Spectrum* 16/1 (1994): 132. The formalist notion of musical compositions as self-contained, unified autonomous works has of course been severely challenged by postmodern aesthetics; see, for example, Roman Ingarden, *The Work of Music and the Problem of Its Identity*, trans. George G. Garbowicz, ed. Jean Harrell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Alan Street, “Superior Myths, Dogmatic Allegories: The Resistance to Musical Unity,” *Music Analysis* 8 (1989): 77–123; and Kevin Korsyn, “The Death of Music Analysis?: The Concept of Unity Revisited,” *Music Analysis* 23 (2004): 337–51.

¹³ See John Covach, “The Rutles and the Use of Specific Models in Musical Satire,” *Indiana Theory Review* 11 (1990): 119–44; “Stylistic Competencies, Musical Humor, and ‘This is Spinal Tap,’” in *Concert Music, Rock and Jazz Since 1945*, ed. Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 399–421; and Serge Lacasse, “Intertextuality and Hypertextuality in Recorded Popular Music,” in *The Musical Work: Reality or Invention?*, ed. Michael Talbot (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 35–58.

¹⁴ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). Bloom’s theory rests on the notion that the true subject matter of poetry is poetry itself; every poem is seen as a “misreading” or “misprision” of a precursor poem or poems. He divides poets into two categories, “strong” and “weak.” What distinguishes strong poets from weak ones is their ability to confront their anxiety of influence; strong poets are those who wrestle with their great precursors in order to achieve their own originality. Among the several attempts to apply Bloom’s theory of poetic influence to the work of nineteenth-century composers, most noteworthy are Kevin Korsyn, “Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence,” *Music Analysis* 10 (1991): 3–72; Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: Imperatives of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); and Michael Klein, *Intertextuality in Western Art Music* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005). See also Joseph N. Straus, *Remaking the Past: Tradition and Influence in Twentieth-Century Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), which appropriates Bloom’s theory to account for allusion and influence in the work of twentieth-century composers such as Stravinsky and Schoenberg.

somehow inferior to the compositional masterpieces of his predecessors, most notably the symphonies of Beethoven.¹⁵ While Bloom's theory offers a provocative model for describing the poetics of influence in a composer such as Brahms, it is perhaps unnecessarily cumbersome when dealing with a composition in which—as seems to be the case with most pop and rock songs—the intertextual resonances are in no way contingent upon the composer having taken some anxious stance towards the past. (On the contrary, when most pop and rock artists borrow—some might say pilfer—from other works, they do so without any hint of a guilty conscience.)¹⁶

In a seminal 1985 article, Robert Hatten outlines a theory of musical intertextuality with the potential for a much broader range of application.¹⁷ He suggests that intertextuality in music operates on two essential levels: stylistic and strategic. *Stylistic intertextuality* occurs when a composer adopts distinctive features of a pre-existing style without reference to any specific work in that style. Indeed, there are many striking instances of stylistic intertextuality among the Beatles' mature output, such as the appropriation of high-Baroque devices in the string-octet accompaniment to Paul McCartney's "Eleanor Rigby," or the ultra-compressed synopsis of Indian *raga* form in George Harrison's "Love You To" (both songs from the *Revolver* album).

¹⁵ An anxiety towards Beethoven's influence has been cited often as the reason why Brahms, thinking he could never outdo his great predecessor, waited so long to unleash his first symphony (the work was premiered in 1877, when Brahms was 44 and already well established as a composer). See, for example, Michael Musgrave, *The Music of Brahms* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), 130–31.

¹⁶ Having said this, I think it would be possible to develop a convincing anxiety of influence theory for the post-Beatles era, resting on the claim that the Beatles, like Beethoven, were such colossal giants that all subsequent pop and rock composers have somehow had to confront them in forging their own originality. Evoking Bloomian terminology, one might say, for example, that the work of a band like Oasis (e.g., [*What's the Story*] *Morning Glory?* [1995]) represents a "weak" misreading of the Beatles, while that of a band like XTC (e.g., *English Settlement* [1982]) could be viewed as a "strong" misreading. I am currently in the early stages of working on a book, provisionally titled *In the Beatles' Wake*, in which I will explore this topic in greater detail.

¹⁷ Robert Hatten, "The Place of Intertextuality in Music Studies," *American Journal of Semiotics* 3/4 (1985): 69–82.

Strategic intertextuality is more pointed, occurring only when a composer makes deliberate reference to a *particular* earlier work or works, and this can involve a variety of techniques such as quotation, structural modeling, variation, or paraphrase. At the risk of oversimplification, we might say that the goal of an intertextual analysis is to unravel the many ways in which the stylistic and strategic references contribute to the meaning of the new piece.

I shall now look closely at three late Beatles songs—all, coincidentally enough, composed by John Lennon¹⁸—as a means of demonstrating how strategic intertextuality can work to enrich a pop-rock song’s overall message. We begin with a very famous example in which the intertextual references are immediately recognizable: the timeless anthem “All You Need is Love” (1967). The circumstances surrounding the genesis of this song are unique, and will be important to remember as we get to the heart of the meaning projected by the intertextual references.

In late May 1967, immediately prior to the release of the monumental *Sgt. Pepper* album on June 1, the Beatles were asked to write a song to serve as the British contribution to the upcoming *Our World* television spectacular on June 25. The Fab Four quickly agreed. *Our World* had been hyped as the greatest event in television history, the first ever attempt at a live worldwide broadcast linking twenty-four countries by satellite. Within two weeks Lennon had written “All You Need is Love,” a joyous appeal to the universal power of love as the solution to all the world’s problems. The original idea behind the Beatles’ appearance on *Our World* was that the television audience would actually get to witness the live recording of a new Beatles

¹⁸ Lennon and McCartney made an agreement when they were teenagers that, as long as they remained in a group together, all of their songs were to be credited as collaborations. Copyright restrictions continue to impose this stipulation even today, despite the fact that the majority of their Beatles songs were for the most part composed individually. See Todd Compton, “McCartney or Lennon?: Beatle Myths and the Composing of the Lennon-McCartney Songs,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 22/2 (1988): 99–131.

single, but George Martin decided that to go into the show with nothing pre-recorded ahead of time would be far too risky, and hence the Beatles entered Olympic Sound Studios on June 14 to record backing tracks for the song.¹⁹

One can hardly overstate the importance of the collaborative role played by producer George Martin in the composing, arranging, and recording of the Beatles' work. Were it not for his musical expertise, many of the most innovative features of the late songs—such as the exotic instrumentation and the famous “backwards” taped effects—might never have taken place.²⁰ It was Martin who was actually responsible for the bricolage of musical quotations that appear at the opening and during the closing section (see Figure 2):

I did a score for the song, a fairly arbitrary sort of arrangement since it was such short notice. When it came to the end of their fade-away as the song closed, I asked [the Beatles]: “How do you want to get out of it?” “Write anything you like, George,” they said. “Put together any tunes you fancy, and just play it out like that.” The mixture I came up with was culled from the “Marseillaise,” a Bach two-part invention, “Greensleeves,” and the little lick from “In the Mood.” I wove them all together, at slightly different tempos so that they all still worked as separate entities.²¹

Although Martin downplays his arrangement as “fairly arbitrary,” his particular choice of borrowed tunes was a masterful stroke in contributing new layers of meaning to Lennon's composition. The quotation of “La Marseillaise” (scored idiomatically for brass) appears at the very onset of the song, establishing the loping “shuffle” ($\frac{12}{8}$) metric feel that is pervasive throughout “All You Need is Love.” No doubt everyone watching *Our World*—not just those on the other side of the English channel—would have instantly recognized the tune. Since being

¹⁹ See William Dowling, *Beatlesongs* (New York: Fireside, 1989), 186.

²⁰ For a fascinating account of George Martin's association with the Beatles throughout their recording career, see Martin's autobiography *All You Need is Ears* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979).

²¹ Martin, *All You Need is Ears*, 192.

FIGURE 2. Catalogue of quotations used in “All You Need is Love”

(a) At the opening:

“La Marseillaise”

(♩ = $\overline{\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}}$)

Brass: tr ~ Enter Vocals:

Love, love, love

(b) During the coda/fadeout:

(i) J. S. Bach, Two-Part Invention in F major (transposed)
Piccolo Trumpet:

(ii) Glenn Miller, “In the Mood”

(♩ = $\overline{\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}}$)

Saxes:

Horns:

All you need is love —

(iii) “Greensleeves”

Upper Strings:

(iv) Lennon/McCartney, “She Loves You”

Paul McCartney:

She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah, — she loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah —

adopted as the French national anthem in 1795, “La Marseillaise” holds the dubious honor of being probably the most often-quoted tune in music literature, imparting what musicologist Philip Keppler once described as a “generalized atmosphere” to the music in which it appears.²² Yet the instant familiarity of the tune is entirely appropriate here, since it is made to serve as a kind of international signpost leading the way into the universal message of “All You Need is Love.”

The four quotations swirled into the texture during the long fadeout at the end of the song are almost as immediately recognizable as “La Marseillaise.” As Martin tells us, he recorded the tunes at “slightly different *tempos* so that they all still worked as separate entities.”²³ This was probably not even necessary, since the tunes themselves have markedly different *metric* profiles, meters that in themselves distinguish the tunes from the background shuffle feel that continues to sound on the rhythm track during the fadeout. Sounding first, in $\frac{3}{4}$ time, is the opening tune from J. S. Bach’s Two-Part Invention in F Major, transposed up by step so as to fit the G-major tonality of the song. It is interesting that Martin scores this melody for piccolo trumpet, the signature instrument of J. S. Bach’s *Brandenburg Concerto* No. 2. In fact, this is not the first time a piccolo trumpet appears on a Beatles record. A few months earlier, Paul McCartney had been fascinated with the sound of the instrument after hearing a performance of the *Brandenburg Concerti*, and had asked Martin if he could work it into the recording of his new song “Penny

²² See Philip Keppler, Jr., “Some Comments on Musical Quotation,” *Musical Quarterly* 42/4 (1956), 474. Among the numerous works that feature quotations of “La Marseillaise” are Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*, Schumann’s *Two Grenadiers*, Debussy’s “Feux D’Artifice” (from the second book of *Préludes*), and the opening bars of Frank Sinatra’s recording of “French Foreign Legion” (from the Sinatra album *All the Way* [1958]). The use of “La Marseillaise” in an international mix also recalls an important political statement made in one of the later nightclub scenes from the Oscar-winning film *Casablanca* (1942), where Victor Laszlo leads the patrons of the club in a rousing rendition of the French anthem to drown out the Nazis’ singing of their own German patriotic songs.

²³ Martin, *All You Need is Ears*, 192.

Lane.”²⁴ In the case of the fadeout to “All You Need is Love,” however, the use of the piccolo trumpet was probably just a question of practicality: had Martin scored the quotation for its original instrument—the harpsichord—it would likely have been lost in the denseness of the texture, especially since John Lennon was already playing his own harpsichord part on the backing track. Nevertheless, the combination of the piccolo trumpet with the famous theme of the two-part invention serves only to intensify the intertextual reference to Bach. It is as if Martin wanted to achieve a pointedly “German” association in using this particular quotation, much like the pointedly “French” association achieved by “La Marseillaise” at the onset of the song.

Next to appear, in a fast “swing” $\frac{4}{4}$, is the opening riff to Glenn Miller’s 1930s big band standard “In the Mood,” performed by a pair of saxophones.²⁵ Aside from being quintessentially “American,” the interesting thing about this quotation is that it seems to echo—and perhaps even helped to inspire—the horn lick that punctuates the titular lyric during the choruses earlier in the song. To illustrate this in Figure 2, I have aligned the “In the Mood” riff above the trombone/saxophone motive from the chorus: notice how the lower of the two parts traces the same chromatic descent connecting D_5 to B_4 at the end of the “In the Mood” riff, which, although a stock melodic pattern for this style, is a correspondence I find hard to believe was merely coincidental.

²⁴ Dowlding, *Beatlesongs*, 148. Although both “Penny Lane” and “All You Need is Love” were released only as singles in Britain in 1967, they do appear together (separated by only one track) on side two of the U.S. *Magical Mystery Tour* album. Listening to the two songs in close juxtaposition makes the use of the piccolo trumpet sound curiously programmatic, almost as a *leitmotif* linking the two songs.

²⁵ As Allen Forte informs me, the opening riff from “In the Mood” had been used as a kind of “stock riff” in swing music for several years before crystallizing in Joe Garland’s 1939 arrangement for the Glenn Miller Band. For a detailed study of the history and stylistic features of swing music, see Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

So far we have heard quotations from tunes that are quintessentially French, German, and American (respectively). There seems to be a definite agenda at work here, one in which the borrowed tunes are made deliberately to evoke a “multinational” atmosphere in accordance with the theme of the *Our World* broadcast. Keeping in step with this agenda, the final two quotations are from tunes that are quintessentially British: the sixteenth-century folk song “Greensleeves” and the Beatles’ own 1963 pop hit “She Loves You.”²⁶ The fact that the Beatles have strategically borrowed from one of their own earlier songs during this fadeout section is especially significant. There is of course the obvious correlation of the “love” motif in both the earlier and the later song, but perhaps more important is the very fact that the Beatles have placed a quotation from one of their own songs among a collection of extremely famous themes culled from various periods of Western music history—themes that seem to capture the very essence of the musical heritages of the particular nations from which they are drawn. And this is what makes this particular swirl of quotations so crucial in contributing to the meaning of “All You Need is Love”: the power of love is timeless, and transcends historical and cultural boundaries. Like the *Our World* broadcast, the musical collage during the fadeout of the song represents a coming together of nations united by the common bond of love.²⁷

²⁶ The authorship of “Greensleeves” is uncertain, but it is famously rumored to have been written by King Henry VIII. While modern renditions of the song often normalize the tune into a conventional minor key (which would in this case be E minor, with C \flat instead of C \sharp in m. 1, and the addition of the leading tone D \sharp in m. 4), it is interesting that Martin retains the original Dorian mode in quoting the tune—which, along with the $\frac{6}{8}$ meter, makes “Greensleeves” stand out all the more from the complex surrounding texture during the fadeout. Martin does not mention “She Loves You” in his list of quotations since it was actually sung live by Paul McCartney during the *Our World* broadcast. Accordingly, it is the only borrowed tune among the swirl of quotations during the fadeout to be in synch with the background shuffle meter of the song.

²⁷ The *Our World* performance of “All You Need is Love” can be seen in its entirety in Vol. 7 of *The Beatles Anthology* series, produced for ABC television in 1995 (now available on DVD).

References to earlier Beatles songs are also exploited strategically, albeit for very different purposes, in Lennon's "Glass Onion" (from the "White Album" [1968]).²⁸ In marked contrast to the universal innocence of "All You Need is Love," "Glass Onion" reveals the composer at his cynical best. By 1968, Lennon had become increasingly annoyed with the tendency of journalists to posit their own meanings for the surrealistic metaphors that often pervaded his lyrics. For example, his famous "I Am the Walrus" (from *Magical Mystery Tour* [1967]) was intended as not much more than a spoof on Lewis Carroll's poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter." Lyrics such as "expert texpert choking smokers / don't you think the joker laughs at you" were likely chosen by Lennon mainly for their alliterative value: "the joker" simply *sounds* interesting in relation to "choking smokers," and these lyrics were not necessarily intended to *represent* anyone or anything.²⁹ Nevertheless, the media took it upon themselves to try to decode the multiple cryptic references in Lennon's later Beatles songs, a mania that peaked with the notorious "Paul is dead" rumor in the wake of the *Abbey Road* album in the fall of 1969.³⁰

²⁸ As Ed Whitley has suggested, the Beatles' "White Album," with its extraordinary bricolage of styles and influences, is perhaps the consummate postmodern album of the rock era. In addition to the strategic intertextual references in "Glass Onion," the album features stylistic intertextual references as diverse as music hall ("Martha My Dear"), Jamaican pop ("Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da"), Baroque lament ("While My Guitar Gently Weeps"), 1930s torch-song ("Goodnight"), country and western ("Don't Pass Me By"), and *musique concrète* ("Revolution 9"), to name but a few. See Ed Whitley, "The Postmodern White Album," in *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A Thousand Voices*, ed. Ian Inglis (London: Macmillan, 2000), 105–25.

²⁹ While it is true that much of Lennon's lyrics were deliberately nonsensical, it is possible that the "joker" in "I Am the Walrus" was meant to represent Lennon himself: the "expert texpert" line is not only alliterative, but a direct criticism of the hypocritical Liverpool headmasters who were analyzing Beatles lyrics in class even though they had found the younger Lennon a poor student. Alliterative wordplay and surrealistic metaphors were a hallmark of Lennon's lyrics throughout the later Beatles' oeuvre. He took this "fantastic" style even further in his prose and drawings, published in the two collections *In His Own Write* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964) and *A Spaniard in the Works* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965). An informative study of Lennon's collected writings is provided by James Saucedo in *The Literary Lennon: A Comedy of Letters* (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 1983).

³⁰ Rumors of Paul McCartney's untimely demise were started by underground disc-jockey Russ Gibb of Detroit's WKNR-FM in October 1969. Gibb claimed that there were clues suggesting Paul's death scattered among the late Beatles albums, both in the songs themselves and on the album covers (for example, Lennon is supposed to have muttered "I buried Paul" during the fadeout of "Strawberry Fields Forever"). For a detailed account of the "Paul is dead" phenomenon, see Nicholas Schaffner, *The Beatles Forever* (New York: Cameron House, 1977), 127–31.

“Glass Onion” was a cunning attempt by Lennon deliberately to confuse the media.³¹ Returning to the Lewis Carroll-inspired world of “I Am the Walrus,” the composer conjures up images from his own past by “looking through a glass onion,” a spoof on the title of Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*. The lyrics make strategic allusions to five earlier Beatles songs: “Strawberry Fields Forever,” “I Am the Walrus,” “Lady Madonna,” “The Fool on the Hill,” and “Fixing a Hole.”³² Beatles experts however will confirm that the song is full of red herrings. For example, when John says in verse two “well here’s another clue for you all—the Walrus was Paul,” he is intentionally lying, since the Beatle in the walrus costume on the cover of the *Magical Mystery Tour* album was of course Lennon himself.³³ Similarly, it was actually McCartney, not Lennon, who “told [us] about the Fool on the Hill” (verse three) earlier on the same album.

Yet Lennon’s subtle allusions to the *music* of these earlier songs make the web of intertextual references in “Glass Onion” especially meaningful (see Figure 3). In the opening lines of the song we are immediately transported back to “Strawberry Fields, . . . the place where nothing is real.” The driving rock backbeat of “Glass Onion” is certainly far removed from the sleepy psychedelic groove that pervades throughout “Strawberry Fields Forever,” yet at the point in the melody where Lennon sings the lyric “Strawberry Fields” he recalls exactly the intervallic contour that had set the titular lyric in the earlier song. I have illustrated this in Figure 3a by

³¹ Like the majority of the songs on the “White Album,” “Glass Onion” was originally written during the Beatles’ stay at the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s ashram in Rishikesh, India, in the spring of 1968. The initial tracks for the song were recorded at Abbey Road Studios on September 11, with overdubs completed by October 10.

³² Copyright restrictions prevent me from reproducing the entire lyrics of “Glass Onion,” but these lyrics—along with the words to most other pop and rock songs, past and present—are readily available online at <http://www.songlyrics.com>.

³³ The irony of this particular line in “Glass Onion” is that it came a full year *before* the “Paul is dead” hysteria, yet the fanatics gobbled up Lennon’s bait in retrospect without any hesitation. After all, Paul must have been the Walrus: the walrus costume was black, and “walrus” apparently means “corpse” in Greek!

FIGURE 3. Strategic intertextual references in “Glass Onion”
 (a) “Strawberry Fields Forever”

Musical notation for the beginning of "Strawberry Fields Forever". It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 3/4 time signature. The melody consists of a series of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Below the staff, the lyrics "Straw-ber-ry fie - lds for - e-ver" are written. Below this, a box labeled "Verse 1" is shown with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The melody starts with a whole rest, followed by eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Chord symbols "Am", "F7", and "Am" are placed above the staff. The lyrics "I told youa - bout — straw-ber-ry fie - lds You know the place where" are written below the staff.

(b) “The Fool on the Hill”

Musical notation for the beginning of "The Fool on the Hill". It features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Above the staff, the text "Plastic Recorder" is written. Below the staff, the text "(transposed from D major)" is written. Below this, a box labeled "Verse 3" is shown with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The melody starts with a whole rest, followed by eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Above the staff, the text "Recorder" is written. The lyrics "I told you about the fool on the hill — I tell you man he's living there still —" are written below the staff.

(c) Introduction to “Strawberry Fields” compared with the coda/fadeout to “Glass Onion”

Musical notation comparing the introduction of "Strawberry Fields" with the coda/fadeout of "Glass Onion". The top staff features a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Above the staff, the text "Mellotron (flute stop)" is written. Below the staff, the text "Enter Vocal" is written. The lyrics "Let me take you down —" are written below the staff. The bottom staff features a grand staff (treble and bass clefs), a key signature of one flat, and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth notes: B-flat, A, G, F, E, D, C, B-flat. Above the staff, the text "Strings" is written. Below the staff, the text "pizz." is written. Below the bottom staff, the text "(Repeat and fade)" is written.

aligning the corresponding phrase from “Strawberry Fields” above the opening melody of “Glass Onion.” Notice that the “Strawberry Fields” motive in “Glass Onion” is an almost-exact transposition of the original, with one important distinction: the minor triad outlined by the original motive has been modified to a diminished triad via the flattening of the uppermost note from E to E \flat . It is this particular altered scale degree— \flat^5 with respect to the prevailing key of A minor—that places the unmistakable stamp of the blues on the melody of “Glass Onion.”³⁴ But more important is the fact that this sensitive note calls special attention to the “Strawberry Fields” motive while at the same time intentionally distorting it when compared to its original context. As Lennon reminds us in the lyric, “nothing is real” in his make-believe world.

In contrast, the musical allusion to “The Fool on the Hill” in verse three—which you will recall was actually not a Lennon but a McCartney composition—is made completely obvious (Figure 3b). Notice that the melody from verse one has been retained, complete with the distorted “Strawberry Fields” motive. Yet punctuating the second line of text is a riff borrowed directly from the plastic recorder solo that serves as one of the most memorable hooks of the earlier song, transposed so as to fit the new key.³⁵ By borrowing not just the riff but the distinctive *timbre* from “The Fool on the Hill,” Lennon has made the reference to McCartney’s composition entirely overt. (Indeed, had the “White Album” been composed and recorded a couple of decades later, one imagines that George Martin would have used digital sampling technology so as to lift the “Fool on the Hill” riff directly from its original source.) It seems

³⁴ For an extended study of how blues elements permeate both the surface and deeper levels of the Beatles’ harmonic language, see Naphtali Wagner, “‘Domestication’ of Blue Notes in the Beatles’ Songs,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 25/2 (2003): 353–65. Concerning the significance of the flatted fifth scale degree, Wagner says: “ \flat^5 . . . is obtained through flattening of the pentatonic nucleus itself. This note will appear as a BN [“Blue Note”] even in a minor environment” (354).

³⁵ The plastic recorder solo in “The Fool on the Hill” (played by McCartney himself) occurs over the third verse, right at the place where we would expect the lead guitar solo to occur.

strangely appropriate that Lennon should quote McCartney's melody verbatim and yet deliberately distort the melody in the quotation from his own composition. It is almost as if John wanted to ensure that the media would be "fooled" into thinking that it was actually *he* and not Paul who wrote "The Fool on the Hill."

Finally, Beatles aficionados have long been puzzled by the bizarre passage scored for strings that emerges seemingly out of nowhere to serve as the coda for "Glass Onion" (Figure 3c). At the risk of skepticism from diehard Beatles fans, I will suggest that this passage might be demystified if we compare it to the introductory Mellotron passage that opens "Strawberry Fields Forever."³⁶ Like the "Strawberry Fields" motive, this closing music once again seems to make a deliberately distorted reference to Lennon's earlier song. The similarities between the two passages are hard to ignore: aside from the very fact that each passage is isolated at the opening or the closing of their respective songs, both share a slow $\frac{4}{4}$ meter, a steady quarter-note pulse, a bassline bounded by the pitches F and D on the corresponding downbeats of mm. 1 and 3, and an uppermost voice that remains stationary for one measure before making a stepwise descent in the second measure. Yet there are some important differences: for example, the chromatic descent in the bass in "Strawberry Fields" is echoed by the chromatic slippage (doubled at the tritone) sounding in the *upper* voices in "Glass Onion." And while the large-scale harmonic function of the introduction in "Strawberry Fields" is to prolong the dominant on the way to the tonic B \flat at the onset of the first verse, the underlying harmonies in the coda to "Glass Onion," as a result of

³⁶ For an illuminating account of the composition and recording of "Strawberry Fields Forever," see Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 75–84.

the repetition of the passage, simply oscillate back and forth between third-related dominant-seventh chords on F and D.³⁷

Although the allusion to “Strawberry Fields” is limited to the opening verse in the lyrics to “Glass Onion,” it seems that its presence is meant to be felt musically, albeit disguised, throughout the entirety of the song, culminating in the strangeness of this coda passage.³⁸ In short, the disguised references to “Strawberry Fields” in the music to “Glass Onion” are made to mirror the cryptic allusions that saturate the lyrics of the song. The overriding theme of “Glass Onion”—that of distorting and confusing the past—is further intensified by the Beatles’ music. Only an intertextual reading of the song, carefully bouncing it off of the earlier tracks that it references, allows us to unravel these sophisticated and multiple layers of meaning.

For our third and final example, let us consider a track from the infamous side two of *Abbey Road* (1969), “Because.”³⁹ The story of Lennon’s classical inspiration for composing this gorgeous song is now a well-known tidbit of Beatles trivia:

Yoko was playing [Beethoven’s] “Moonlight Sonata” on the piano. She was classically trained. I said, “Can you play those chords backwards?” and wrote “Because” around

³⁷ These harmonies echo in slow motion the oscillating F and D dominant-seventh chords that accompany the second half of the verses of “Glass Onion.”

³⁸ Several scholars and critics have argued that the “weirdness” of much of the Beatles late work, especially Lennon’s, was a direct reflection of their increasing fondness for using LSD and other psychedelic drugs. For a discussion of what is termed “psychedelic coding” in the late Beatles, see Sheila Whiteley, *The Space Between the Notes* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 39–60.

³⁹ Side two of *Abbey Road*, particularly its famous “medley” of eight songs seamlessly joined together to create a unified whole (beginning with “You Never Give Me Your Money”), has already received considerable attention from music theorists. See, for example, Walter Everett, “The Genesis of *Abbey Road*, Side Two,” in *Concert Music, Rock and Jazz Since 1945*, ed. Elizabeth West Marvin and Richard Hermann (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 172–227; and Robert Gauldin, “Beethoven, Tristan, and the Beatles,” *College Music Symposium* 30/1 (1990): 142–52.

them. The lyrics speak for themselves; they're clear. No bullshit. No imagery, no obscure references.⁴⁰

“Because” is unique among the Beatles’ oeuvre in that it is the only song to have been modeled directly on a specific pre-existing classical composition (albeit an extremely famous one). The surface similarities between Lennon’s composition and its Beethovenian model are obvious if we compare the opening measures of both pieces (Figure 4).⁴¹ In paraphrasing Beethoven, Lennon retains the key of C# minor—quite an unusual key for pop and rock—and, like the model, writes a texture dominated by arpeggiated triads and seventh chords in the baritone range of the keyboard, played by George Martin on an electric harpsichord, and doubled by Lennon’s Epiphone Casino hollow-body electric guitar from m. 5 onwards. Of course, Lennon’s own description of “Because,” quoted above, should not be taken literally when he says that the chords are simply those of the “Moonlight” sonata “played backwards.” As Walter Everett has explained: “if one considers that in Beethoven, the . . . arpeggiations appear in an ascending manner only, one might guess that Ono was instructed to reverse the direction; the resulting ‘circular’ ascending and descending arpeggiations . . . can be related to a hearing of Beethoven with both forwards and backwards ‘chords.’”⁴²

What I would like to focus on here, however, is Lennon’s response to the harmonic *syntax* of Beethoven’s original. As we would expect, the introductory phrase of the “Moonlight” sonata follows the “rules” of early nineteenth-century harmony and voice leading to the letter (see Figure 4b): it begins on the tonic (i) and moves through the submediant (VI) and the

⁴⁰ From an interview conducted by David Sheff for *Playboy* magazine in September 1980, reprinted in G. Barry Golson, ed., *The Playboy Interviews with John Lennon and Yoko Ono* (New York: Playboy Press, 1981), 161.

⁴¹ For a full transcription and analysis of “Because,” see Everett, “The Genesis of *Abbey Road*, Side Two,” 187–98.

⁴² Everett, “The Genesis of *Abbey Road*, Side Two,” 197.

FIGURE 4. A comparison of harmonic syntax in Lennon and Beethoven
 (a) "Because" (opening measures)

Electric Harpsichord

$\text{♩} = 81$

5 (add Electric Guitar)

(b5)

i ii^{♭7} V⁷ VI i (I) VI(⁴7₆) = |V⁷₆

Ah _____ Be - cause the world is round, it turns

♯II common-tone [♭]4 (I) i (etc.)

Detailed description: This musical score shows the opening measures of "Because" by The Beatles. It features two staves: the top staff for the Electric Harpsichord and the bottom staff for the Electric Guitar. The key signature is C major (one sharp). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 81. The guitar part includes a "5" (fifth fret) and "(b5)" (flat fifth) instruction. Chord symbols are provided below the guitar staff: i, ii^{♭7}, V⁷, VI, i (I), VI(⁴7₆), and = |V⁷₆. The vocal line includes the lyrics "Ah _____ Be - cause the world is round, it turns". The score ends with "etc." and a ♯II symbol.

(b) Piano Sonata in C# Minor, Op. 27, No. 2 ("Moonlight"), I (opening measures)

Adagio sostenuto

5

i _____ (4) VI ⁸V(7₆—6—5—7) i V⁶ (etc.)

Detailed description: This musical score shows the opening measures of the first movement of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C# Minor, Op. 27, No. 2, "Moonlight". The key signature is C# minor (three sharps). The tempo is marked as Adagio sostenuto. The score includes a "5" (fifth fret) instruction. Chord symbols are provided below the staff: i, (4), VI, ⁸V(7₆—6—5—7), i, and V⁶. The score ends with "etc." and a ♯II symbol.

Neapolitan (\flat II) to the dominant (V), before returning to the tonic in m. 5 (at which point the main theme enters). The opening measures of “Because” contain all of these chords, but Lennon’s chosen pathway through them is considerably more circuitous (see Figure 4a). Beginning likewise on the tonic, he moves through $ii^{\flat 7}$ and V, resolving deceptively to VI in m. 5 (note the overt parallel fifths in this V–VI progression, a common voice-leading “mistake” that is all too familiar to those of us who teach first-year harmony). So far so good, but from this point onward the classical harmonic syntax in “Because” gets considerably out of whack. Rather than moving from VI directly to the Neapolitan, as Beethoven does, Lennon makes a temporary swerve backwards to the tonic in m. 6, before returning to the submediant in mm. 7–8. You will notice that here the VI chord is embellished with its seventh $G\flat$, which serves to intensify the move to the Neapolitan in m. 9 by transforming the chord into an applied dominant seventh (although I should point out that the chord seventh $G\flat$ anticipates its downward resolution by moving to $F\sharp$ one measure too soon). But what is even more significant about this $G\flat$ —recalling a similar use of this particular altered scale degree in “Glass Onion”—is the resultant emphasis placed on $\flat\hat{5}$, which again gives an unmistakable blues flavor to the harmony.

It was no accident that Lennon chose to introduce the lush three-part vocals, arguably the most memorable feature of “Because,” right at the moment the harmonic progression moves to \flat II.⁴³ Looking again at the “Moonlight” sonata (Figure 4b), we can see that the Neapolitan, with its Phrygian $\flat\hat{2}$, stands out as the only chromatically altered chord in the opening measures (the

⁴³ As Everett points out, “Because” was the first Beatles song since “Yes It Is” (February 1965) to feature Lennon, McCartney, and Harrison singing in close three-part harmony throughout (Everett, “The Genesis of *Abbey Road*, Side Two,” 186). The parts were arranged by George Martin, who subsequently taught each of the three singers their respective lines by rote.

chord is “marked,” as Robert Hatten would say).⁴⁴ Indeed, Beethoven attaches a special significance to the Neapolitan at key moments throughout the first movement (e.g., the entrance of the “second theme,” especially at its recapitulation in m. 51*ff.*). I suspect that Lennon’s ear was keen enough to latch on to this unusual aspect of Beethoven’s harmonic design, explaining perhaps why he and George Martin chose this particular chord to heighten the expressive import of the first vocal entrance. But I would also suggest that it was Lennon’s very *lack* of familiarity with the language of nineteenth-century harmony that freed him to resolve the Neapolitan in a characteristically “wrong” way. Returning to Figure 4a, we see that rather than behaving normally as a chord of dominant preparation, the D major chord of m. 9 instead resolves to an oddball common-tone diminished seventh in m. 10 before folding back to the tonic at m. 11, seemingly bypassing a traditional dominant (with customary raised $\hat{7}$) altogether, at which point the entire progression begins anew.⁴⁵ The harmonic design of “Because” is therefore circular, as Everett has suggested, musically portraying the “twisting, circular thinking” of the lyrics.⁴⁶

Those who know the first movement of the “Moonlight” sonata will confirm that the distinctive sound of a fully-diminished seventh chord, while not marked in the opening measures like the Neapolitan chord, is also an essential feature of the harmonic design of Beethoven’s

⁴⁴ Borrowing a term from structural linguistics, the concept of “markedness” is based on the “significance given to difference”—in this case, the fact that the Neapolitan is the only chromatically-altered harmony within the C#-minor diatonic surroundings of the opening measures. For a full explication of this theory, see Robert Hatten, *Musical Meaning in Beethoven: Markedness, Correlation, and Interpretation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); see also Patrick McCreless, “Syntagmatics and Paradigmatics: Some Implications for the Analysis of Chromaticism in Tonal Music,” *Music Theory Spectrum* 13/2 (1991): 147–78 (especially 163–74).

⁴⁵ In its customary nineteenth-century usage, a common-tone diminished seventh chord that embellishes the tonic would share $\hat{1}$ with it, as the common tone—in other words, the seventh of the common-tone diminished seventh (as typically spelled) would be retained as the root of the tonic chord to which it resolves. Yet in the case of “Because,” the shared common tone is $\hat{5}$ —in other words, the *root* of the common-tone diminished seventh is retained as the *fifth* of the tonic. For a lucid explanation of common-tone diminished sevenths, see Edward Aldwell and Carl Schachter, *Harmony and Voice Leading*, 3rd edn. (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Schirmer, 2003), 553–55.

⁴⁶ Everett, “The Genesis of *Abbey Road*, Side Two,” 197.

original (e.g., the parallel fully-diminished seventh chords that sound over a dominant pedal during the extended retransition [m. 28ff.]). It is significant I think that Lennon situates his Neapolitan and fully-diminished seventh chords in immediate juxtaposition; needless to say, such a progression is worlds removed from the harmonic conventions of late-1960s pop and rock. Imagining what Lennon might have been thinking as he composed such an unusual progression, I am reminded of Leonard Meyer's oft-quoted definition of musical style:

Style is a replication of patterning, whether in human behavior or in the artifacts produced by human behavior, that results from a series of *choices* made within some set of *constraints*.⁴⁷

Following Meyer, one could say that Lennon's harmonic choices when composing "Because" were simply not as "constrained" as Beethoven's, due to his unfamiliarity with the style. This stylistic freedom—naïveté, if you will—is precisely what enabled Lennon to compose a song that sounds wonderfully fresh and unique even today, like so much of the Beatles' late output, melding together harmonic elements of two seemingly disparate tonal traditions.⁴⁸



The intertextual analyses in this article have been, of necessity, very selective, and they only begin to scratch the surface of the aesthetic richness offered by the late songs of the Beatles.

⁴⁷ Leonard Meyer, *Style and Music: Theory, History and Ideology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 3 (my emphasis); quoted, for example, in Covach, "Stylistic Competencies, Musical Humor, and 'This is Spinal Tap,'" 402.

⁴⁸ The late Elliott Smith recorded a cover of "Because" for the soundtrack to the 1999 Oscar-winning film *American Beauty* (in a poignant effect, the song sounds over the closing credits immediately in the wake of Lester Burnham's shocking shooting death at the climax of the film). Smith's version represents an interesting reversal of the Beatles' original conception: he *begins* with the three-part vocals *a cappella*, and introduces the arpeggiated accompaniment, along with the sudden harmonic shift to F# major (IV), only at the onset of the bridge. In the Beatles' original version, the message of the poetic text—"love is old, love is *new*"—is portrayed musically only by the abrupt shift of harmony and mode (a marvelous effect unto itself), but Smith's version goes one better in that the "newness" of the bridge is achieved both harmonically *and* texturally.

Yet I believe that the analytical implications of such an intertextual approach are much broader, with the potential for illuminating a wide range of pop and rock music throughout the post-Beatles era. In defense of his Bloomian interreading of pieces by Brahms and Reger in relation to a prior piece by Chopin, Kevin Korsyn suggests that “perhaps the . . . greatest strength [of an intertextual reading] is the space it carves for the imagination, allowing music analysis to recover the element of fantasy that is as necessary to theorizing about art as it is to artistic creation.”⁴⁹ Keeping with this element of fantasy, I shall conclude by evoking John Lennon’s “glass onion” as a metaphor for a kind of intertextual lens, a lens through which we are better able to view the richness of imagery that saturates the Beatles’ late music. By “looking through a glass onion,” Lennon intentionally distorted music from his own past; but when *we* look through a glass onion, the music of the past should become all the more clear.

⁴⁹ Korsyn, “Towards a New Poetics of Musical Influence,” 61.

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ABSTRACT

In a seminal 1985 article, Robert Hatten outlines a theory of musical intertextuality with the potential for a broad range of application. He suggests that intertextuality in music operates on two essential levels: stylistic and strategic. *Stylistic intertextuality* occurs when a composer adopts distinctive features of an earlier style without reference to any specific work in that style (such as the appropriation of high-Baroque devices in the string-octet accompaniment to Paul McCartney's "Eleanor Rigby"). *Strategic intertextuality* is more pointed, occurring only when a

composer makes deliberate reference to a particular earlier work or works, and this can involve a variety of techniques such as quotation, structural modeling, variation, or paraphrase. At the risk of oversimplification, we might say then that the goal of an intertextual analysis is to unravel the many ways in which the stylistic and strategic references contribute to the meaning of the new piece. In this article, the author offers close analyses of three of John Lennon's late Beatles songs—"All You Need is Love," "Glass Onion," and "Because"—as a means of demonstrating how strategic intertextuality can work to enrich a pop-rock song's overall message.

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