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THE EVOLUTION OF THE LYRICS OF THE BEATLES AS A SOCIAL FUNCTION
WITHIN THE POPULAR CULTURE

by

LESLIE THORNTON KING

Under the Direction of Ashley J. Holmes, PhD

ABSTRACT

This thesis analyzes the rhetorical ascendance achieved by the musical group, The Beatles, during a career that propelled them from largely musical performers/entertainers to consummate and fully-fledged artists. This thesis examines two time periods in the group's career, and then explores the elements that affected the performer-to-artist transition, focusing exclusively on the rhetoric, not the meaning of the song lyrics. A cornerstone of the research was an analytic comparison of parts of speech.

INDEX WORDS: The Beatles, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, Songwriting, *Rubber Soul*, Lyrics, Artistic progression, Rhetoric

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

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Leslie Thornton King
2020

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to William Parry King, whose extensive knowledge and worldview of The Beatles situates them beyond the pantheon of musicians and places them among the most significant historical and cultural figures.

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INTRODUCTION

An overwhelming number of books have been written on The Beatles, covering almost every aspect of the group's and the individuals within the group's impact—ranging from their career, lives, effect on the industry, influence on the popular culture, psychology, sociology, associates and friends and family, personalities, and nearly any other facet or entity or phenomenon one can think of. The authors of these books run the gamut of interests and specialties. Some are scholars including Simon Frith of Oxford University and Kenneth Womack of Monmouth University and Michael Frontani of Elon University. Other authors were fans and some were detractors or buck-chasers, who in the pre-digital days slapped together books referred to as “clip jobs” to deceivers (I decline to give names). Still, others were photographers, family members, or journalists. Some of these writers were music critics of low or high stature such as Allan Kozinn, former classical music critic of the New York Times, or disciples of the historic record such, as Mark Lewisohn, who has been given exclusive and unprecedented access to the vaults of EMI Music for his in-progress, three-part definitive history of The Beatles. These written explorations cover the most granular facets of the works and art and lives of The Beatles. Yet, as I state in this thesis, the rhetoric of their lyrics as a primary topic of research and exploration has yet to be analyzed. It is as though the writers of these works bought into Paul McCartney's words that “We often used to say to people, the words don't really matter, people don't listen to words, it's the sound they listen to” (Miles, p. 153). Their rhetorical advancement is overlooked or obscured by the major, permanent directional changes they made and inspired in music and its production.

There are works written about their song lyrics as poetry, though the main songwriters, John Lennon and McCartney—and George Harrison can be included in this statement—did not

discuss or differentiate the genres of expression they used or preferred. In my thesis, I note Lennon's comment that McCartney always preferred to write stories about people (narrative) whereas he, Lennon, preferred to write about himself (memoir, self-analysis, personal quest).

The basis of this thesis is that the rhetoric of the lyrics of their songs changed considerably over their career. In the beginning of The Beatles' career when the four of them, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Richard Starkey known as Ringo Starr, were most active and influential artistically as a group. This changed considerably from those early years to when they reached what is considered their critical peak of influence musically and culturally in the later years of the 1960s with the *Revolver* album in 1966. This thesis studies the ways in which the rhetoric of their lyrics responded to the artistic and cultural changes shaping the era and, further, what contributed to change in the rhetoric. Chapter 2 is a comparison of the rhetorical aspects of the lyrics in the early songs to the lyrics in the transition songs and the major different influences on the lyrics choices and changes that affected the transition. This relatively fast-paced evolution not only paralleled but was also fueled by the quickened pace of the cultural changes during the post-World War II period in Western societies. Moreover, this transition, in which The Beatles grew their rhetorical purpose to fit the evolving popular culture from the simplistic in the construction and meaning, made that evolutionary jump in an almost startlingly quick period of time. Although a number of the early songs were written very simply or simplistically, similar to the techniques used by Tin Pan Alley and the Brill Building, the roots of the evolution were evident in these early songs, albeit in a very rudimentary way. The Beatles evolved from influenced to influencer, from follower to leader. Their works originated and were first situated as commercial product then become art, transitioning from the rhetoric of a specific, closely personal point of view to a rhetoric with a broadened relevance for a more inclusive

audience. This is revealed in the songs analyzed in snapshot one of the thesis, such as the song “I’ll Get You,” as an example, with its verbs that move the needle on the sophistication level from The Beatles’ songs written and recorded around the same time. The songs on the album, *Rubber Soul*, began moving away from declarations of love, of desires, of wants, or needs toward ones with a rhetorical purpose that was more nuanced, setting those wants, desires, and needs into situations that were more complex and less straightforward, but also more universal. The rhetoric broadened the audience of listeners by bringing more and diverse numbers of people into engagement with the changing popular culture at that time to remake their identities and worlds, according to Barry Brummett’s premise.¹ When Peter Astor’s change in focus for lyrics began in the 1960s, the lyrics to popular songs started working in different ways and addressing a much wider range of subjects beyond love and courtship. It was at this time that the group’s songwriting began to change, starting with some of the songs on this seminal album. It was seminal in the sense that it contained transitional songs whose changes foreshadowed and developed into what The Beatles’ music, lyrics included, would become at its peak. Music critics have recognized *Rubber Soul* as an album that opened up and broadened the possibilities of pop music in terms of lyrical and musical scope, and as a key work in the creation of styles, or genres of music, such as psychedelia and progressive rock. Indeed, the difference in the numbers of musical genres of The Beatles’ music between the two snapshots analyzed is significant and pronounced. *Rubber Soul* also moved the focus away from single releases and put it toward creating albums of consistently high-quality songs among The Beatles’ peers.

For the purposes of this thesis, I am using the song listings of the combined United Kingdom and United States released albums, selections of songs included which often differed, though slightly, between the two markets.

Noting Brummett's position that the work of popular culture is inherently rhetorical, The Beatles rode the changing cultural wave of the 1960s and gave their expanding and diversifying audience new ways to contend with the rhetorical struggle of defining individual identity as well as universal identity within the world. One of the ways in which Lennon and McCartney did this was by offering candid insights into their respective personal lives through the rhetorical framework of their lyrics. For a concentrated exploration of The Beatles' early, formative years, read Dave Laing's essay, "Six Boys, Six Beatles: The Formative Years, 1950-1962" in Kenneth Womack's book. In that essay, Laing demonstrates that the individuals who eventually made up the definitive version of The Beatles were express products of the historical process of 1950s-era England. Also in the Womack book, James Decker writes his view of transitional album *Rubber Soul* and its rhetorical shift evidenced by the increasing edginess, ambiguity, and nuances in their song lyrics.

1 RHETORIC AS A PROMINENT FACTOR IN THE EVOLUTION OF LYRICS

The evolution of the English rock-popular music group The Beatles from clean, safe, "lovable mop-tops"—clichés frequently used to describe the members as well as the group as an entity in the early years of their career—to designated leaders in the popular culture of the 1960s—a decade of such monumental change as to be unrecognizable from its early years to its concluding ones—is rarely considered within the rhetorical context of their image and lyrics. Instead, the lyrics are given secondary consideration, if any consideration at all, within most of the explorations of the artistic, cultural, or musical phenomenon that was this group of English musicians whose influence on popular music continues into the twenty-first century. The rhetoric of the lyrics—not the meanings of them—is overlooked to the point of being nonexistent in serious study. A comparison of two periods of time in their group career, to be known as

“snapshot one” and “snapshot two,” will explore this change. This exploration is not concerned with lyrics in and of themselves, that is, the meanings of the lyrics of various songs or lyrics as poetry. Rather, the focus here is on the words themselves as elements within sentences or sets of elements that were chosen and used by the songwriters in the group to construct the lyrical part of the musical composition. This analysis compares how their rhetorical choices changed from the earlier time period, which will be designated as 1962-63, to the later time period, 1965, which covers a time of significant transition. Critics concur, that this transition was what moved The Beatles from musicians and popular music entertainers to fully-fledged artists and popular culture leaders. An examination of the two snapshots will look at how their rhetoric evolved and transitioned within the context of Brummett’s meaning of rhetorical practice as it had shifted from great oratory in public speaking during ancient times to, among other expressions, popular music, thus situating their rhetoric within popular culture that it helped create (4, 35). This shift situates their rhetoric within the popular culture that it helped create. The examination will be based on those choices and uses of words, beginning with examining and comparing the parts of speech used in the songs in snapshot one, then snapshot two; the cultural and musical influences that inspired the choices; and the tools they used in making their rhetorical choices when they wrote lyrics. The comparison will examine first for the songs in snapshot one and then analyze if and how these selections in parts of speech and these influences were changed or continued in the songs in snapshot two. The comparison will also analyze whether they used the same tools in making their rhetorical choices or if they developed or even co-opted new tools in the transition songs of snapshot two. Also for consideration is whether or not other, new factors were introduced during the transition period from snapshot one to snapshot two that contributed to the evolution of the rhetoric of the later songs.

This use of rhetorical theory and criticism will be linked to The Beatles' evolutionary role in the popular culture of that time, not in persuading people what to believe and how to behave, but rather in reflecting the contemporary culture, as their early songs did, and then in responding to the change in the culture of the specific time as reflected in the two snapshots. Their domination of popular music, having been prominently responsible for elevating the genre to an art and through art, made them leaders whether that was their intent or not.

The first snapshot will be taken within the timeframe of their early musical hits in 1962-63, beginning with the song "Please Please Me." This snapshot will then be compared to the second snapshot with an exploration of the songs in 1965 that marked the transition, which led to the culmination of what is considered the group's critical peak in 1966-68, with the previously noted *Revolver* but also including *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* released in 1967 and *The Beatles* (also known as *The White Album*, which was released in 1968) albums. The lyrics in the songs of the two time periods will be assessed for how the words and parts of speech were used and how they differed between the two time periods to show their rhetorical evolution from these two periods of time within the songs themselves but also within the prevailing culture of that era, how the rhetoric of the lyrics influenced and was also influenced by that culture. The rhetoric used to create, maintain, and refine their image by outsiders as well as by themselves and how this rhetoric was reflected, deflected, embraced, or opposed that image within their lyrics will also be considered. This analysis will be situated within the context of the conjunction of rhetoric and popular culture, the development of which Brummett places in the eighteenth century with the use of artifacts, a socially created reality, as the building blocks of a culture (19, 57). The Beatles as a group, Brummett says, were a cultural artifact (54).

1.1 Lyrics as Objects of Research

Lyrics in popular music have always been the subject of writers' and researchers' attention for interpretation, critical analysis, and the desire to peer into the psyches of artists/musicians who intrigue them as well as pull out interpretations of meanings and intent. Astor (143) cites J. G. Peatman from 1943, H. F. Mooney from 1954, and D. Horton from 1957 who put their focus on lyrics and analyzed the content in lyrics of songs, some of which were written as far back as 1890. These and others looked only at what the lyrics were saying, which was usually variations on the themes of romantic love and courtship contemporary to the era in which the song was written. The rules guiding these songs were typically shaped by the prevailing culture of the era in which they were set, as well as the audience to whom they were directed. A change in focus began in the 1960s, when Astor says lyrics to popular songs started working in different ways and addressing a much wider range of subjects than just love and courtship. It was in the 1960s that songs moved from the objects of "content analysis" to fulfill a new set of functions for new audiences and addressed a broader range of topics, requiring changes in the rhetoric and word choice of the lyrics (144). While lyric analysis is not within the purview of this thesis, one of these new functions of a rock or popular music lyric was the addition of substance and layers of meaning, higher and weightier than in the songs that came before (Astor 144). This function of meaningfulness is directly linked to the prevailing popular culture of the 1960s and to the audience that the lyrics and the culture served. American essayist and music journalist Robert Christgau directs our attention to the function of lyrics beyond or besides poetry: poems are read or said, songs are sung (1967). Christgau links the work of lyricists and singers to the function of speaking to a new, non-literary audience and this linkage prompts the question: Was The Beatles' audience non-literary? And did that characterization, if

true, influence perhaps strongly this evolution we are examining? Certainly, their audience could be said to be “new” due to mass media whose rise and then-domination spread up until then to many more people in many more places in the world—people who would not have been informed and thus included without this long and wide reach of the new mass media providing the information and access for that inclusion. However, we would need Christgau’s definition of literariness to determine the status of the audience in that regard. British sociomusicologist Simon Frith discusses songs as texts, “speech acts” that utilize rhetoric and function more as plays than poems (159). While song lyrics are rightly designated as speech acts, they have a primary weight for the listener because words have a greater resonance for listeners than sounds, notes, or musical textures (Astor 247). Song lyrics as words create a personal, even intimate, communication—a one-on-one experience in songs for the listener; this happens especially in songs by The Beatles that address broader issues to wider audiences.

The framework of the analysis in this thesis will begin with the review and examination of the two aforementioned snapshots within the timeline of the life of The Beatles as artistic group. First, the analysis examines the parts of speech they chose for their songs, as well as the creative uses and shapings of this rhetoric, and compares the differences in both the parts of speech and the word choice between snapshot one and snapshot two. Secondly, the analysis looks at the influences or artifacts to which The Beatles were most exposed that they most identified with (Brummett 55). Finally, the thesis reviews how these changed or influenced the changes that created the transition in their move from performers to artists.

For the analysis the purpose of this thesis disregards rhetoric as a text tool for analyzing the lyrics to a song for its meaning or as poetry or also for using the term “lyric” as an adjective to describe the words to songs as a collective expression of feelings in the way that a song would

describe the feelings that the lyrics are addressing. An overview of influences on song lyric word choice and usage sets up the analysis of the snapshots. Mass media—a term not heard as often in the twenty-first century as it was in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly from the 1960s onward—has been given different descriptors, including social media, digital media, and even virtual media. Yet the quality of these communication outlets, regardless of the references used, remains as a mass distribution system, even as audiences are arguably more fragmented or specialized than they were during the 1960s when modes of communication were fewer and less developed. It was during the 1960s, when The Beatles as a group began establishing and exerting their influence on the popular culture, with the influence reaching a culmination in the later part of the decade and creating a legacy of influence that continues. Critical factors in the phenomenon of The Beatles include the influences of the mass of youth population known as the Baby Boomers, the new creations of and evolving changes in communications mediums that facilitated the spread of information and influenced its exchange, and the post-World War II culture of Britain and the United States.

As an active group, The Beatles had a relatively brief career of approximately eight years; yet, what they changed in popular culture and who they were within popular culture and music remains pervasive and ubiquitous. As Womack points out in *The Cambridge Companion to The Beatles*, much new ground was broken by their lyrics alone—aside from the music itself with the conceptual arrangements and the production techniques—in terms of both the themes and imagery of what he calls the poetry of their songs. He believes that their lyrics are a key part of their legacy of what made them so important, so popular, and so imitated. However, accounts and critiques of their artistic legacy in numerous scholarly and popular sources overwhelmingly discuss the ways in which the group transformed several aspects of popular music as a creative,

highly commercial art form of the music industry. Their pioneering changes included the contributions they made to music writing and production and the way they disrupted the business model on which the music industry had been based up until that time. The accounts and critiques largely and often completely exclude any discussion or acknowledgement of the role lyrics, and not just limited to their meanings, played in their artistic development or evolution and, particularly, in their legacy. Womack asserts that The Beatles merit the same depth and scope of treatment as Richard Ellman gave James Joyce in his classic biography, wherein Ellman seeks to understand “the life of the artist” in order to interpret Joyce’s overarching accomplishment (1-2).

1.2 The Art School as a Crucible of Creative Fusion

While popular culture and media were major facilitators on the music and the lyrics of The Beatles, there were other dominating influences that were less obvious. In some cases, these influences were tied to place and time, one of which was the art school, an English institution originating from a campaign in mid-Victorian times whose aim was to improve what were considered at the time the lagging standards of British industrial design. A major proponent of this theory is Frith, though Ian MacDonald also believes it to be a preeminent factor in The Beatles’ art. Frith bases his assertions on his observation that a significant number of British pop musicians from the 1960s to the present were educated and first started performing in art schools (Frith and Horne 35; MacDonald xviii). The art schools as crucibles of creative fusion of new ideas and new ways of thinking fostered an atmosphere that was the “secret ingredient” in the imaginative elements of English popular and rock music, MacDonald asserts, and concurrently engendered and encouraged rebellion against not only the status quo ideas but also against the new ones as well. These schools exerted a large influence not only on the individual members of The Beatles but also on the general youth culture. The art schools placed constant emphasis on

experimental practice but also preserved art's tradition and taught the established art techniques against which students were expected to rebel. Popular/rock-and-roll musicians who graduated from them or were influenced by their graduates applied "high art" identities and skills—high art being fine art, serious literature, academic music—to a mass cultural form such as expressing their art through popular radio, TV, tabloid press, and other forms, thus crossing these divisions in terms of class and ideology (Frith and Horne 35). Pop music takes its power from the consequent meeting of consumer fantasies of difference and musicians' fantasies of collectivity. To Frith, the art school connection became the best explanation of why some British beat groups made a successful move into the new rock culture (in pursuit of creative challenge) while others were doomed to stunted careers performing the songs of their commercial and artistic peak and never advancing. He compares, as an example, The Beatles' progress with that of their Merseybeat colleagues, many of whom reached dead ends in their careers (Frith and Horne 84). Lennon was the only member of The Beatles to be an official student at the Liverpool College of Art; McCartney was on the fringes of the school, being in the pre-Beatles bands with Lennon and spending time there around a number of students, including Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe. Sutcliffe was a member of an early iteration of The Beatles and who later became an accomplished visual artist. The art school atmosphere produced an effect on the style created by The Beatles, particularly felt in the imprint of Lennon, whose friendships at the school, especially that of Sutcliffe, taught him what it meant to be an "artist." Philip Norman notes that (52, 85) in the beginning of their group career at Liverpool's Cavern Club, The Beatles gave an artistic attitude to the concern of the young, lower class patrons there by creating a sense of Bohemianism. According to MacDonald, it was the art school background and influence on The Beatles that was behind their idea to introduce the idea of "concept" into popular music as well

as other postmodern motifs like eclecticism, self-referentiality, parody, and pastiches (MacDonald xviii).

1.3 The Strength and Sources of Legacy Music Genres

The macro influences of style, mass media, and art school are all eclipsed by the weight of legacy music genres on the rhetoric of The Beatles' lyrics, particularly rock and roll, which had an impact of equal strength on their music and lyrics. For The Beatles, this genealogy of influences began with their American heroes of the rock and roll genre of music of the 1950s, according to MacDonald, including Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Carl Perkins, to name a few (MacDonald xviii). The Beatles' music is grounded in the genre of rock and roll, a genre of popular music that originated and evolved in the United States during the late 1940s and early 1950s from earlier musical styles such as gospel, jump blues, jazz, boogie woogie, rhythm and blues, and country music. It is frequently described as a genre that broke boundaries and expanded the frontier of the contemporary culture in which it was situated. Rock and roll liberated, tested limits, and became a metaphor for thinking about life, an effect that can be seen in The Beatles' music throughout their group career. Tim Riley notes in *Tell Me Why* that "Good rock 'n' roll is simple not dull, thus it must bear repeated listenings. Its impact comes from saying a lot in a short period of time and it innovates as well as conforms to conventional patterns (12). Ideally, rock'n'roll plays with our expectations making each experience of a given song different." The essence of rock and roll as "fun songs about sad stuff" is the description used by novelist Mary Jo Parker embodied in The Beatles' song "I'm Down," a song that Riley describes as a combination of irresistible spirit and The Beatles' rhetorical twists (135). The influences that The Beatles brought to their art encompassed a wide variety of genres and styles that not only changed how music sounded but also how it was produced by stretching

the limits of music production technology. Their lyrics reflected their individual backgrounds in terms of economic and social class, the values of the families they were part of, blocks in the foundation of the formal and, particularly informal, education they received, the kind of people they became formed out of their respective childhood experiences. Their lyrics also reflected their exposure to other contemporary musicians (such as Bob Dylan), the events and changes and relationships going on in their lives, and most of all their philosophical dispositions and perspectives towards what was happening in the culture via the national and international events and influences of the times. The choices of the words for the lyrics reflect not only all these influences but also chart the growth of the members of The Beatles as artists who, on the one hand, had something to say and, on the other hand, discovered a much broader world than the one into which they were born and formed. They were looked to by fans, other artists, leaders in political, cultural, and artistic circles to use their art to interpret the times and point the way toward a future that was turning out to be vastly different from the past, moving forward at a much faster than previously. For example, Lennon said that the song, "All I've Got to Do" recorded and released in fall 1963, was written specifically for the American market because the idea of calling a girl on the telephone was unthinkable to a British youth in the early 1960s. Telephones were not part of the landscape of living for the young in post-war Britain (Badman 135).

In America, the birthplace of rock and roll, many early songs of this genre dealt with issues of cars, school, dating, and clothing. Topics such as sex that had generally been considered taboo and a covert subject began to appear more blatantly in rock and roll lyrics. The rhetorical influences on the lyrics that The Beatles wrote were related more to the topics such as breaking that taboo about sex but then reshaped by the members of the group as they wrote the

songs, reflecting the times and the situation they lived in. The artifacts to which the members of The Beatles were exposed to and influenced by in the late 1950s and early 1960s emanated as products of a culture still constrained by the economic and cultural losses from World War II in Britain. Indeed, Britain was a nation that did not experience the booming economy that marked that of the United States in that post-war period. For example, war-time rationing of products including foodstuffs ended in 1946 in the United States but was not lifted in Britain until 1954. This new direction in music tried to break boundaries and express emotions that people were feeling but were not talking about, sparking the beginning of an awakening in American youth culture. Both the musical and the lyrical influences were filtered and aided by the technological advances taking place in communications throughout the United States, Britain, and much of the Western world.

Thus, these macro influences coming together in the 1960s—the intangible quality of style, the genre-crossing art school, and the musical expression of rock and roll that spread throughout the world via the expanding reach of the new and developing mass media technology—moved the lyrics of The Beatles from their beginnings and sparked the transition that later carried them to their peak.

1.4 Comparing Word Choice and Usage for the Evolving Lyrics

In the evolution of The Beatles' works from snapshot one to snapshot two (as defined in Chapter 1), the rhetoric of the lyrics moved from the simplistic, putting forth rudimentary, stereotypical concepts on the order of the current popular songs of the early 1960s, to the more sophisticated, expressing more complex, more concrete, and denser ideas that addressed a broader audience. The sophistication in concepts of the later lyrics shapes the rhetoric with the parts of speech, particularly nouns and verbs, increasing in number and complexity between the

two time periods as will be seen in this comparison. The rhetoric could not nor would not stay the same, changing in terms of degree of complexity and sophistication as not only the composition and production of the music advanced but also the popular culture opened up and expanded. This resulted in a spreading of new ideas by opening up paths and offering the opportunity to reshape roles in a variety of life areas, including the arts, politics, gender, and more largely due to the increased technological sophistication and availability of mass media that reached more people and presented more alternatives and options. The comparison of the snapshots shows how the rhetoric of the lyrics changed and expanded considerably between the two periods. The expansion happened over the course of the group's career starting just after their period as teenage idols into their evolution as leaders of a new culture primarily for youth but inclusive of other ages and an expanded variety of demographics as well. The comparison reveals Lennon and McCartney's creativity in the use of rhetoric in this evolution, the two group members being the principal songwriters.

The comparison of the two snapshots will look at how they evolved within a rhetorical context based on those choices and uses of words, beginning with how their lyrics were shaped by post-World War II culture as well as how the rhetoric of their songs related to the culture that evolved during the time of their career and will be made by examining the parts of speech, the influences, and the tools they used in making their rhetorical choices. First the songs in snapshot one will be examined to see if and how these choices in parts of speech and influences changed or carried over to the songs in snapshot two. This will mean also analyzing if they used the same tools or if they developed new ones in the transition songs of snapshot two. Also for consideration is whether or not other, new factors were introduced during the transition period from snapshot one to snapshot two that contributed to the evolution of the rhetoric of the later

songs. Furthermore, these questions will be explored to provide a guide to the rhetorical evolution:

- Was word play as prominent in the songs in the second snapshot as it was in the first snapshot?

- Are the early songs more repetitive in verse than the later ones?

- Were the endings in the snapshot two songs as melodramatic as the endings in the snapshot one songs?

- Do the nonsense words, like the yeah-yeahs and the woo-woos, carry over into the snapshot two songs, or are they primarily a feature of the earlier period and a response to its popular culture?

- How did the word choice change the story being told or message being given?

- Also for consideration is whether or not other, new factors were introduced during the transition period from snapshot one to snapshot two that contributed to the evolution of the rhetoric of the later songs.

2 COMPARING SNAPSHOTS IN TIME FOR EARLY AND LATER LYRICS

Paul McCartney told Barry Miles in Miles' authorized McCartney biography *All Those Years From Now*, "We often used to say to people, the words don't really matter, people don't listen to words, it's the sound they listen to" (153). However, this comparison of the two snapshots in time of The Beatles' art, the words to the songs could not *not* matter. This makes McCartney's statement not only untrue and in direct opposition not only to his statement but also to the descriptions he and Lennon discussed, for the (written) record, of the way they wrote lyrics to songs. McCartney's statement about the unimportance of the words is also contradicted by Astor's premise that the resonance of song lyrics, because they are words, gives them a primary weight for the listener over sounds, notes, or musical textures (144). The resonance of the lyrics that creates this intimate communication for the listener is shaped and driven by the rhetoric based on the choices of words and parts of speech. how they are put together, and how they are used to create and form the intent of the message of the song. In many of the interviews in which either Lennon or McCartney discussed writing lyrics, they talked about word selection, parts of speech, and word play, meaning the words very much mattered in the shaping of the songs.

2.1 The Battle Between Art and Commerce: Original Works vs. Cover Versions

Even before the beginnings of their group career as The Beatles, Lennon and McCartney wrote original songs and performed them in their concerts. Their original songs set the group apart from their peers. Lennon and McCartney began to compose their own songs in 1957 (Kozinn 23). Writing original songs to perform in concert, that is, beyond inclusion in an output of a body of songs as either a single recording, an EP (Extended Play format), or as a collection of work on an album, was not standard in the music industry of the early 1960s. Attempting to go against the status quo by using original material instead of that of professional songwriters

devolved into battles between those on the commercial side of the popular music industry and the artist-performers, with the latter almost always the losers. This was particularly true if the output of the performer/s was considered for primarily its financial potential, which was the case for The Beatles in their early years. The effect of this entrenched attitude for industry and artists was illustrated in Lennon's description of the decision to write their own songs as ". . . quite a traumatic thing because we were doing such great numbers of other people's, of Ray Charles and [Little] Richard and all of them" (Roylance 68). The Beatles, like their peers, had always performed cover versions of songs by the artists who had influenced them most. Many, if not most of those songs, were not written by the performing artists. Instead, they followed the then-standard Tin Pan Alley and Brill Building system of having artists-performers record songs by professional songwriters. Though they were geographic locations, Tin Pan Alley and Brill Building encompassed a broader meaning as music publishing and songwriting hub. Songwriters in these commercial enterprises out product to be hit-makers for musical performers and money-makers for the employers. A song described as reminiscent of these entities, as was The Beatles' original composition "I Saw Her Standing There," could essentially be called a potboiler. A review of the early output for snapshot one shows that cover versions of others' songs were included on the albums and as A-sides and B-sides to their released singles when The Beatles were finally able to secure a recording contract. The numbers of cover songs included in the group's output between 1963 and 1965 is very pronounced. This is because The Beatles had achieved an outsized commercial success by 1965 and attained sufficient clout to select the songs they wanted to include in their output. The result was that their original songs for recording and performing became the majority of their output.

While The Beatles were leaders in the changing popular culture, Beatles scholar Allan Kozinn points out they were not the architects of that culture (11). Kozinn attributes the attainment of this leadership position to their “unfailing ability to detect trends early and when those trends matched their own impulses, they adopted and amplified them, making them instantly chic for the millions of fans who looked to The Beatles for guidance.” In snapshot one, the simplicity of The Beatles’ songs fit neatly into the culture of the early 1960s, adopting and reflecting it. “The innocence of early Sixties British pop is perfectly distilled in the eloquent simplicity of this number,” said Ian MacDonald about 1963’s “All My Loving,” an early hit song (94). At the same time they were using their lyrics to distill the innocence from the cultural atmosphere of the early 1960s, The Beatles were writing songs subtly exhibiting the foreshadowing of changes that would take place in the culture. These changes would be manifested when they left behind what McCartney dubbed their “cute” period by which he meant the period described in snapshot one. The changes expanded their work to put them on the threshold of becoming fully-fledged artists, instead of merely top entertainers. As an example, MacDonald pointed to “Love Me Do,” declaring that it “rang the first faint chime of a revolutionary bell” compared to the standard Tin Pan Alley and Brill Building productions occupying the music charts at the time (14). He described the song “. . . [with its] blunt working class northernness” as “standing out like a bare brick wall in a suburban sitting-room.” At the beginning of their career, The Beatles wrote songs that were largely conventional, patterning their work on other musicians’ songs. They particularly admired and were influenced by American artists. Rhetorically, a major *raison d’etre* of The Beatles’ lyrics, in structure and in meaning, was the manifestation of their desire and quest for success. In the beginning, they emphatically adopted the topic of young love, which was predominant in the musical culture of

the early part of the decade. Even in the original songs written early in their career, The Beatles would often subtly twist the stereotypical image of this young love rhetorically in terms of word play, usage, and arrangement, as well as meaning of the lyrics. Lennon and McCartney almost completely dominated the group's songwriting output throughout their career but especially in the early period. The two tended to add in their particular twists of words to go beyond expression of the trite, stereotypical, and repetitive to interpret the same ideas as other contemporary peer musicians. The original material in the snapshot two period is more nuanced and sophisticated. These songs' intentions addressed a broader audience beyond the boy-girl relationship. These snapshot two songs also covered a much wider spectrum of topics and concepts than the songs in snapshot one. The Beatles' creativity in their original songs enhanced their rhetorical effectiveness. Kozinn frames this as the seeming inclination to rewrite their own rules every time they produced a song (6, 7). I think they not only rewrote their own rules but they also rewrote the rules of songwriting in the music industry at that time. I agree with Kozinn that this rewriting of rules gave their songs the ability to yield new secrets after many listenings, one of the hallmarks of great art.

The lyrics of popular and rock and roll songs in the early 1960s were seemingly constructed with the rhetorical purpose of putting forth simplistic concepts and word pictures. Songwriters were heavily influenced by or copied from their contemporary peer lyric writers, particularly ones who followed the trend of the moment. The Beatles shed the rhetorical simplicity of this songwriting method in their early years. The evolution in the rhetoric of their songwriting can be seen in the selection and usage of the parts of speech. The rhetoric of the early lyrics of what Charles Gower Price called these "simple adolescent anthems" (209) changed with the complexity and sophistication of the parts of speech. The parts of speech also

evolved to support lyrics that put forth more advanced notions, ideas, and messages. These changes followed and fit the popular culture as it evolved rapidly from the beginning to the middle of the decade.

The early pattern of lyric-writing in The Beatles' songs followed the formula of the developing genre of rock and roll of that era. This is solely from looking at the words of the songs themselves as elements within sentences or sets of elements. Note how often the phrase "in love" comes up in the songs by The Beatles in the early 1960s. The images and culture of the era designated love as a dominant topic. The topic was defined most frequently as young love by the demographic numbers of youths from the latter years of the pre-World War II Silent Generation¹ of which the members of The Beatles were part of and from the large numbers of the Baby Boomers, a group that dominated the popular culture.² This concept was shaped and presented in what seems to twenty-first century observers as a simplistic, trite even, framework. "Love" was the dominant subject of the songs of the snapshot one period. However, the word, "love," describing either an emotional or a physical state, was used as a noun or a verb in only approximately half of the snapshot one songs. This is true even though the concept of love in the form of the boy-girl young love relationship is what almost all of the songs of this period, including The Beatles' songs, are about. The rhetoric draws the circle tightly around "you and me," singer/addressee, and object of affection. It does this with a rhetorical frame that creates an exclusive focus on those two people. Note that few songs of this period look outside of this relationship and invite other people and entities inside the message they intend to impart.

² The Pew Research Center defines the Silent Generation as those born between 1928 and 1945 and the Baby Boomers as those born between 1946 and 1964.

The Beatles, even in their early songs, would follow convention in songwriting overall but would depart from that convention in using—or not using—the word in different ways vis-a-vis the rhetoric to express the intended message. In “It Won’t Be Long,” “love” as a descriptor, either as a noun or verb, is not used despite the expressions of obviously missing the object of affection, of longing, even to the point of tears, anticipating the happiness that comes with reunion. The lyrically simple “Little Child,” (MacDonald 96) intended for the limited vocal range of Ringo Starr and his limited vocal range, also never uses “love” in any form, though it describes the introductory aspects of a relationship with the “sad and lonely” singer seeking someone. The song “All I’ve Got to Do” also doesn’t use the word “love,” instead, dancing around it with words like “longing” and “kissing.” The word “love” was never used in songs about the negative aspects of a relationship as in the Lennon song “Misery” as well as “Don’t Bother Me,” the first song Harrison had written that the group recorded. “Misery” is, according to writer MacDonald, “a droll portrait of adolescent self-pity” with all the appropriate adjectives to paint that picture (70–71).

2.2 How the Parts of Speech Were Used in the Transition

First, we will take an overall look at the parts of speech in the early songs, those from 1962-1963 in snapshot one with references to some of the even earlier ones. The Beatles used basic parts of speech in line with the contemporaneous rhetorical pattern in order to express the sentiments and messages that were then dominant trends. The parts of speech examined here and also for the songs in snapshot two are nouns, verbs, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs. Verbs drive a song’s action, and adverbs power the verbs. As in most of these early songs by The Beatles, adjectives were the least used part of speech for the most part, being barely present in either time group. Lennon and McCartney apparently saw little need for description, instead

getting straight to the heart of the matter or relationship. Or else they constructed their intended expression with other parts of speech. In some songs, a part of speech was completely absent. For example, “Love Me Do” contained no nouns whatsoever. Adverbs were used much more often than adjectives as descriptors in The Beatles’ work, in both snapshots. Pronouns were leaders because they characterized the connection to the personal relationship that was often the intent of the lyrics. This was especially the case of the snapshot one songs.

The nouns in the song lyrics of this era were oriented around the personal, naming the aspects of the song’s topic relationship. The nouns were simple and relatively sparse. The nouns in the snapshot one songs were more ethereal and much more intangible. Even the tangible ones, like the body parts, represented feelings and emotions more than a physical entity. The bulk of the nouns can be divided into these broad categories with examples: Location: home, there, place; Feelings: happiness, misery, bliss, heartache, love; the Natural World: breeze, trees, leaves, sky, stars, rain, flowers (oddly, not sun); Parts of the Body: eyes, lips, arms, heart, side, hair, head, hand, ear with “mind” also prominent; and Time: night, day, morning, tomorrow. These lists are not comprehensive nor are the labels repositories for all of the nouns. Nouns were scarce in some songs, such as “From Me to You,” where nouns were third in numbers behind verbs and pronouns. Perhaps this was because this song is a rather lyrically simple song with relatively few words because it repeats so much. “Love” was the sole noun in “Hold Me Tight,” which used other parts of speech to express its message. The noun-less “Love Me Do” was an example of Lennon and McCartney’s wordplay in the way they creatively inserted their twists into the lyrics to state the standard message in different and imaginative ways. Almost all of the other nouns in the snapshot one songs were related to the state of love, either as descriptors for the setting, i.e., “heaven,” as actions “kiss,” as synonymous emotions “bliss.” However, nouns

did not carry the message in all songs. For example, nouns were relegated to the least-used parts of speech in “I Saw Her Standing There,” a song in which verbs, adverbs, and pronouns were used to weave together the one-on-one relationship that is the point of the song. “I’ll Get You” was also a very verb-driven song. Nouns were the next most prominent part of speech with adjectives, adverbs, and even pronouns relatively tamped down in it. This was surprising because in most cases when verbs dominate, adverbs were second in the numbers.

Verbs were the dominant parts of speech in the lyrics of all of The Beatles’ songs across both time periods, driving the action and intent of the song, something highly likely true of every song with words ever written. There were almost twice as many verbs as any other part of speech in any of the snapshot one songs. The verbs supplied a wide range of feelings and actions in the physical and emotional intimacy associated with young love, all sides of it. A partial list of these would include hurt, loss, pleading, love, desire, exuberance, gratitude, ego, sex, fidelity, pretense, dreams, regret, sadness, tears, loneliness, happiness, romance, and completeness. The verbs expressed these feelings in simple, usually one-syllable words. Toward the end of the period defined in snapshot one, the verbs started pointing toward the transition in the rhetoric of the snapshot two songs. For example, instead of the simple verb construction, common up until then, “I’ll Get You,” a late 1963 release, moved toward compound verbs and also single verbs that expressed more nuanced concepts in a relationship, like “change” and “resign,” (meaning “reluctant acceptance”). “I’ll Get You” opened with the verb “imagine” in the imperative form, which was considered an innovation at that time in that the form draws the listeners into a story instead of simply declaring an intent or emotion (Miles 150).

Adjectives were the least-used parts of speech in the snapshot one songs. Many of the songs had only two or three adjectives; and two of the songs “All I’ve Got to Do” and “I Wanna

Be Your Man” had no adjectives in them at all. Negative descriptors dominated; “lonely” was used in five of the twenty-eight songs of Snapshot One; “alone” three times. The adjective pairing “sad and blue” and the use of each of these terms separately were made prominent. “Little” was also frequently used. The George Harrison song, “Don’t Bother Me,” featured relatively more adjectives than most of the songs written by either Lennon or McCartney or both of them during the snapshot one period.

The pronouns in their songs of snapshot one were heavily dominated by first-person pronouns directed to second-person pronouns to ground the focus of young love. This created a tightly-drawn circle via a deeply personal message limited to two people by utilizing an abundance of “you,” “me,” “I,” “it,” “your,” “mine.” Other songs featured a considerable use of the indefinite pronouns of “everybody,” “somebody,” “some,” “another,” “nobody,” and others, opening the circle of the messages of these songs and spreading the inclusivity. David Rowley noted that at least half of all Lennon–McCartney lyrics had the words “you” and/or “your” in the first line. The use of pronouns in this way served their purpose which was to communicate (3). In the pronoun-dominated “She Loves You,” Lennon and McCartney differentiated themselves from their peers of the early 1960s and the standard way of orienting the lyrics in that era. They did this by employing the less-used point of view of the narrator in the song as the dominant person speaking to two others in the second- and third-person pronouns, structuring this third-person voice as a triangle with you-me-her, instead of a linear you-and-me setup. Noting that it was, like so many of their compositions at that time, a she-you-me(I) personal pronoun song, McCartney told biographer Miles that he thought the most interesting thing about it was that it was a “message song . . . it was someone bringing a message. It wasn’t us any more, it was moving off the ‘I love you, girl’ or ‘Love me do,’ it was a third person, which was a shift away.

‘I saw her, and she said to me, to tell you, that she loves you,’ so there’s a little distance we managed to put in it.” (Miles, 150, Lewisohn 9). Lewisohn noted that while the title of “She Loves You,” like many early Beatles songs was framed around the use of personal pronouns, unusually, he pointed out, for a love song, the rhetorical framing moved the lyrics away from the narrator’s love for someone else. Instead, the narrator functioned as a helpful go-between for estranged lovers. Lennon and McCartney used the common stratagem of putting “I,” “me,” or “you” in the song title to make it more personal. Notable examples included “Love Me Do,” “Please Please Me,” “PS I Love You” among others. However, their infrequent use of the possessive pronoun “mine” and the concept it represents gave a subtlety to their rhetoric. It did this as the rhetoric evolved to become less focused on possessiveness and exclusivity and more inclusive. One song at least, “All I’ve Got to Do,” an I-you-me song features no possessives in it at all. The way the pronouns are balanced creates a give-and-take relationship as opposed to one in which either the protagonist or the object of his intention dominates: “I can do this but you can do it as well.”

Though outpaced in usage by nouns and pronouns and verbs, the adverbs in the snapshot one songs were plentiful. This is unsurprising since adverbs are verb-drivers and verbs are the dominating speech parts. Adverbs are also especially useful in the theme of young love to punctuate strongly the message of a song, upcharging the emotions of this type of love’s ebullience and elation or misery and despair. Adverbs in these songs also supplied a lot of time-related perspectives and intensified the messages and emotions with extremes, “never” being a major one, also “ever,” “forever,” “eternally,” “always.” Despite the abundance of adverbs noted in the snapshot one songs, one, unusually, “I Wanna Be Your Man,” had none.

2.3 The Role of *Rubber Soul* in The Beatles' Artistic Progression

It was the release of the album *Rubber Soul* on EMI Parlophone on December 3, 1965, that prompted this remark by McCartney regarding the band's approach to songwriting: "We'd had our cute period, and now it was time to expand." (Royslance 197). *Rubber Soul* was the announcement that The Beatles were beginning their evolution and development into artists. After the album *A Hard Day's Night* in 1964, *Rubber Soul* was the second Beatles album to contain only original material. Lennon recalled that *Rubber Soul* was the first album on which The Beatles were in complete creative control, a declaration bolstered by the fact that it was also the first album not to feature their name "The Beatles" on the cover. This was at their insistence instead of following the preference of the recording company whose aim was to boost sales. In Ringo Starr's later recollection, *Rubber Soul* was The Beatles' "departure record," written and recorded during a period when, largely through what he attributed to the influence of marijuana, "We were expanding in all areas of our lives, opening up to a lot of different attitudes (Spitz 584). At the release of *Rubber Soul*, The Beatles' music producer George Martin described it as "the first album to present a new, growing Beatles to the world." (Hertsgaard 149). In a September 1966 review of *Revolver*, KRLA Beat said that the title of *Rubber Soul* had "become a standard phrase used to describe a creation of exceptional excellence in the field of music," such that several highly regarded releases had since earned the description "a '*Rubber Soul* in its field'." Writing in *Esquire* in 1967, Robert Christgau praised the album for "innovation, tightness, and lyrical intelligence." The songs demonstrate The Beatles' increasing maturity as lyricists, according to Michael Frontani. "By the time of the release of the album *Rubber Soul* in 1965, each new complete collection of songs recorded for an album and even the single records and EPs was [sic] viewed as a progression in the band's artistic development and as an expansion

of the parameters of popular music, and the [group's] image reflected and promoted notions of The Beatles' artistry and importance" (5). The songs from the 1965 period were released either on the *Rubber Soul* album itself or separately as singles not anchored to an album, which was the commercial practice at the time. The third outlet for songs released in this period was The Beatles' album in *Help!*, produced and released in conjunction with their eponymous film, the second of their movies. *Help!* contained songs used in the film on the first side and seven other releases including one of Lennon-McCartney's most-covered songs ever written, according to Guinness World Records, "Yesterday" on the second side. Definitively, *Rubber Soul* was a transition work. Not all of the compositions reflected the change in focus and the evolution toward a transition. The album's mix of songs encompassed some whose rhetoric puts them in the camp of the snapshot one songs, the 1963 and pre-1963 group of lyrical declarations of young, naive love. They tended to be simplistically stated, heavy with the first-person and second-person pronouns particularly in singular form, light on nouns. The sophistication or originality of these particular songs on *Rubber Soul* was largely in the musical part. Having noted those performers and their music that had such a prominent influence on The Beatles' original efforts, James Decker considered it significant that *Rubber Soul* "took its narrative cues more from folk crossovers such as Bob Dylan and the influential American rock group The Byrds than from The Beatles' pop cohorts" (75), with The Byrds.

Music critics' view of The Beatles' lyrics varied considerably. Beatles scholar and longtime former classical music reviewer for the New York Times Allan Kozinn noted that The Beatles' "lyrics are unusually articulate (if sometimes deliberately cryptic) (11)." Music critic Greil Marcus wrote that "The Beatles were still writing about love, but this was a new kind of love: contingent, scary and vital," making the "emotional touch" tougher than before (221). In

particular, the relationships between the sexes moved from simpler boy-girl love songs to more nuanced and negative portrayals (Bray 269–70). The snapshot two songs are formed as more story-like plays than the “poems” or short-form dialogue of the snapshot one songs. Thus, there is less repetition of wordage in some, but not all, of the later songs. The rhetoric starts to move away from repeating verses and toward creating new ones. However, these differences between the two snapshots are not as significant as other changes.

Rubber Soul was an immediate commercial success. However, the artistic progression that The Beatles had made as musicians and as lyricists caught some popular culture observers off-guard. They were unprepared to address the changes or recognize the beginning of an evolution. The result was that their reactions and responses seemed to be based on an image and the work that The Beatles were moving away from. Or these were formulated with a lack in foresight of any depth about these new developments and the future direction of the culture. In his review of *Rubber Soul*, Richard Green, critic for the British weekly music newspaper Record Mirror, concluded in the December 11, 1965 issue, that the contents of the album did not support the statement that “Lennon and McCartney are the great songwriting team of the day and that Beatles performances are spot-on.” The song “You Won’t See Me” seemed to be one that critics particularly pointed out as an example of the transition in The Beatles’ songs, as either negative or positive depending on the critic’s argument. Green thought “You Won’t See Me” was one of the tracks on that album that was “dull and ordinary,” lacking “the old Beatles excitement and compulsiveness about them.” The opposite view was taken by American rock music magazine KRLA Beat’s Nikki Wine whose called *Rubber Soul* an “unbelievably sensational” album because it was “setting trends in this world of pop” (15). Wine said “You Won’t See Me” was “one of the best cuts” on the album. My analysis of the snapshot two lyrics supports Wine’s

prescience about *Rubber Soul* as the marker of the transition in The Beatles' lyrics. The lyrics of "You Won't See Me" pointed the way to the new rhetorical direction for The Beatles in that the song is still about love and the one-to-one relationship. It patterned the predominant topic of the snapshot one songs, but "You Won't See Me" raised the rhetorical stakes by trying to persuade-bully-beg the person to whom it is addressed to do what the speaker/singer wants. It moved beyond declaration to a rhetorical purpose of persuasion, effective or not, by using more compound verbs and indicating less certainty.

The songs on the *Rubber Soul* album were wordier, due to the more complex topics and approaches to expression in these songs. Is the rhetorical shift a result of having to use more words to explain something deeper than the emotions of a surface relationship? Perhaps it is the result of moving into more original territory in lyric-writing and away from following the prevailing cultural framing of songs of the genre one is writing in. We can look through Frith's lens to see the way in which songs utilize rhetoric to become texts or speech acts. Then, the rhetoric of the snapshot two songs makes them function more as plays while the rhetoric of the snapshot one songs keeps them closer to poems. This perspective is about the structural aspect of the rhetoric and not the meaning of the lyrics. Whereas love dominated the snapshot one songs, not all of the songs on *Rubber Soul* were about love. For example, "Nowhere Man," fitting with the self-reflective nature of several songs on *Rubber Soul*, was the first Beatles song to completely avoid boy-girl relationships, (Schaffner 50, Everett 322). The song also featured the first example of a literary character in The Beatles' work (Womack 118-19) defined as the result of Lennon conveying his feelings of inadequacy. The third person voice was employed again but in a different way than was used in "She Loves You." (Everett 323). The lyrics of the songs on *Rubber Soul* represent a pronounced development in sophistication, thoughtfulness, and

ambiguity with this development reflected in the word choices of the lyrics (Philo 85, 88). The first song on *Rubber Soul* (U.K. album), “Drive My Car,” illustrates the raised stakes of reshaping the rhetoric of their song lyrics as part of their transition as artists and as leaders in the popular culture. By this time Lennon and McCartney were writing more songs separately rather than in partnership. However, “Drive My Car” was an equal collaboration, with Lennon writing most of the lyrics and McCartney coming up with the melody. The song was set up to use “an ingenious role reversal typical of Lennon-McCartney songs of the period.” The roles had the man as a gold digger and the woman as a wannabe star who is looking for a chauffeur even though she does have a car. The ambiguity of the story suggests that perhaps the woman also wants the man allegedly for sexual services. It was Lennon who shaped the lyrics in an example of the two songwriters’ changing approach to word selection. Upon presenting the evolving song to Lennon, McCartney noted that the lyrics weren’t “good” but he was confident in the quality of the tune itself (Miles 269). The problem was that the song was plotted around the words “golden rings,” which he noted “is always fatal . . . because ‘rings’ always rhymes with ‘things’.” McCartney had used “rings” and “things” together in his hard rocker “I’m Down,” released also in 1965 as a stand-alone single and not on *Rubber Soul*. “I’m Down” was commercially successful, but McCartney realized with “Drive My Car” that they could not follow the same pattern of using what had become static, stereotypical words. Lennon and McCartney took the song in a different direction and came up with a more sophisticated, less stereotypical story than their previous outcomes. They did this by flipping the male-female relationship and approaching it without romantic love but, in some interpretations at least, sex. This approach of changing the relationship was also used in “Ticket to Ride,” which describes a casual meet-up without ties or feelings, again, possibly just sex. “Norwegian Wood” featured the rhetoric of introspection,

which was influenced by American singer-songwriter and major popular culture figure Bob Dylan. McCartney noted they put “a little sting in the tail,” (Miles 270), which was the act of revenge of burning down the house because the woman had spurned the man. Again, there is the ambiguity. As McCartney noted, “[The words] could have meant ‘I lit a fire to keep myself warm, and wasn’t the decor of her house wonderful?’ Instead, it meant something more sinister.”³

Lennon unconsciously defined the rhetorical transition in a discussion of “The Word,” another song from the snapshot two period. “It sort of dawned on me that love was the answer, when I was younger, on the *Rubber Soul* album. My first expression of it was a song called ‘The Word’,” he said, calling it the underlying theme to the universe.” (Roylance 193). “The Word” is illustrative of the transition between snapshot one and two. The lyrics’ quasi-religious overtones present Lennon and McCartney as evangelists for their new revelation about love as a very different concept from the young love of their early songs. The song also illustrates The Beatles’ increasing awareness of their power as spokesmen and figureheads in the popular culture. This awareness began here and was developed, especially by Lennon, in their rhetoric of the lyrics of songs beyond *Rubber Soul* such as in 1966’s “Rain” and Lennon’s later political songs.

The topics of the snapshot two songs reflected the expansion of The Beatles’ art and scope in the rhetoric of their chosen topics. However, the grammar of the lyrics was more conventional. By that I mean that the songwriters did not experiment with different grammatical forms to make rhetorical changes as they did in “She Loves You” where they changed the voice by using the third-person point of view. The songs of snapshot two, while clever, imaginative, original, and framed toward a wider audience, are conventionally structured with familiar

narrative styles. However, the words chosen for the lyrics remove these songs much further from the one-to-one relationships in the songs of snapshot one.

The snapshot two songs feature nouns that are more diverse, more anchored in real life than those in snapshot one. In 1965, the nouns changed. There were a lot more of them, and the songs became much less pronoun-oriented and much more noun-specific. Instead of talking directly to “you” or about “her,” the songs speak of the people in the dispassionate third party. They are called teaser, tripper, driver (used in two different songs, “Day Tripper” and “Drive My Car”), fool, star, lovers, friends, people, “bird” (a label for a girl-young woman in the slang of that era), guy and man and woman. The diversified nouns characterize a variety of stories instead of love-dream scenarios that marked the snapshot one songs. “Guy” becomes “man”; “love” is expanded from a person to other objects of affection. “Love” is much more concrete, tangible, and real in that it has consequences and results, and the effects of it and what the lover/protagonist wants are identified and filled out. There are friends, memories, people, and things, and expressions of the darker side of relationships including crime, fights, spite, and pride in addition to tears, longing, rejection, and sadness. Consequently, the nouns in the snapshot two songs are more material, less ethereal. They encompass a wider universe of topics and audiences than those of snapshot one. Love as a topic or noun or verb is very much present. However, of the twenty-seven songs of snapshot two, love is named in eight of them and not named in nineteen, though some of those nineteen songs are about negative or positive or off-kilter romantic relationships. The group of nouns that includes, to name a few, (day) tripper which has multiple interpretations in the song “Day Tripper” (released as a single in 1965 but not on

³Day tripper is a term to describe a person who goes on a short journey or excursion, especially for pleasure, that is completed in one day.

Rubber Soul),³ ticket, teaser, way, peanuts, doors, feet, ground, life, ways, independence, haze, friends, memories, affection, people, girl, bird, fire, man, land, plans, point, view, world, command, time, hand, sermon. This is a much different and broader mix from those nouns in snapshot one's Feelings, Natural World, Location, and Parts of the Body categories. Due largely to "Norwegian Wood," but other lyrics sets, too, architectural and related nouns are used including room, wood, chair, rug, time, land, bed, morning, bath (meaning tub or room), car, and more. In the case of "car," consider its use in "Drive My Car" as compared to its use in the songs of American rock and roll. The car was center stage, the object of attention, in the American songs. Lennon and McCartney used it as a device for what they were saying. Consider the 1963 relationship-related nouns that, in addition to the aforementioned body parts, included ones like dreams, bliss, kiss, along with the starry-eyed, love-related nature nouns of trees, breeze, sky, birds, phone, and home. The snapshot two nouns included haze, friends, affection, plans, sermon, and peanuts. The difference illuminates a notable change of direction in what they were trying to say and whom they were trying to include.

Love was used less often as the topic in the snapshot two songs. It retained, though, a certain prominence. The verbs noticeably transitioned from relating predominantly to feelings to the actions of the stories in many of the songs, again from poems to what Frith considers plays (159). The same verbs frequently appear in the songs in both snapshots. Some examples include understand/understood, help, break, remember, planned, wait, compares, changed, opened, vanish. The difference is the verbs in the snapshot two songs are employed to reach out with a broader message to a wider audience encompassing a more universal group of people than the one-to-one relationship in the songs of snapshot one. Even when the song is aimed at a personal love relationship in snapshot two, the verbs reflect the change in expression of relationships.

They are more nuanced, more complex, more perplexing, and more difficult to solve divides within the relationships' issues. Examples are "Another Girl" or "I'm Looking Through You." This is often achieved by the use of complex verbs. Indeed, complex verbs dominate the snapshot two songs. The verbs also express different kinds of love. "In My Life" expresses a love for a place, the past, or the place as it was in the past, and people from that place in a nonsexual/non-romantic context of friends and family. Compound verbs get an increased usage in snapshot two songs. Most contain several compound verbs each. In addition, the songwriters introduce different verbs that increase the sophistication of the lyrics. These include "earn," "biding," "drinking," "crawled," "vanish," and "lend." A review of the verbs extracted from the lyrics gives the overall impression of exploring new territories in ideas, relationships, and in the popular culture.

The adjectives are fewest in number as they are in the snapshot one songs. Yet, more than any of the other parts of speech, they change the tone from that in the snapshot one songs. That tone moves from innocence, exuberance, and personal interrelationship drama in the earlier songs to the more sophisticated, complex, darker, and sometimes even cynical tones of the snapshot two songs. The "true-blue," "sad-lonely," "bad-glad" combinations and their sister-emotion descriptors are no longer used. Instead, adjectives like "self-assured," "insecure," "wicked," "jealous," "whole," "determined," "famous," "unwise," "sincere," "Norwegian," "opaque" shape the tones and the messages of these songs.

The pronouns in snapshot two support the expansion of the circle of audience as in the other parts of speech. They do this with a noticeable increase in "group" pronouns like everybody, somebody, nobody, and anybody. They also feature a greater usage of third-person personal pronouns. The increase in the number of pronouns in snapshot two songs is significant,

but that is true of the increase in all the parts of speech between the two time periods. Pronouns are the most limited parts of speech. They are comparatively sparse in number and used repetitively by necessity. They perform an exclusively supporting role, though the support is to the general message of the rhetoric unlike adverbs whose role is to support verbs.

The adverbs in the snapshot two songs move away from setting time-related perspectives. The use of adverbs such as “when,” “ever,” “never,” “tomorrow,” “someday,” “yesterday,” and “eternally” are reduced. Instead, this part of speech is used to amplify the emotional and psychological states of the situation or person being described in the song. Therefore, one sees more words such as “much,” “up,” “down,” “upside,” “nowhere,” “why,” and “somehow.” These adverbs do not drive the messages and emotions of the narrative with the intensity of those in the snapshot one songs or even really much address that intensity at all. Rather, they expend their energy and purpose on punctuating the current state of what is happening or what is ongoing in that particular situation according to the lyrics.

This comparison in the differences in the parts of speech between the two time periods is one illustration of the transition of the rhetoric of The Beatles’ songs. It shows the way in which their rhetoric responded to the artistic and cultural changes shaping the era and moving the culture in a different direction. These changes created a path for The Beatles’ rhetoric to evolve. That in turn enabled their development as artists and designated them as leaders in the popular culture. These differences illustrate and support Brummett’s argument of rhetoric functioning to manage meaning within the popular culture. This allows people to participate in rhetorical struggles or efforts over their identities and the shaping of their worlds and the wider world (for them) itself. The differences broaden the audience who were being brought into the fold and reached via the expanding technology of the mass media of the era. The Beatles’ rhetoric guided

their audience in reinventing themselves, or considering reinvention, within the changing culture. They were discarding the simplistic stereotypes of relationships. They were acknowledging the multi-faceted interrelationships and their complexities whether that involved a romance or their place in a wider world. They were

2.4 Reshaping, Shedding, Adopting Influences in the Creative Process

The earliest influences on the individual Beatles in creating and using the rhetoric for their song lyrics came from their respective home environments and the people in them. Lennon and McCartney, and to an extent Harrison, came from families with native musical talent and interest, prominently expressed. McCartney's father played in a band as an avocation, and Lennon's mother, Julia Lennon, sang to him songs that encompassed a wide variety of genres beyond children's nursery songs, particularly including songs from Broadway musicals. She also played the banjo and ukulele. In particular, Price noted McCartney's love for music of the older generation. He used as an example their cover version, sung by McCartney, of "Till There Was You" from *The Music Man*) as one of the American influences on The Beatles' music, saying that this helped ensure their widespread and enduring popularity with people of all ages (209). The manifestation of this musical influence via the cover songs contributed to their designation as leaders in the popular culture. All of these influences created inspirations for songs, particularly in the early years. Lennon, for example, recalled half-remembering a "Thirties or Forties song . . . connected to my mother," who used to sing "It's De-Lovely" by Cole Porter. That song, which first appeared in the 1936 stage musical "Red, Hot And Blue," inspired Lennon's song "Hello Little Girl," which was recorded by the group and used as one of the songs at their unsuccessful 1962 audition for Decca Records (Harry 337-338). "Hello Little Girl" was John Lennon's first song and being written in 1957 does not fall within the time period of the

early snapshot. However, it testifies to the influences that inspired and guided Lennon's work, which was his mother's erratic but dominant presence in his life. "Do You Want to Know a Secret?" was another example of his mother's influence. The song, on which Lennon was primary composer, was inspired by "I'm Wishing," (Distant Melody 2007), a tune from Walt Disney's 1937 animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Lennon's mother, Julia Lennon, also would sing it to him as a child. The first two lines of the song, which are taken from the Disney movie ("Want to know a secret? Promise not to tell?") come right after the opening lyrics of "You'll never know how much I really love you... You'll never know how much I really care..." (Harry 209; Sheff 165). Using these older songs as templates, whether obtained from family or from other sources, was one of Lennon's modes of composing (Kozinn 24). McCartney also used this mode of composing as he acknowledged in the composition of the lyrics of the 1963 song, "There's A Place." The title was inspired by the Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim song "Somewhere" from the film *West Side Story* and which contained the line: "There's a place for us." McCartney admits that he owned the album of the film's soundtrack at the time of writing the song and acknowledges its influence (Miles 95). The song, like so many of the early ones, was co-written by McCartney and Lennon. Lennon, however, credits the influence for his part of "There's A Place" to Motown, an American record label recording African-American singers of rhythm and blues and soul music, instead of the Broadway musical (MacDonald 65-66). MacDonald saw the song's subject matter as pitched on a higher intellectual plane than most popular songs of that period. Both McCartney and Lennon said that the "place" to go for solace and comfort was in the mind. "This was the difference with what we were writing: we were getting a bit more cerebral," according to McCartney

(MacDonald 65–66). This made the song one of the precursors to the rhetorical change in the songs of snapshot two.

Lennon and McCartney cited as influences these earlier-era songs from other writers, learning about some of them via family members in their early compositions. However, they only reference other performers who were contemporaries for their songs in the snapshot two period. As an example, Lennon refers to his “Dylan period,” for which he does not cite any specific lyrical phrases, patterns, or ideas from Dylan’s songs. Instead, he rather implicitly refers to modeling Dylan’s style, which changed Lennon’s direction and emphasis in songwriting (MacDonald 124). Note again the influence of style on creative pursuit per Brummett. Lennon and McCartney do not credit the influences or the wording or word play of songs of admired performer-artists (other than Dylan) when they talk about writing their songs in snapshot two. They also do not note what their family members brought to them that influenced the writing of the lyrics or even the music as they do for the snapshot one songs. Rather, they had absorbed the influences but reshaped them to their own creative ends. They were becoming independent artists in their own right, forging their own creative ideas to make the transition in their art.

Among the sources of influence for their early work was their native city of Liverpool. As a seaport, Liverpool was the source of access to a wide exposure of musical influences. Sailors coming in and out of the port brought in recordings of all genres of music, particularly of rock and roll, rhythm and blues, soul, and jazz and especially from the United States.

The original songs written by Lennon and McCartney during the early years of the group were influenced by other artists and their genres. Motown; and Stax, another American record label that was prominent in the creation of U.S. Southern soul and Memphis (Tennessee) soul music, were dominant influences (Gould 284-85). Stax also was a source of other genres

including gospel, funk, and blues. During this early period, the original compositional efforts of Lennon, McCartney, and Harrison were the results of the influences of other performers whom they admired and copied. Some of these were U.S. performers and musicians Elvis Presley, particularly admired by Lennon, along with Jerry Lee Lewis, Carl Perkins, 1950s rockabilly artist Buddy Holly, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Arthur Gunter, and Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, and for McCartney, the Everly Brothers (Harry 650; MacDonald 92; Sheff 193). These songs, “All I've Got to Do,” “Ask Me Why,” “This Boy” and “Not a Second Time,” from the snapshot one period were directly influenced by American rhythm and blues/soul singer and composer William Smokey Robinson, a star at Motown (Roylance 96).

Another way other performers' influences manifested themselves goes back to a contradiction in McCartney's statement that “the words don't really matter, people don't listen to words.” (Miles 153). A correlated statement, which he also made also in the Miles biography, was this description of writing song lyrics: “Often you just block songs out and words just come into your mind and when they do, it's hard to get rid of them. You often quote other songs too and you know you've got to get rid of them, but sometimes it's very difficult to find a more suitable phrase than the one that just insinuated itself into your consciousness.” (269). In the song “Little Child,” McCartney admitted taking the line “I'm so sad and lonely” from a song by 1950s folk singer British balladeer and actor Elton Hayes. The song was “Whistle My Love,” featured in the 1952 Walt Disney film “The Story Of Robin Hood and His Merrie Men” (Miles 153). The “sad and lonely” phrase was also used by Lennon and McCartney in their song “Bad To Me.” As they transitioned in the art of their songwriting, they dropped so many of these borrowed phrases and used their own expressions.

Literary figures were another source of inspiration for Lennon and McCartney's lyrical phrasings and word choices. Author Lewis Carroll was considered an influence on Lennon, particularly Lennon's style and word play, and was credited by Lennon himself as well as cited by McCartney as an influence regarding Lennon's lyrics (Miles 150). Carroll's style was evident in the opening line 1963 song "I'll Get You." It opens with "Imagine I'm in love with you," an innovative way to draw the listener immediately into the story. This was a technique that Lennon, the primary composer on that song, would use again in the lyrics of songs composed in the latter part of his group career, including "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "Strawberry Fields Forever," and also "Imagine," Lennon's composition from his solo career.

The Beatles had a fascination with what were known as "girl groups" at the time like the Shirelles. Barbara Bradby thoughtfully explores that influence and how The Beatles incorporated it in her article "'She Told Me What to Say': The Beatles and Girl-Group Discourse." Girl groups, prominent in the 1950s and early 1960s, consisted of young women singers of popular music, and rock and roll. The Beatles stood out as being particular fans of these groups. They were highly influenced by their music and their style as evidenced by their covers of a number of girl group songs. For example, "Boys" and "Baby It's You" by the Shirelles were covered on their first album. This influence extended to The Beatles' original compositions. The Shirelles in particular held a strong sway with McCartney. He claimed that "Hold Me Tight," on which he was primary composer was mildly influenced by the Shirelles. "P.S. I Love You," a song written in 1962 largely by McCartney, was described by Lennon as his writing partner's attempt to write a song a la the Shirelles' "Soldier Boy" (Sheff 168; Everett 127, 187). That The Beatles included five covers of girl-group songs on their first two albums is testament to their love of girl-group music and its influence on their early sound (Bradby (360).

One of the strongest influences on The Beatles' songwriting overall was the legacy of music genres. While The Beatles did not create any new genre of music, they were heavily influenced by a variety of them. The obvious influential genres were the popular ones of their current era, like rock and roll, soul, and folk. Also, as noted previously, those from the past, like British music hall and Broadway musicals. However, do the genres influence rhetoric? Genre may press more subtly on word choice and shape than other influences but I see a case that can be made for this influence. I looked at musical genres as a directional indicator for the transition. The influences of snapshot two songs mark a notable change in music genres. The Beatles did not leave behind the genres that influenced the songs of the early years of their career as their art transition. Additionally, they adopted different ones and reshaped those influences for their new direction. In particular, they embraced the genres that rose to prominence in the mid-1960s, particularly those influences from Dylan, who was a leader not only in changing the direction of the music of the period but also in changing the popular culture. The genres of folk and folk rock music in The Beatles' output reflect the influence of Dylan, whose folk and folk-like music created and led a change particularly for youth in the popular culture, during that period. Lennon designated his "Dylan" period as being a time when he began self-reflecting in his writing that started in the summer of 1964.

The rhetoric of the snapshot one songs of adolescent love and its respective delights and tribulations fits the straightforward, in some cases simple-sounding, music of that era. This was music that The Beatles borrowed from the contemporary genres of the time, including popular music, blues, jazz, rock and roll, and more. The genres of the snapshot one songs show a heavy influence from the cover songs they sang and recorded during that period. In the snapshot two songs, the genres reflect the trend of influences in the popular culture. However, they also exhibit

more of an independence in experimentation on the part of The Beatles. The Beatles borrowed more and more often during the snapshot one period. Experimentation went beyond the music and encompassed the rhetoric of the lyrics, which became more original, during the snapshot two period. The time period of the Snapshot Two songs coincided with the aforementioned influence of Dylan and his use of the folk and folk-rock genres, and Lennon's self-described "Dylan period" of self-reflection in which his rhetoric either moved away from or took a more introspective look at relationships.

In the following chapter, I examine the tools that The Beatles used to create the transition in the rhetoric of their songs and how these tools either did or did not carry over and whether or not they changed or were discarded.

3 TOOLS TO CHANGE THE RHETORICAL DIRECTION AND IMPLICATIONS

The foundation for constructing the transition can be found in the songwriting tools that The Beatles used to build the rhetoric of their songs. These tools, a variety of which they employed, not only constructed the transformation of The Beatles' work and art but also followed a transition between snapshot one and snapshot two. One of the tools they used in the beginning of their group career was the rhetoric of appreciation. They would address songs directly to their fans, particularly their female fans. The song, "Thank You Girl," written in early 1963, was lyrically constructed with their female audience in mind, the idea being that the ones who wrote them fan letters would take it as a "genuine thank-you," McCartney said (MacDonald 61). Lennon and McCartney, though McCartney in particular, used themes as frameworks for their songs such as the "letter song" of which 1962's "P. S. I Love You" was one such example, the rhetoric of personal written communication. McCartney, who was the principal writer on this song, noted that there are "certain themes that are easier than others to hang a song on, and [the popular] letter theme is one of them." (Miles 38). Another song inspired by the "letter song" theme was 1963's "From Me to You." The title was taken from the "From You To Us," letters section of the British music magazine, *New Musical Express*. McCartney told Miles that putting "I," "me," or "you" in the song title "was a little trick we developed early on and got bored with later," making the song's aim very direct and personal. McCartney cited "Love Me Do," "Please Please Me," and "From Me To You" as songs on which they used their "trick." Eventually, they overdid the use of the pronouns in this way. About "From Me to You," McCartney was particularly pleased that "we got two of them [personal singular pronouns] in there... That was a pivotal song. Our songwriting lifted a little with that song. It was very much co-written. We were

starting to meet other musicians then and we'd start to see other people writing," pointing to another indicator of the transition in their songwriting (148-149).

There is a prominent use of patterns in the creation of their more formulaic songs during the early part of their career when Lennon and McCartney used what they both described as their "eyeball to eyeball" writing technique (MacDonald 99). Patterns, however, are not in evidence in the snapshot two songs. Lennon and McCartney moved away from using patterns as a songwriting tool. They crafted the rhetoric of the songs during this period using more unstructured and individual frameworks suited to the expression of more complex ideas. From snapshot one to snapshot two, The Beatles transitioned from performing and recording a significant number of cover songs to dropping the use of this type of song almost altogether. They also moved away from using the rhetoric of others' songs to increasing the originality and creativity of their lyrics during the transitional time. The Beatles followed the conventions that had made others successful musical stars. This, in turn, gave them the power, commercially and artistically, to break free of these conventions and to be original, able to express their work in the words and manner they wanted, thus becoming artists instead of mere performers.

3.1 Wordplay Differences Between Songwriters and Snapshots

It is very noticeable that both Lennon and McCartney were very much attracted to wordplay for use in their lyric-writing albeit in different ways. The chorus in the snapshot one song "It Won't Be Long" features a play on the words "be long" and "belong" (MacDonald 92); Lennon was the main writer of that song with significant input from McCartney. The juxtaposition of "be long" and "belong" was a point of pride for the two songwriters, with McCartney comparing it to the word play in "Please Please Me." McCartney told Miles he was "doing literature at school, so I was interested in plays on words and onomatopoeia" and that

Lennon, being well read, was interested in the same, he said (152). Lennon's verbal sensibility was one of the most important things he brought to the writing collaboration with McCartney. The pair also liked to get a double meaning and a double use into the lyrics of their songs. An example of this is in the snapshot one song "Please Please Me." Lennon took this from a Bing Crosby song, the 1932 hit entitled "Please." Lennon said he was intrigued by the double use of the song's lyric: "Please lend a little ear to my pleas." (Roynance 90).

The rhetoric in the snapshot two lyrics takes wordplay in a different direction with fewer uses of plays on individual words or phrases and more on twists in meanings and alternate definitions of words. For example, "Day Tripper" from 1965, described as a typical play on words by Lennon (Sheff 177), has as its subject a term with multiple meanings. Day tripper can mean tourist and a "trip" in the sense of a psychedelic drug experience. Or it can mean a sexual short-timer, one who engages only in physical relationships of one-night stands or occasional and brief liaisons. As in "Drive My Car," the stereotypical gender roles in "Day Tripper" are reversed.

Another tool that Lennon and McCartney employed in the snapshot two period was the use of archetypes. These were used to create the more expansive and inclusive rhetoric. Archetypes were not seen in the snapshot one period songs. For example, in the 1965 song "Girl" Lennon, the main writer, uses an archetype to communicate what he's looking for in a match for a soulmate. This showcases a difference in the change in communication between the two time periods. The snapshot two songs have moved away from the personal, one-to-one focus that characterizes the rhetorical construct of most of the snapshot one songs. They now address not just a wider audience but almost an "everyperson" audience. Each listener can apply and interpret the words the songwriters chose either to their own situation or one they can fantasize.

Even songs like “Help!” that have a one-to-one point of view move beyond “you love me”-“I love you.” They make an effort to address more universal and everyperson concerns and complex personal issues by reshaping the rhetoric to address them. During the transition period, Lennon was in the middle of his aforementioned “Dylan period” of introspective songwriting. I have previously pointed out how Lennon’s song “In My Life” from 1965 described different kinds of love beyond romantic, personal love. Lennon considered “In My Life” his “first real major piece of work” as it was the first time he had written about his own life in lyrics (Sheehan). He was inspired by English journalist Kenneth Allsop’s suggestion that he should write songs about his childhood (Everett 319). Lennon wrote a song in the form of a long poem reminiscing about his early years, basing the original version of the lyrics on a bus route he used to take in Liverpool. He named various sites seen along the way, including the Liverpool street area and surrounding thoroughfare Penny Lane and orphanage Strawberry Field, later subjects of songs considered among The Beatles’ masterpieces. Those original lyrics for “In My Life” are on display at the British Library. Lennon discarded the original lyrics, however. He reworked the words to replace the specific memories with a generalized meditation on his past and yet framed in such a way that the song’s audience could “borrow” it as their own meditations on their individual pasts (Spitz 587-591). Lennon did this by positioning it from a more impersonal rhetorical stance, even though it was his personal past he was talking about, thus universalizing the communication.

The use of nonsense, or filler, words was another tool for Lennon and McCartney. These words were likely employed to create hooks within the song, such as the infamous “yeah, yeah, yeah,” which became almost a marketing tool, possibly without intention. Their use was also a part of the call-and-response aspect of their lyrics (MacDonald 91), another tool they liked to employ that I would speculate was borrowed from the early rock-and-roll African American

singers. McCartney does not appear to have addressed the use of nonsense and filler words as a tool. Lennon was vague about the source and inspiration for its use by the group, attributing it to Elvis Presley songs. The multiple “yeahs,” employed in a number of the snapshot one songs including “She Loves You” and “It Won’t Be Long” acquired such a high profile that their use almost became a trademark of their music and performances in the early years. The Beatles did not pioneer the use of these filler words, which were fairly common as musical hooks and lyrical “punctuation” in popular music of that era. However, they did take this tool to a higher level with their own innovative use. For example, in “She Loves You,” Lennon and McCartney moved the “yeah yeah yeah” hook to the beginning of the song. Normally, a hook of this sort was positioned later in the song, including at the end of it. In the snapshot two songs, these types of words were rarely used and not in the way they were in the snapshot one songs. In the few places they were used, they did not repeat. As The Beatles evolved in their art, their rhetoric was shaped with more concrete words that expressed thoughts, ideas, story elements, and characters that are multi-dimensional with complexity and form.

3.2 Unchanged Foundations of Lennon’s and McCartney’s Technique

Many aspects of songwriting of Lennon and McCartney changed between the two periods examined in this thesis, including the rhetoric, the framework of the lyrics, the music, and the production. However, their individual styles of writing did not. McCartney’s style was to write the music and then the lyrics. He seemed to surprise himself enough to comment on his writing of the song “All My Loving.” McCartney said, “It was the first song [for which] I’d ever written the words first. I never wrote words first, it was always some kind of accompaniment. I’ve hardly ever done it since either.” He continued, “I wrote ‘All My Loving’ like a piece of poetry and then, I think, I put a song to it later.” (Harry 25–26). McCartney’s love of and use of

rhyming and onomatopoeia are so strong that the songs he wrote in the snapshot two period are immediately obvious compared to those of Lennon. Lennon's songs were rhymed, the use of that was more subtle and employed less as a hook and more as a "string" to pull the listener through the message or song.

Lennon tended to write his lyrics first, then fitted chords and melody around the words. He would use as templates songs from past eras and other genres as one of his methods of composing. McCartney liked to balance his words and phrases to match and complete his purpose, sometimes rhyming, sometimes just echoing or re-expressing the same thought in a similar manner. For example, in "All My Loving," he put together "will miss," "will kiss," "am missing," "am kissing" whereas Lennon, on the other hand, positioned his verbs as though placing them in a line and threading them like a string to construct and express his intention in the song, with the result of less rhyming and less matching of phrases. Intention was where the two songwriters diverged. Lennon noted, regarding "She Loves You" that "It was Paul's idea: instead of singing 'I love you' again, we'd have a third party. That kind of little detail is still in his work. He will write a story about someone. I'm more inclined to write about myself."

(Roylance 96). Lennon and McCartney worked in partnership in the early period by calling out lyrically bland, random phrases, keeping them if the phrases fit the overall sound (MacDonald 102). The co-writing between Lennon and McCartney was not to last. The transition that marked their growth as artists also saw a lessening of collaboration, a tool that served them well in their early days. The two main songwriters began moving apart and writing more and more songs separately despite continuation of the use of the double credit on all of the group's songs, the exception being the songs written by Harrison.

This separation continued and grew until the end of their group career in 1970. There were exceptions to the separation. The snapshot two song “We Can Work It Out,” from 1965, is considered a comparatively rare example of a Lennon–McCartney collaboration from this period in their career (Hertsgaard 150) because the level of input was similar to that that they had shared when writing the songs in the snapshot one period, though not quite to the depth of that “eyeball to eyeball” method. Another example is the previously discussed “Drive My Car.”

We know what happened in the transition: The rhetoric of their songs changed. What is the *why* of the change? A variety of reasons and factors are possibilities for consideration to answer this. A wide reading of their history suggests their superior ability to reshape and reconstitute literary and musical influences of the shared past. They also had a superior ability to incorporate new influences like Bob Dylan, The Byrds, and Indian classical music. Other influences for consideration were popular drugs of the era and the rise of the mass media, which afforded them wider exposure to extend the expression of their art. One observation on the difference is that the songs in snapshot one were not situated in any kind of reality that was personal to any of the members in the group. What ignited the transition? The present-from-the-beginning desire to write and perform their own songs? An innate talent and charisma that vaulted them out of the pack and into the cultural stratosphere? I think most, if not all, would agree on the talent and charisma but were these qualities were enhanced by the strong cultural forces of the 20th century that arose in the aftermath of World War II.

Perhaps the *why* question cannot be answered and instead the question to be examined should be the *how*. As noted, Kozinn conferred on the group the characteristic for success as being their “unfailing ability to detect trends early . . . adopting and amplifying them” and making them fashionably cool for their fans (11). The Beatles attained their fan base in the early

days of the group's career by following the playbook for success set by singers and musical groups in the early 1960s. They appealed to the interests of the demographic rising to dominance. However, they also set the stage for their transition and elevation early on by pushing for their original compositions. They incorporated their originality into the changes in their rhetoric when they composed their own songs and also in presenting their original personalities. They were consistent in presenting at all times their authentic selves, and they did that in a way that was appealing both universally and inclusively.

3.3 Implications of This Project

I see the implications of this project as an effort to properly situate the rhetoric of song lyrics on the same level of importance as the composition of the music and the innovations and creative changes made in musical production in the case of The Beatles. The transition that began that major evolution encompassed the rhetoric of lyrics, though this element is ignored in critical examinations and research into The Beatles' work and art. Yet, it was as important as any aspect of the transition in their music in elevating their art. Their achievements and the status they attained could not have happened without the transition of all aspects of their art. Reading the scholars who have extensively analyzed The Beatles' art brings the realization that the music is paramount. Even when scholars discuss the rhetoric of the lyrics, it is a brief nod to that part of their genius. Among the scholars who have devoted considerable research and time to the phenomenon of The Beatles, I found no evidence of research into the lyrics in which there was a comparison of the rhetoric, word choice, word usage, influences, and development as their art evolved. There may be such scholarship and research but it is not prominent in this area of research. The majority of research and scholarship about the words The Beatles used is concerned with the meaning of the lyrics as a whole, sometimes with a discussion of word choice

as a minor part of the discussion. Comparing the rhetoric of the songs used in snapshot one and snapshot two reveals the depth of the transition and the complexity of the change in the rhetoric illustrating the achievement of this elevation. The change in rhetoric also revealed what I see as a giant leap they made from entertainers and aspiring musical entertainers, though at the top of the commercial game, to consummate artists and cultural leaders.

4 CONCLUSIONS

This examination points to the significance of the rhetorical changes being as significant as the evolution of their music and as symbolic as those in society and popular culture. The time period covers from the beginning of the decade to the middle of it when the group produced *Rubber Soul*. The album pointed the way in which they were moving. This examination also indicates that the transition in the rhetoric of their lyrics supports Astor's statement that lyrics to popular songs changed their focus in the 1960s (144). The lyrics do this by moving to work in different ways to address a wider range of subjects and fulfilling new functions for new audiences and being more inclusive. This was certainly the case with the topics of the songs on *Rubber Soul*. The conclusions I have drawn from this study are based on a pre-thesis premise that says that rhetoric was an integral ingredient in the fusion that sparked the changes in the culture of the 1960s. It is fairly straightforward and easy to connect the artifacts to the rhetoric and discern the evolution of influence within the cultural context of their time. In both the early period and the later period of the group's career, the cultural-social-demographic-political forces and The Beatles' art convened perfectly, flowing together, changing. This was reflected in the topics and meanings of their songwriting formed by the rhetoric. Their rhetoric is that of inclusion; it is universal but entirely free of condescension to their audience. Instead, it invites admittance to a much broader and larger group of listeners and giving the expanded audience a way to imagine

their own inclusion. The Beatles assume their listeners will be in on the wordplay and they structure their lyrics in such a way as to pull them into conversation or the particular story being told in their lyrics. The authenticity in their art was also shown in the musical and rhetorical influences from the past; the literary references that inspired them; and the attention they gave to the commonplace and quotidian aspects of life.

This thesis looks at two critical time periods, defined as snapshot one and snapshot two, in the development of the rhetoric in The Beatles' song lyrics. For future research, considerations to explore would be adding a third snapshot of a different time period. Researchers could also follow the paths of the transition further out beyond 1965 to what is considered the critical peak of their group career, the *Revolver* album. This is another, major transition in their music but also in their rhetoric, the direction of which changed again. Another possibility for research would be to examine a wider population and then would be to compare rhetorical transitions of The Beatles with their musical artist contemporaries. However, few if any groups come to mind who had the career and cultural momentum that The Beatles did. So many, it seems, were stopped or flared out along the way to icon or even just famous-for-a-period-of-time status. They either lacked the depth of talent needed or were unable to break free of a music or cultural stereotype, or they were simply the victims of bad luck.

The two snapshots in this thesis were structured to follow and cover The Beatles' group career at its beginning to the 1965 transition marked by the *Rubber Soul* album. As their group career effectively ended in 1970 for songwriting and recording, there were five years from the 1965 transition to that end, during which time the group issued six more albums. This presents itself as a potential area of further research to identify and examine transitions for significant rhetorical shifts, their relevance, and effect they had.

In chapter one, the question was asked: Was The Beatles' audience non-literary? This was the claim made by Christgau (1967). I concluded that Christgau's definition of literariness would be needed to determine that. However, the literariness of the audience for The Beatles' music, both the original audience and the audience that expanded during the transition, is an area for further exploration in research.

The research in this thesis shows how contrary is the rhetorical evolution to McCartney's statement that "the words don't really matter, people don't listen to words" (Miles 153). The confidence they had in their art as songwriters moved them forward in their expression of concepts and ideas and stories in a stunningly short time. They were confident enough to do this without concern that they would alienate their audience, actual and potential, or that it might endanger their financial status or fame. They deliberately moved their rhetoric in addition to their music. The rhetoric of The Beatles' lyrics was as major a factor in their art as the music itself.

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