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INNOVATORS: SONGWRITERS

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ABSTRACT

Irving Berlin and Cole Porter were two of the great experimental songwriters of the Golden Era. They aimed to create songs that were clear and universal. Their ability to do this improved throughout much of their careers, as their skill in using language to create simple and poignant images improved with experience, and their greatest achievements came in their 40s and 50s. During the 1960s, Bob Dylan and the team of John Lennon and Paul McCartney created a conceptual revolution in popular music. Their goal was to express their own ideas and emotions in novel ways. Their creativity declined with age, as increasing experience produced habits of thought that destroyed their ability to formulate radical new departures from existing practices, so their most innovative contributions appeared early in their careers.

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During the early twentieth century, the primary source of innovations in popular songwriting was the musical theater. Composers and lyricists took ideas from the librettos of musical comedies as the starting point for ballads that were then tailored for the particular situations and characters of those plays. These songs were generally experimental in nature, for they dealt with the lives and (especially) loves of realistic characters in terms that were intended to be universal –readily understood and enjoyed by a wide audience, who could see them as relevant to their own lives.

The second half of the century saw rock and roll replace the theater as the primary source of innovative popular songs. These songs were intended to stand alone. No longer constrained by the plots of specific plays, writers could treat any subject they wished. In this new, freer setting, the greater speed with which their innovations could be made gave conceptual songwriters a decided advantage, and from the mid-1960s on popular music became a predominantly conceptual art.

This chapter examines the careers and contributions of two of the greatest songwriters of what came to be considered the Golden Era of popular song, in the second quarter of the twentieth century, and of three rock songwriters who played a leading role in making popular music a conceptual art.

Irving Berlin (1888-1989)

A verse with simple words will always linger,
A tune that you can pick out with one finger.

Irving Berlin¹

Israel Baline arrived in the United States at the age of five, with his parents and four older siblings. His only lasting memory of his native Russia was of watching his house burn down

during a pogrom.² His family settled on New York's Lower East Side, where they lived in extreme poverty. His father had been a cantor in Russia, and Izzy enjoyed singing with his father in a synagogue on holy days.

His father died when Izzy was 13. His family could no longer afford to keep him in school, and out of shame at not being able to contribute more to the family's income he decided to leave home. For the next few years he lived in lodging houses, singing on the street to support himself. At 17, he got a job as a singing waiter in a Chinatown dance hall. After two years, the owner suggested that Izzy and the café's pianist write a song, to attract customers. Izzy wrote the lyrics and the pianist the melody to "Marie from Sunny Italy." To their surprise, a music publisher bought it. At 19, Izzy signed his first published song with a new name he considered more formal; four years later, he legally changed his name to Irving Berlin.³

Berlin began to earn money writing songs for vaudeville, and at 21 he quit waiting tables and went to work as a staff lyricist at a music publishing firm. There he began working without a collaborator. Although he had no formal training, and never learned to read or write music, Berlin would subsequently work alone, both writing lyrics and composing music, and having his songs transcribed by an assistant.

Berlin was often described as the master of *American* songwriting: in 1925, for example, Jerome Kern declared that "Berlin has entrenched himself in shell-proof, impregnable position as commander-in-chief of all the purveyors of American music," and in 1936 Cole Porter reflected that "Berlin comes closest to writing real American music."⁴ One source of this characterization was Berlin's first great popular success, "Alexander's Ragtime Band," in 1911. He did not intend "Alexander" to be a rag, but rather a song about ragtime music. Yet to a white American audience largely unfamiliar with the music of Scott Joplin, Eubie Blake, and other black

composers, “Alexander” caused Berlin to be labeled the “King of Ragtime.”⁵ Berlin embraced this identification. In a 1915 interview, he accused other composers of being ashamed of American music, and of imitating European music. He portrayed himself as unsophisticated but patriotic: “Ignorant as I am, from their standpoints, I’m doing something they all refuse to do: I’m writing American music!”⁶

It might appear ironic that a native Yiddish speaker who had little formal education would come to be considered the quintessentially American composer, but in fact there is no necessary contradiction. One of Berlin’s greatest innovations was to bring common language, which had previously been restricted to folk music, to the commercial popular music of Tin Pan Alley. Late in his life, he reflected that the simplicity for which his music was celebrated was a product of his early educational and musical deficiencies: “The reason I wrote simply is just that I wasn’t clever when I started... By the time I sharpened the tools of my trade, I found I wrote simple songs because that’s how they came out of my head.”⁷ Berlin’s importance was also a result of the fact that he was the first Tin Pan Alley composer to embrace America’s greatest indigenous music. In 1929, George Gershwin paid tribute to Berlin for showing him what became the key to his own music: “I have learned many things from Irving Berlin, but the most precious lesson has been that ragtime –or jazz, as its more developed state was later called –was the only musical idiom in existence that could aptly express America. And so, when I was eager to compose something larger and more permanent than mere songs, I did not for a moment think of abandoning the jazz idiom.”⁸

Berlin aimed at the largest possible audience, and measured success accordingly: “The mob is always right. It seems to be able to judge instinctively what is good, and I believe that there are darned few good songs which have not been whistled or sung by the crowd.”⁹ His goal

for his lyrics was simplicity and universality: “‘Easy to sing, easy to say, easy to remember and applicable to everyday events’ is a good rule for a phrase.”¹⁰ He rejected as pretentious the idea that songwriters were artists, instead maintaining that they were craftsmen and (his highest term of praise) professionals. He scoffed at “this legendary stuff about great inspiration in popular songwriting. If you’re a professional, you sit down and write.”¹¹ He was enormously productive –his complete works include more than 1,250 songs –but he attributed this to hard work rather than facility: “The melody doesn’t come to you. You sweat it out.”¹² He considered songwriting a job, declaring that “This is a business and I’m in it to make money.”¹³

Berlin had no doubt that his skills had improved over time. In 1960, he dismissed his early songs: “I call ‘em bad. They were not only bad, they were amateurish.”¹⁴ It is also clear that Berlin in fact had artistic goals that were not limited simply to making money. As early as 1910, he complained that “we are not producing any living songs. These songs I am writing are only for the brief career of the vaudeville stage. They will be a hit for a week or two... But I cannot think of a song in years that has come to stay.”¹⁵ Berlin produced hits throughout his career, but his lasting songs came only with his maturation as a craftsman.

In Berlin’s novice work, the narrator of “Marie from Sunny Italy” (1907) implored his beloved to

Meet me while the summer moon is beaming,
For you and me the little stars are gleaming.
Please come out tonight, my queen,
Can’t you hear my mandolin?¹⁶

The language is stilted and formal, the rhyme between *queen* and *mandolin* forced, and the latter is hardly an everyday instrument. Berlin worked assiduously at his craft, however, and soon adopted a simpler vocabulary. In 1911, the narrator of the song that first made Berlin both rich and famous invited listeners to

Come on and hear, come on and hear
 Alexander's Ragtime Band.
 Come on and hear, come on and hear,
 It's the best band in the land.¹⁷

The song's use of dialect –it opened by addressing “ma honey” –its rapid tempo, and its insistent repetition all suited it to vaudeville, where it had its great success.

Over time, Berlin's songs became slower and more thoughtful. In 1927, “Blue Skies” was the first song Al Jolson sang in the legendary first talkie, *The Jazz Singer*:

Never saw the sun
 Shining so bright,
 Never saw things
 Going so right.
 Noticing the days
 Hurrying by –
 When you're in love
 My, how they fly!¹⁸

As is often the case in Berlin's ballads, the sweetness of the lyrics is tempered by a hint of fragility, here the narrator's observation of how quickly happy times pass.

Berlin was a thoroughgoing New Yorker. (Even Los Angeles was too rustic for him: “There's no Lindy's in Los Angeles. No paper at two in the morning. No Broadway. No city.”¹⁹) Yet he insisted that it was not his own taste that should be reflected in his songs, but rather that “A good song embodies the taste of the mob.”²⁰ One of his most enduring songs, “God Bless America” (1939), did that by ignoring urban America and glorifying the country's natural beauty –“From the mountains, to the prairies, / To the oceans white with foam.”²¹ Much easier to sing than “The Star-Spangled Banner,” during World War II Berlin's song became a popular alternative to the official national anthem, and has remained so to the present.

In 1942, Bing Crosby sang “White Christmas” in the movie *Holiday Inn*. The song became a hit in that year, spending 10 weeks in first place on the Lucky Strike Hit Parade. More

significantly, however, “White Christmas” became a preeminent example of what the young Irving Berlin had called a living song. It is the top-selling popular song in history, with record sales of over 125 million copies. It is also one of the most frequently recorded popular songs: since Crosby’s famous version, “White Christmas” has been recorded by scores of other musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Nat King Cole, Charlie Parker, Elvis Presley, Aretha Franklin, the Beach Boys, the Supremes, the Jackson Five, Willie Nelson, Bob Dylan, Barbra Streisand, Bob Marley and the Wailers, and U2.²²

The long life of “White Christmas” was the result of Berlin’s success in fully achieving his goal of writing simple, universal songs. “White Christmas” evokes the associations of a rural New England winter holiday simply and vividly.²³ And it makes these associations more poignant by having them expressed by a speaker who now can only remember them wistfully. When “White Christmas” was released, Irving Berlin was 54.²⁴ After decades of painstaking effort, he had succeeded in writing “in the simplest way... as simple as writing a telegram.”²⁵ A biographer tellingly compared Berlin’s masterpiece to the greatest work of another great experimental writer: “‘White Christmas’ is the counterpart to Robert Frost’s ‘Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,’ which uses the simplest of rhymes and the barest of imagery to evoke a beautiful but melancholy scene.”²⁶

Cole Porter (1891-1964)

Poets always speak of youth
 With such admiration,
 But we all must face the truth,
 Age has many a compensation.

Cole Porter²⁷

If Irving Berlin was the immigrant who grew up to represent traditional American values, Cole Porter was the small-town boy who grew up to epitomize the glitter and elegance of New

York high society. Born and raised in Peru, Indiana, Porter was the grandson of a very wealthy landowner, and enjoyed a privileged youth. His mother's dream was for Cole to be a great musician, and by the age of six he had instructors for both piano and violin, and he practiced music two hours a day. Cole wrote an operetta at the age of 10, and when he wrote "The Bobolink Waltz" a year later, improvised from the notes of a bird's song, his mother had it published in Chicago.²⁸

A friend and biographer concluded that Porter's childhood taught him he could use music to gain affection and acceptance, and observed that he carried this lesson with him throughout his life.²⁹ He attended prep school in Massachusetts, and went on to Yale, and throughout his school career he used his wit and musical skills to be popular: many parties revolved around Cole playing piano and singing, and at Yale he not only wrote productions for the drama society and songs for the glee club, but also fight songs for the football team. A reviewer of one glee club performance described Cole as "one of those musical geniuses to whom music is second nature," and predicted that "He could make his fortune on the vaudeville stage," singing "topical songs to his own accompaniment or giving imitations."³⁰

Porter did intend to conquer Broadway, and in 1916 he wrote the score for a musical comedy, *See America First*. The lyrics gave signs of Porter's ability as a phrasemaker, as in the alliterative "lazy hazy crazy" (that would reemerge nearly 50 years later in the title of one of Nat King Cole's greatest hits), but this was embedded in an awkward tribute to his native state: "I simply quiver –to drive my flivver/ Along that lazy hazy crazy Wabash River."³¹ Porter also liberally displayed his expensive education –one song contained references to Browning, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and Shelley. The play was heavily indebted to Gilbert and Sullivan, and one critic described it as "something that college boys might have done in the way of entertainment." The

play was a flop –another critic advised “Don’t *See America First*” –and it closed within two weeks.³²

Porter’s successes throughout his school years had not prepared him for failure, and he was humiliated. Uncertain of his future, the next year he went to Paris, apparently to try to forget the self-doubt that followed his failed New York debut. In 1919 he married Linda Lee Thomas, a beautiful and wealthy American divorcee. The Porters entertained lavishly and frequently at their Paris mansion and their Venice palazzo. Among their guests were minor European royalty and major theatrical and musical royalty, including Noël Coward, John Barrymore, Serge Diaghilev, George Bernard Shaw, Igor Stravinsky, Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, and Lorenz Hart. During this time, Berlin advised Porter to stop trying to imitate other composers and write in his own style.³³ Richard Rodgers was entertained by the Porters in Venice, and he later recalled that he was stunned when Porter played a few of his new songs, which “fairly cried out to be heard from a stage. Why, I asked Cole, was he wasting his time? Why wasn’t he writing for Broadway?”³⁴

When Porter did return to New York in 1928, appropriately as the composer of the score of *Paris*, he received rave reviews. Among the songs was his first hit, “Let’s Do It, Let’s Fall in Love,” which escaped being banned from radio play only because of the title’s second phrase.³⁵ The song is a prime example of Porter writing with supreme confidence –sophisticated, clever, suggestive, and irrepressible:

Electric eels, I might add, do it,
 Though it shocks ‘em, I know.
 Why ask if shad do it?
 Waiter, bring me shad roe.

The lyrics are filled with double entendres, alliteration, and verbal surprises: one phrase, for example –“So does ev’ry katydid do it” –contains three forms of a single verb within the span of just six words.³⁶

During the next few years Porter wrote a series of hits, and in the process he became not only the toast of New York’s high society, but for many listeners elsewhere the personification of that tribe –the wealthy, urbane aristocrat who wrote songs that offered amusing, sophisticated glimpses of love as it was practiced in the café society of Fifth Avenue. In 1934, “You’re the Top” provided an irreverent catalogue of the chic and the excellent, from a Bendel bonnet and a Shakespeare sonnet, the National Gallery and Garbo’s salary, an O’Neill drama and Whistler’s mama, to a Waldorf salad and a Berlin ballad.³⁷ Porter’s achievement was appreciated by Ethel Merman, who sang the song in *Anything Goes*: “What Cole had done was to analyze my voice and turn out songs which showed off its variety. ‘You’re the Top’ brought audiences to their feet because it was a new kind of love song. There had never been a song like it before.”³⁸ In the same score, Porter displayed his verbal virtuosity by including five rhymes within a single sentence of “I Get a Kick Out of You” –“Flying too high in the sky with some guy/ Is my idea of nothing to do.”³⁹

The two Porter songs that have been most often recorded were both written after he had passed the age of 40: “Night and Day” (1932) and “Begin the Beguine” (1935).⁴⁰ Both are love songs, with insistent rhythms that have helped make them standards for jazz musicians. In “Night and Day,” repetitive sounds the narrator hears –the beat of a drum, the tick of a clock, the drip of raindrops –echo the repeated thought he has of his beloved, and the thought becomes a physical sensation:

Night and day under the hide of me
There’s an, oh, such a hungry yearning burning inside of me,

And its torment won't be through
 Till you let me spend my life making love to you
 Day and night, night and day.⁴¹

In "Begin the Beguine," hearing the music of a popular dance powerfully evokes the memory of a lost love:

When they begin the beguine
 It brings back the sound of music so tender,
 It brings back a night of tropical splendor,
 It brings back a memory ever green.⁴²

In these songs Porter used his mastery of language and rhythm to express love and passion, free of satire or irony.

F. Scott Fitzgerald made the Jazz Age into short stories and novels; Cole Porter made it into songs and musical comedies. Porter succeeded early in becoming a member of the social elite, but he did not begin to achieve artistic and professional success until he understood that his true audience was not his own circle, but a much larger population of those who were entertained by the lives of the rich and famous. Late in his life, Porter told a biographer that one of the few people who had sought him out to give him encouragement after his early failure on Broadway, the playwright Harrison Rhodes, told him that if he wanted to take advantage of his talent, working hard was not enough: Rhodes' advice, Porter recalled, was to "Learn about life."⁴³ Porter's eventual success was the result of doing that, and of developing a vocabulary that communicated the glamour and excitement of his own life to anyone who heard his songs. In 1955, Porter reflected that as a young composer he was overly concerned with what he called tricky rhymes: "In Yale, I was rhyme crazy. That was due to the fact that I was Gilbert and Sullivan crazy." With time, however, he had made his music simpler: "My songs are easier than they used to be musically and lyrically. I've never been able to get complete simplicity the way Berlin does."⁴⁴ Porter's songs never became as simple as Berlin's, but he had learned to write

sophisticated songs that were widely accessible. In his humorous songs, his early bookish references were replaced by more familiar people and places. And in “Night and Day” and “Begin the Beguine,” he altogether eliminated the flippancy of his early work, and used his technical skills to make passionate love songs.

Porter’s greatest work was almost certainly truncated prematurely by a devastating horse-riding accident in 1937 that broke both his legs, and left him in pain for the rest of his life. The pain did not stop him from producing work of high quality; the songs he wrote for *Kiss Me, Kate* in 1947, for example, are generally considered the best complete score he ever wrote.⁴⁵ Yet no individual song Porter wrote after 1937 matched the best of those songs he had written in the years just before the accident, and Porter himself believed there was a permanent loss in the quality of his work.⁴⁶ At his best, Porter’s songs expressed a carefree optimism and joy in living, as a mature experimental artist used his craft to describe the thrill of being talented and in love. After 1937, however, the constant pain he suffered appears to have left him unable to recapture the exhilaration and excitement that animate every phrase of his best songs.

Bob Dylan (1941 -)

Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin’ ship,
 My senses have been stripped, my hands can’t feel to grip,
 My toes too numb to step, wait only for my boot heels
 To be wanderin’.

Bob Dylan⁴⁷

In 1955, James Dean’s performance in *Rebel Without a Cause* gave 14-year-old Bobby Zimmerman a lasting model of the artist as defiant nonconformist.⁴⁸ Bobby’s chosen art, however, was not movies, but popular music. Among the singers Bobby revered were Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and Hank Williams, and when he graduated from Hibbing (Minn.) High

School, he listed his ambition in life as “To join the band of Little Richard.”⁴⁹ *Zimmerman* wouldn’t do for a rock musician, so in 1958 Bobby decided his new name would be *Bob Dylan*.⁵⁰

As a concession to his parents, Bob enrolled at the University of Minnesota. Acquiescence did not come naturally to him, however, and he did not complete his freshman year. Yet his time in Minneapolis had a profound impact, for the university’s bohemian neighborhood was not dedicated to rock and roll, as he’d expected, but to folk music. The folk ethos appealed to Bob’s individualism, and he quickly became a convert. His conversion was cemented by his discovery of *Bound for Glory*, the memoir of the folk singer Woody Guthrie. Guthrie’s book presented a philosophy that championed the individual, the dispossessed, and the downtrodden, and his songs made this philosophy into anthems of protest and hope. Dylan instantly had a role model, as he adopted wholesale Guthrie’s ideas, his music, and even his bad grammar: “when I heard Woody Guthrie, that was it, it was all over.”⁵¹

When Bob Dylan arrived in New York early in 1961, his first concern was to visit Woody Guthrie, who was suffering from the degenerative disease Huntington’s chorea in a New Jersey state hospital. Dylan then set out to conquer folk music: “Picasso had fractured the art world and cracked it wide open. He was revolutionary. I wanted to be like that.”⁵²

Dylan immersed himself in the Greenwich Village folk music community, learning from more experienced singers and performing in coffeehouses. He cultivated people who could advance his career, among them a *New York Times* critic. On September 29, 1961, a *Times* review described Dylan as “bursting at the seams with talent,” a newcomer with “originality and inspiration all the more noteworthy for his youth.” Like others in the folk community, the reviewer was struck by the speed with which Dylan’s music was evolving, commenting that “He has been sopping up influences like a sponge.”⁵³

Dylan immediately used the *Times*' rave to obtain a recording contract.⁵⁴ He also began writing his own songs. In 1962, he wrote "Blowin' in the Wind." Its simple tune and lyrics placed it clearly in a line of descent from Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" and Pete Seeger's "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," and its criticism of indifference to social injustice made it an immediate Civil Rights standard:

Yes, 'n' how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, 'n' how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?⁵⁵

In 1963, a recording of the song by Peter, Paul and Mary reached number two on the *Billboard* charts.⁵⁶ In barely more than two years in New York, at the age of 22, Bob Dylan had become a leader of the folk music revival. He had also done something that Guthrie and Seeger never had, by writing a popular hit song.

Among the songs Dylan wrote during 1962-63 were his "finger-pointing" songs – "You know –pointing to all the things that are wrong."⁵⁷ Some of these, like "A Hard Rain's Gonna Fall" (1962), contained such apocalyptic images as "a dozen dead oceans" and "the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world," while others, like "Masters of War" (1963), had angry messages of protest.⁵⁸ The hallucinatory imagery and bitter vitriol of these songs went well beyond the traditional bounds of folk music: as Noel Stookey (Paul of Peter, Paul and Mary) observed, "Dylan was stretching the folk idiom and traditionalists were no longer going to be upheld. A new spirit had come."⁵⁹

In 1964, Dylan made another abrupt transition. He resigned as a leader of folk music – "I don't want to write *for* people anymore. You know –be a spokesman" –and he denied being a civil rights activist: "I'm not part of no Movement." He would no longer write about the external world: "From now on, I want to work from inside me."⁶⁰ Dismissing his earlier songs as one-

dimensional, Dylan declared in 1965 that his new songs were “more three-dimensional, you know, there’s more symbolism, they’re written on more than one level.”⁶¹ He added a blues sound to folk music, and his lyrics were inspired by Arthur Rimbaud and other Symbolist poets. His new music was quickly labeled “folk-rock,” though he objected to that name, explaining that “I like to think of it more in terms of vision music.”⁶² As suddenly as he had earlier become a leader of folk music, Dylan now became a leader of popular music. Ever the rebel, however, he would never admit this. In 1966, he complained that he would probably never achieve the same critical acceptance as the Beatles, and he scoffed at their music as “a cop-out” – “There are millions of songs like ‘Michelle’ and ‘Yesterday’ written in Tin Pan Alley.” When asked if he influenced young people because he broke the rules, Dylan responded, “It’s not a question of breaking the rules, don’t you understand? I don’t break the rules, because I don’t see any rules to break. As far as I’m concerned, there aren’t any rules.”⁶³

Dylan identified his breakthrough song as “Like a Rolling Stone” (1965) – “it was a whole new category.”⁶⁴ Although Dylan described “Rolling Stone” as “vomitic,” it was firmly rooted historically: its title alluded to “Rollin’ Stone” (1950) by the legendary blues singer Muddy Waters, and its form owed a clear debt to the chanting rhythms of Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” (1956).⁶⁵ The song was a vindictive and vituperative attack on a woman identified only as Miss Lonely, sneering at her arrogance, reveling in her fall from prosperity, and repeatedly taunting, “How does it feel/ To be on your own/ ...Like a complete unknown/ Like a rolling stone?”⁶⁶ “Rolling Stone” convinced Dylan he could fit whatever he had to say into songs. As a single, it peaked at number two, giving Dylan his own first hit, in spite of the fact that at six minutes it was more than twice as long as most singles. Yet it marked a clear shift, for although Dylan might be settling his own scores (and debates raged over the identity of Miss Lonely), he

was no longer writing about anyone else's problems. To leave no doubt about this, in the vicious sequel "Positively 4th Street" (1965), Dylan jeered, "You say I let you down/ ... You say you lost your faith/ ... Don't you understand/ It's not my problem."⁶⁷ Other songs of this period, like "Gates of Eden" (1965), juxtaposed images that few listeners claimed to understand:

Of war and peace the truth just twists
Its curfew gull just glides
Upon four-legged forest clouds
The cowboy angel rides
With his candle lit into the sun⁶⁸

"Like a Rolling Stone," "Positively 4th Street," and a series of Dylan's vision songs went into the two albums *Highway 61 Revisited* (1965) and *Blonde on Blonde* (1966). These two albums, completed by the time Dylan was 25, were the two highest-rated of Dylan's albums in two major recent rankings of the greatest rock albums of all time, based on surveys taken by cable network VH1 in 2003 and *Rolling Stone* magazine in 2005. *Rolling Stone* wrote that *Highway 61* "quite simply, changed everything," while VH1 commented that in *Blonde on Blonde* Dylan "brought an intelligence and emotional sophistication to pop music that blew listeners' minds and daunted those who tried to match him."⁶⁹ On the occasion of Dylan's induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, the rock singer Bruce Springsteen gave a summary of the impact of these albums that neatly captured both the immediacy and the durability of their influence:

Without Bob, the Beatles wouldn't have made *Sgt. Pepper* [1967], the Beach Boys wouldn't have made *Pet Sounds* [1966], the Sex Pistols wouldn't have made "God Save the Queen" [1977], U2 wouldn't have done "Pride in the Name of Love" [1984], Marvin Gaye wouldn't have done *What's Going On?* [1971], the Count Five would not have done "Psychotic Reaction" [1966], Grandmaster Flash might not have done "The Message" [1982], and there never would have been a group named the Electric Prunes [1965-69]. To this day, wherever great rock music is being made, there is the shadow of Bob Dylan.⁷⁰

In the summer of 1966, a motorcycle accident left Dylan seriously injured, and he did not release another album until 1968. He has made dozens of albums since then, but none has repeated his early impact on popular music: in 1986, Mikal Gilmore could write in *Rolling Stone* that “for about twenty years now Bob Dylan hasn’t produced much music that transfigures either pop style or youth culture,” and in 2003 Quinton Skinner observed that *Blonde on Blonde* had been “the last of Dylan’s great mid-sixties mind-bombs.”⁷¹ Dylan himself remarked in 1978 that “Right through the time of *Blonde on Blonde* I was doing it unconsciously. Then one day I was half-stepping, and the lights went out.”⁷²

Dylan has discussed his loss of creativity. In his recent autobiography, he wrote of a visit he made to New Orleans in 1989 to work with a celebrated producer, Daniel Lanois, in the hope of reviving his recording career. As they worked together, Lanois repeatedly remarked – “nagging at me, just about every other day” –that they could use some songs like those Dylan had written in the mid-‘60s. Dylan had no answer:

I would have liked to been able to give him the kinds of songs that he wanted, like “Masters of War,” “Hard Rain,” “Gates of Eden,” but those kinds of songs were written under different circumstances, and circumstances never repeat themselves. Not exactly. I couldn’t get to those kinds of songs for him or anyone else. To do it, you’ve got to have power and dominion over the spirits. I had done it once, and once was enough. Someone would come along eventually who would have it again –someone who could see into things, the truth of things –not metaphorically, either –but really see, like seeing into metal and making it melt, see it for what it was and reveal it for what it was with hard words and vicious insight.⁷³

Throughout his career, Dylan had maintained that he had no control over his creativity. In 1962, for example, he told an interviewer that his songs were given to him: “The songs are there. They exist all by themselves, just waiting for someone to write down. I just put them down on

paper. If I didn't do it, somebody else would."⁷⁴ At the age of 44, Dylan could only marvel at the songs he had written 20 years earlier: "I can't write those songs today. No way. But I look at those songs, 'cause I sing 'em all the time, I wonder where they came from and how they came... I couldn't do them now, and I don't even try, I'd be a fool to try."⁷⁵ Two decades later, the source of "Like a Rolling Stone" was still a mystery: "It's like a ghost is writing a song like that. It gives you the song and it goes away... You don't know what it means."⁷⁶ Yet when he looked back, it was with pride as well as bemusement: "I've written some songs that I look at, and they just give me a sense of awe. Stuff like 'It's Alright, Ma' [1965], just the alliteration in that blows me away. And I can also look back and know where I was tricky and where I was really saying something that just happened to have a spark of poetry in it."⁷⁷ In 1995, Dylan did offer an explanation for why his muse had deserted him: "As you get older, you get smarter and that can hinder you because you try to gain control over the creative impulse... If your mind is intellectually in the way, it will stop you. You've got to program your brain not to think too much."⁷⁸

Just as his idol James Dean had been a rebel without a cause, in the mid-1960s Bob Dylan became the strident and angry voice of unspecified protest for a generation. At the same time, his novel synthesis of folk music, the blues, and Symbolist poetry created a radical new model for popular music, as the clear, simple language that generations of songwriters had used to express universal emotions suddenly gave way before an onslaught of cryptic and enigmatic verses that expressed the thoughts and feelings only of the musicians who wrote and sang them. As Bruce Springsteen explained, Dylan created a conceptual revolution in popular music: "Bob freed your mind the way Elvis freed your body. He showed us that just because the music was innately physical did not mean that it was anti-intellectual."⁷⁹

John Lennon (1940-1980) and Paul McCartney (1942-)

Let me take you down,
 'Cause I'm going to Strawberry Fields.
 Nothing is real,
 And nothing to get hung about.

John Lennon-Paul McCartney⁸⁰

John Lennon and Paul McCartney first met on July 6, 1957, at a neighborhood festival in a Liverpool suburb, after one of the first performances by Lennon's band, the Quarry Men. The two teenagers discovered that they shared a passion for American rock and roll, particularly that of Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Buddy Holly, and Paul soon joined John's band.⁸¹ By 1962, the Quarry Men had become the Beatles (the insect reference a tribute to Buddy Holly's band, the Crickets, and the spelling John's homage to the beat generation), the personnel consisted of Lennon, McCartney, and two other Liverpoolians, the guitarist George Harrison and the drummer Ringo Starr, and they had been voted the top band in Liverpool in the first annual *Mersey Beat* poll.⁸² In 1962 the Beatles released their first single, "Love Me Do," which became a top 20 hit in England and started the meteoric recording career that would make them the most famous and influential band in the history of rock music.⁸³

George Harrison described the Beatles' original goal as "just to be in a band as opposed to having a job."⁸⁴ But Paul McCartney noted that "It went beyond that pretty quickly," as he and John Lennon began doing something more ambitious, and unusual for rock and roll singers, by writing some of the songs they performed.⁸⁵ From the start, they agreed to share credit for all their songs.⁸⁶ Unlike earlier songwriting teams, which typically paired a composer and a lyricist, Lennon and McCartney both performed both tasks. Their styles were quite different, as Lennon observed that McCartney "provided a lightness, an optimism, while I would always go for the sadness, the discords, the bluesy notes."⁸⁷ Sometimes they worked separately, but Lennon

stressed that “We wrote a *lot* of stuff together, one-on-one, eyeball to eyeball.”⁸⁸ The Beatles’ producer explained that the collaboration changed over time, as initially “It was more a question of one of them trying to write a song, getting stuck, and asking the other: ‘I need a middle eight. What have you got?’ ... But as they developed their art, each moved on to writing songs entirely on his own. Collaboration became rare, apart from the odd word or line: it was either a John Lennon song or a Paul McCartney song.”⁸⁹

Initially, Lennon and McCartney aimed to emulate Tin Pan Alley songwriters: “first of all Paul and I wanted to be the Goffin and King of England.”⁹⁰ Gerry Goffin and Carole King were leading New York songwriters, who in 1961 had written a number one hit for the Shirelles, and another in 1962 for Little Eva, and whose “Chains,” originally recorded by the Cookies, was included on the Beatles’ first album in 1963. In early Lennon-McCartney songs, “lyrics didn’t really count as long as we had some vague theme: ‘She loves you, he loves her, and they love each other.’ It was the hook and the line and the sound we were after.”⁹¹ These early songs used simple and direct language to express the heady and urgent experience of young love. A song’s speaker, typically identified as “I,” declared his love for the object of his affection, usually “you,” in simple rhymes, with repetition, as in “Love Me Do”:

Love, love me do
 You know I love you.
 I’ll always be true
 So please love me do
 Whoa-ho love me do.⁹²

On *A Hard Day’s Night* (1964), the Beatles’ first album that consisted exclusively of their own compositions, the two pronouns *I* and *you* accounted for more than 15% of the total words in the album’s songs.⁹³

From late 1962 through mid-1965, the Beatles recorded nearly 60 original songs, every one of which was concerned with boy-girl romance.⁹⁴ Rapid tempos and lyrical melodies further contributed to a music that millions of fans found exciting and exhilarating (“We sing about love,” Lennon explained, “but we mean sex, and the fans know it.”⁹⁵) These early love songs, in Lennon’s words “pop songs with no more thought to them than that –to create a sound,” became the basis for a popular enthusiasm so widespread and so intense that it would add a new word – *Beatlemania* –to the Oxford English Dictionary.⁹⁶

The Beatles’ music changed over time, largely in response to the music of Bob Dylan. The Beatles first met Dylan in New York in 1964, and again the next year when he visited England. Lennon recalled that at “the early meetings with Dylan, he was always saying ‘Listen to the words, man’ and I said ‘I can’t be bothered, I listen to the sound of it, the overall sound.’”⁹⁷ Soon, however, Dylan’s emphasis on lyrics took effect, as Lennon reflected that

I think it was Dylan helped me realize that –not by any discussion or anything but just by hearing his work –I had a sort of professional songwriter’s attitude to writing pop songs... But to express myself I would write [the books] *Spaniard in the Works* [1965] or *In His Own Write* [1964], the personal stories that were expressive of my personal emotions. I’d have a separate songwriting John Lennon who wrote songs for the sort of meat market, and I didn’t consider them –the lyrics or anything –to have any depth at all... Then I started being me about the songs, not writing them objectively, but subjectively.⁹⁸

In 1965 Lennon wrote “In My Life,” which he considered “my first real major piece of work... [T]hat was the first time I consciously put my literary part of myself into the lyric.”⁹⁹

The narrator wistfully remembered people he had loved in the past, reflecting that “Some are dead and some are living,” before resolving his emotions in favor of the present:

Though I know I’ll never lose affection
For people and things that went before
I know I’ll often stop and think about them

In my life I love you more.¹⁰⁰

Included on *Rubber Soul*, “In My Life” broke with earlier rock and roll songs in its nostalgia and melancholy, and its open acknowledgement of death. *Rubber Soul* (1965) marked a turning point: the Beatles would no longer sing only about young love, but would also make statements about their own lives and their society, and they and their engineers would develop new sounds and recording techniques to reinforce their more complex verbal statements. Paul McCartney described *Rubber Soul* as “the beginning of my adult life.”¹⁰¹

In 1967, Lennon drew on his childhood, real and imagined, in “Strawberry Fields Forever.” The enigmatic lyrics included the line, “No one I think is in my tree,” which he later explained was an expression of his early feelings of isolation: “what I was trying to say in that line is ‘Nobody seems to be as hip as me, therefore I must be crazy or a genius’ ... And it’s scary when you’re a child, because there is nobody to relate to.”¹⁰² McCartney explained that Strawberry Fields had been a magical childhood place for Lennon, and that “We transformed it into the sort of psychedelic dream, so it was everybody’s magic childhood place.”¹⁰³ At the same time, McCartney drew on his own childhood memories for “Penny Lane.” He explained that the song’s images served artistic goals: “the ‘fireman with the hourglass’ and all that sort of stuff was us trying to get into a bit of art, a bit of surrealism.”¹⁰⁴ The fireman and the song’s other eccentrics, characterized simply and clearly and described as “very strange,” were inspired by the incongruous imagery and limpid technique employed by the Surrealist painter René Magritte, whose art Paul had recently begun to collect.¹⁰⁵ Lennon emphasized his debt in this period to Dylan’s example:

In those days I was writing obscurely, à la Dylan, never saying what you mean, but giving the *impression* of something. Where more or less can be read into it. It’s a good game... [T]here has been more said about Dylan’s wonderful lyrics than was ever in

the lyrics at all. Mine too. But it was the intellectuals who read all this into Dylan or the Beatles. Dylan got away with murder. I thought, Well, I can write this crap, too.

Lennon described the process: “You know, you just stick a few images together, thread them together, and you call it poetry. Well, maybe it *is* poetry.”¹⁰⁶ McCartney wanted the music to be mystical: “I’d like a lot more things to happen like they did when you were kids, when you didn’t know how the conjuror did it, and were happy just to see it there and say, ‘Well, it’s magic.’”¹⁰⁷

Lennon summarized the change in the Beatles’ music: “The *depth* of the Beatles’ songwriting... in the late Sixties was more pronounced; it had a more mature, more intellectual... approach.” He explained that “We were different. We were older.”¹⁰⁸ Yet they were not much older, for the change occurred quickly. In 1964, the word “love” occurred 53 times in the lyrics of their album *Hard Day’s Night*, but just three years later it occurred only 13 times in *Sgt. Pepper*. And as the Beatles’ themes expanded, so did their vocabulary: *Sgt. Pepper* had 13% more total words than *Hard Day’s Night*, but it contained 76% more *different* words than the earlier album.¹⁰⁹ In just a few years, the Beatles had departed decisively from the restricted subjects and language of conventional popular music.

In 2003, VH1 ranked the Beatles’ *Revolver* as the greatest album ever made; in 2005, *Rolling Stone* gave this honor to *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. In spite of this disagreement, both rankings clearly agreed on the greatest period of the Beatles’ career, for VH1 placed five of their albums –*Rubber Soul* (1965), *Revolver* (1966), *Sgt. Pepper* (1967), *The Beatles* (aka *The White Album*) (1968), and *Abbey Road* (1969) –among its top 11, and *Rolling Stone* placed these same five among its top 14.¹¹⁰ No other album by the Beatles, or by Lennon or McCartney after they left the Beatles, made the top 20 in either ranking. At the end of the

period spanned by these five landmark albums, John Lennon was 29 years old, and Paul McCartney was 27.

The Beatles have been the subject of a great deal of writing, scholarly as well as popular. Yet little attention has been devoted to the dramatic time profile of their creativity –the abrupt transition from the early work to the peak period of 1965-69, and the loss of creativity by both Lennon and McCartney in their solo careers after the dissolution of the Beatles in 1970. Both may have been consequences of their conceptual approach to their art.

Lennon and McCartney had no formal training in music. They learned to play guitar together, listening to records, and neither learned to read or write musical notation.¹¹¹ Their producer George Martin, who was formally trained in classical composition, wrote in his memoir that he was often asked if he could have written any of the Beatles' songs, "and the answer is definitely no: for one basic reason. I didn't have their simple approach to music." He attributed their creativity to the absence of constraints:

I think that if Paul, for instance, had learned music "properly" –not just the piano, but correct notation for writing and reading music, all the harmony and counterpoint that I had to go through, and techniques of orchestration –it might well have inhibited him... Once you start being taught things, your mind is channeled in a particular way. Paul didn't have that channeling, so he had freedom, and could think of things that I would have considered outrageous.¹¹²

McCartney agreed: "People say now, 'Oh, the Beatles were breaking all the rules.' But we didn't know what the rules were. We had no knowledge whatsoever of musical theory. We just did what felt right."¹¹³

The Beatles' sudden breakthrough in 1965 into their most innovative period was the immediate result of a decision by Lennon and McCartney to draw on their own experiences and emotions in writing songs.¹¹⁴ Neither Lennon nor McCartney claimed to understand where the

creativity of the next few years came from. Thus Lennon recalled that on one occasion he'd "struggled for days and hours to write clever lyrics. Then I gave up and 'In My Life' came to me." Similarly, he explained that the lyrics for "Across the Universe" (1969) "were given to me as *boom!* I don't own it, you know, it came through like that. I don't know where it came from... It's like being *possessed*; like a *psychic* or a *medium*."¹¹⁵ "Yesterday" (1965) came to McCartney suddenly and completely: "I had a tune in my head. It was just all there, a complete thing. I couldn't believe it. It came too easy. In fact, I didn't believe I'd written it. I thought maybe I'd heard it before, it was some other tune, and I went around for weeks playing the chords of the song for people, asking them, 'Is this like something? I think I've written it.'"¹¹⁶ In one of his last interviews, Lennon was asked whether musicians' creativity disappeared early in their lives, and responded: "I can't believe it goes away for ever... but you can never be twenty-four again. You can't be that hungry twice." In the same interview, he explained that he had given up music for much of the 1970s because of what he wanted to avoid: "Let's use Picasso as an example. He just repeated himself into the grave. It's not to take away from his great talent, but his last forty years were a repetition. It didn't go anywhere."¹¹⁷

A common explanation for the loss for the loss of creativity of Lennon and McCartney after the Beatles era attributes it to the end of their collaboration.¹¹⁸ Perhaps, however, the end of the collaboration was not the real problem: perhaps, like Bob Dylan, Lennon and McCartney had passed the time when innovative lyrics and melodies would simply be given to them, as if by spirits. Much like the aging Dylan, at 62 McCartney could only look back at his own early work with a mixture of wonder and pride: "you can't go on making *Pepper* all your life. It just can't be done. *Pepper* was a peak... It hit the right notes, the right moment in time. It was strange. It was

weird. It was hugely popular. It embraced all the things you want to embrace as an artist... But it was always going to be impossible to top.”¹¹⁹

Together with Bob Dylan, during the mid-1960s the Beatles created a conceptual revolution in popular music. Dylan and Lennon and McCartney broadened the subject matter and vocabulary of popular music: thus in 1968 Jean-Luc Godard declared that the Beatles “are very important because they are popular and intellectual at the same time. That is good. That is what I am trying to do in the movies.”¹²⁰ In the process, Dylan and the Beatles transformed rock and roll from dance music into something to be listened to, carefully and attentively, by adults as well as teenagers, and for the first time made it something to be studied by scholars. Dylan and the Beatles also definitively eliminated the division of labor between songwriters and performers. Beyond the legacy they shared with Dylan, the Beatles changed the sound of popular music, by introducing novel production techniques, instruments that had not previously been used for pop songs, and electronic music. With *Sgt. Pepper*, they introduced the concept album, which made a record a single extended statement rather than simply a collection of individual songs. They changed the appearance of albums, by having English pop artists Peter Blake and Richard Hamilton create the covers of *Sgt. Pepper* and the *White Album*, respectively. And for a vast audience in the ‘60s and afterwards, the Beatles created the sound of an era: as the American classical composer Aaron Copland observed, “When people ask to recreate the mood of the sixties, they will play Beatle music.”¹²¹

Craftsmen and Artists

The practices and attitudes of Golden Era songwriters stemmed in large part from their recognition of the role of their work, for their songs were nearly always created in response to the needs of musical comedy scripts that had been written before composers or lyricists ever

became involved. Early on, songwriters accepted as a test of quality that their songs should not disrupt the continuity of the play, and over time the integration of songs into the plot, and their role in developing characters, came to be considered increasingly important criteria for a songwriter's success. Irving Berlin and Cole Porter were among the master songwriters who produced songs intended for the voices of specific actors. Even as an undergraduate in college, when he was writing the score for a fraternity musical, Porter asked the director: "Tell me whom you select for different parts, and I can write fitting songs."¹²² In 1932, Fred Astaire hesitated to accept a role in *The Gay Divorce*, because he was unsure of singing "Night and Day" successfully, but Porter convinced him that the song was tailored to his strengths. As Gerald Mast explained, "One reason 'Night and Day' uses a single note eighty-one times is that G was a particularly good note for Astaire. One reason the song uses its insistent rhythms and half-tone modulations is that Astaire was a master of rhythmic punctuation and melodic modulation."¹²³ Porter's judgment was vindicated by the great popular and critical success of his score, as Astaire acknowledged that *Gay Divorce* "came to be known as the 'Night and Day' show," and Irving Berlin wrote to Porter that "I am mad about 'Night and Day' and I think it is your high spot."¹²⁴

In contrast, Bob Dylan, John Lennon, and Paul McCartney were the leading figures in creating a new model, in which the writer of popular songs would also be the performer. Instead of a craftsman producing material to be interpreted by an artist, the creation of the song would now be an integral part of the final work of art. Thus in 1978, when asked to define what he did, Dylan declared "I'm an artist. I try to create art."¹²⁵ He was not concerned with anyone else's voice: "My songs were written with me in mind."¹²⁶ Lennon considered his mature songs to be intellectual contributions, not mere decorations: "I'm interested in concepts and philosophies. I am not interested in wallpaper, which most music is."¹²⁷

In keeping with their view of themselves as craftsmen, Golden Era songwriters prided themselves on their humility and avoidance of pretension. Thus the highest tribute Jerome Kern could pay to his fellow composer Irving Berlin was to explain that “He doesn’t attempt to stuff the public’s ears with pseudo-original, ultra modernism, but he honestly absorbs the vibrations emanating from the people, manners and life of his time, and in turn, gives these impressions back to the world –simplified, clarified, glorified.”¹²⁸ Similarly Porter, whose work was routinely described as sophisticated, would protest that “I’ve worked like a dog to keep all that [‘sophisticated’] implies out of my music.”¹²⁹ The Golden Era songwriters thus considered their greatest obligation to be to their audience, but the same would not necessarily be true of their conceptual successors. When asked in 1965 whom he was writing and singing for, Dylan responded “Not writing and singing for anybody, to tell you the truth.”¹³⁰ His obligations were limited: “I have no responsibility to anybody except myself.”¹³¹ Lennon confessed that “I always wrote about me when I could... I like first person music.”¹³² Putting false modesty aside, Lennon explained that he was a genius: “It isn’t egomania. It’s a fact. If somebody gave me a pair of glasses that makes me see through walls, I can’t help it.”¹³³

Berlin’s approach to composing was to strive for simplicity through a repeated process of refinement. The writer Anita Loos recalled sitting with Berlin as he worked: “He would go over and over a lyric until it seemed perfect to my ears. Then he’d scrap the whole thing and begin over again. When I asked Irving what was wrong, he invariably said, ‘It isn’t *simple* enough.’”¹³⁴ Dylan’s method of composition during his peak years owed little to revision, but was instead indebted to Rimbaud’s belief that the artist should systematically derange his own senses.¹³⁵ He would smoke marijuana, and write as quickly as possible: “The best songs to me –my best songs –are songs which are written very quickly... Just about as much time as it takes to write it down

is about as long as it takes to write it.”¹³⁶ Paul McCartney explained that *Sgt. Pepper*, which he considered the Beatles’ greatest achievement, was not the product of drudgery: “Whatever *Pepper* amounted to, call it wisdom, call it a vision, call it what you like, it didn’t come out of a great struggle. It came out of a great party we were having.”¹³⁷

Berlin and his fellow Golden Era songwriters dismissed Dylan and the Beatles with their strongest term of contempt, referring to them as the “unprofessionals.”¹³⁸ Yet in light of the contrasting aesthetic of the younger songwriters, the insult held little sting, for the very qualities Berlin and the other experimental songwriters derided as amateurish were prized by the younger conceptual songwriters as the secret of their success. When an interviewer in 1986 referred to the epoch-making music he had created in the mid-‘60s, Dylan responded, “I did that accidentally.”¹³⁹ Dylan consistently maintained that his songwriting was not a career: “In my mind it’s never really been seriously a profession... It’s been more confessional than professional.”¹⁴⁰ And in his best Liverpudlian diction, John Lennon explained why he often composed at the piano, which by his own admission he played worse than the guitar: “I surprise meself, you know.”¹⁴¹

Footnotes

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3. Woollcott, *The Story of Irving Berlin*, Chaps. 2-5.
4. Woollcott, *The Story of Irving Berlin*, p.214; William McBrien, *Cole Porter* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), p.200.
5. Philip Furia, *Irving Berlin* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), p. 47; Laurence Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer* (New York: Viking, 1990), pp. 67-68.
6. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, p. 68.
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10. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, p. 66.
11. Jablonski, *Irving Berlin*, p. 313.
12. Jody Rosen, *White Christmas* (New York: Scribner, 2002), p.22.
13. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, p. 77.
14. Jablonski, *Irving Berlin*, p. 290.
15. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, p. 46.
16. Kimball and Emmet, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, p.4.
17. Kimball and Emmet, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, p.31.
18. Kimball and Emmet, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, pp. 231-32.
19. Rosen, *White Christmas*, p. 35.

20. Rosen, *White Christmas*, p. 13.
21. Kimball and Emmet, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, pp. 322-23.
22. Rosen, *White Christmas*, pp. 5-8.
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24. He had probably written the song two years earlier; Rosen, *White Christmas*, p. 17-18.
25. Rosen, *White Christmas*, p. 4.
26. Furia, *Irving Berlin*, p.204.
27. "I Sleep Easier Now;" Robert Kimball, ed., *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), p. 291.
28. George Eells, *The Life that Late He Led* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1967), pp. 11-18.
29. Eells, *The Life that Late He Led*, p. 19.
30. William McBrien, *Cole Porter* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), Chap. 2.
31. Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, p.39.
32. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, pp. 54-55.
33. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 75.
34. Richard Rodgers, *Musical Stages* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 88.
35. Stephen Critron, *Noel and Cole* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 79.
36. Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, pp. 72-73.
37. Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, p.120.
38. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 171.
39. Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, p.118.
40. David Galenson, "From 'White Christmas' to *Sgt. Pepper*: The Conceptual Revolution in Popular Music," *Historical Methods*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (2009), Table A1, p. 30.

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42. Kimball, *The Complete Lyrics of Cole Porter*, p. 133.
43. Eells, *The Life that Late He Led*, p. 51.
44. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 364.
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55. Dylan, *Lyrics*, p. 53.
56. Howard Sounes, *Down the Highway* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), p. 135.
57. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, p. 16.
58. Dylan, *Lyrics*, pp. 56, 59.
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60. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, pp. 16, 26.

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63. Shelton, *No Direction Home*, pp. 343-44.
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72. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, pp. 259-60.
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74. Sounes, *Down the Highway*, p. 122.
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80. "Strawberry Fields Forever;" *The Beatles Lyrics* (Milwaukee: Hal Leonard Corporation, 1996), p. 129.
81. Jonathan Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love* (New York: Harmony Books, 2007), pp. 59-66.

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88. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, p. 137.
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93. Ian Inglis, ed., *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 99. The concentration could be considerably greater in particular cases. So for example in "P.S. I Love You," recorded in 1962, the three words *I, love, and you* account for more than 40% of the total; Campbell and Murphy, *Things We Said Today*, p. 43.
94. Campbell and Murphy, *Things We Said Today*, p xxv.
95. Kenneth Womack, *Long and Winding Roads* (New York: Continuum, 2007), p. 59.
96. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, p. 152; *The Oxford English Dictionary*, Second ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vol. 2, p. 35.
97. Ray Coleman, *Lennon* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1984), p. 290.
98. Wenner, *Lennon Remembers*, p. 126.

99. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 178-79.
100. Campbell and Murphy, *Things We Said Today*, p. 32.
101. Steven Stark, *Meet the Beatles* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 192.
102. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, p. 157.
103. Mark Hertsgaard, *A Day in the Life* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1995), p. 204.
104. Michael Frontani, *The Beatles* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), p. 132.
105. Walter Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: "Revolver" through the "Anthology"* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 32.
106. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 184-85.
107. Everett, *The Beatles as Musicians: "Revolver" through the "Anthology,"* p. 33.
108. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 142-43.
109. Inglis, *The Beatles, Popular Music, and Society*, p. 99.
110. Hoye, *VHI's Greatest Albums*; Levy, *Rolling Stone*.
111. Gould, *Can't Buy Me Love*, pp. 58-59.
112. Martin, *All You Need Is Ears*, pp. 137-39.
113. Sawyers, *Read the Beatles*, p. 247.
114. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 152-53.
115. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 192-93.
116. Womack, *Long and Winding Roads*, p. 112.
117. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, pp. 5, 141.
118. Womack, *Long and Winding Roads*, p. 304.
119. Sawyers, *Read the Beatles*, pp. 249-50.
120. David Sterritt, ed., *Jean-Luc Godard Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), p. 15.

121. Frontani, *The Beatles*, p. 156.
122. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 45.
123. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 146; Mast, *Can't Help Singin'*, pp. 42, 194.
124. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 146, 149-50.
125. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, p. 224.
126. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, p. 381.
127. Wenner, *Lennon Remembers*, p. 162.
128. Woollcott, *The Story of Irving Berlin*, p. 215.
129. McBrien, *Cole Porter*, p. 200.
130. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, p. 41.
131. Shelton, *No Direction Home*, p. 293.
132. Wenner, *Lennon Remembers*, p. 29.
133. Sheff, *All We Are Saying*, p. 158.
134. Bergreen, *As Thousands Cheer*, p. 142.
135. Dylan, *Chronicles*, p. 288.
136. David Hajdu, *Positively 4th Street* (New York: North Point Press, 2001), pp. 233-34; Dylan, *Younger Than That Now*, p. 266.
137. Sawyers, *Read the Beatles*, p. 248.
138. Rosen, *White Christmas*, p. 182.
139. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, p. 336.
140. Cott, *Bob Dylan*, pp. 336, 384; Dylan, *Chronicles*, p. 227.
141. Wenner, *Lennon Remembers*, p. 115.