Kenneth L. Campbell

THE BEATLES AND THE 1960s

Reception, Revolution and Social Change

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BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

BLOOMSBURY ACADEMIC
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA
29 Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2, Ireland

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First published in Great Britain 2022

Cover design: Terry Woodley
Cover image: Statue of the Beatles at Liverpool pierhead.
John Davidson Photos / Alamy Stock Photo

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Campbell, Kenneth L., author.
Title: The Beatles and the 1960s : reception, revolution, and social change / Kenneth L. Campbell.
Description: [1.] | New York : Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. |
Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2020052557 (print) | LCCN 2020052558 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781350107434 (hardback) | ISBN 9781350107441 (paperback) |
ISBN 9781350107458 (ebook) | ISBN 9781350107465 (epub)
Subjects: LCSH: Beatles. | Rock music–1961–1970–History and criticism. | Nineteen sixties.
Classification: LCC ML421.B4 C34 2021 (print) | LCC ML421.B4 (ebook) |
DDC 782.42166092/2–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020052557
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2020052558

ISBN: HB: 978-1-3501-0743-4
PB: 978-1-3501-0744-1
ePDF: 978-1-3501-0745-8
eBook: 978-1-3501-0746-5

Typeset by Newgen KnowledgeWorks Pvt. Ltd., Chennai, India

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For Millie

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank Emily Drewe, Abigail Lane, and Beatriz Lopez for believing in this book and for their support throughout the writing of it. Special thanks to Tedi Pascarelli for help with the research and for reading the entire manuscript and her valuable and thoughtful comments and editorial corrections. Thanks also to Melissa Davis, who read a large portion of the manuscript and provided so much encouragement and helpful feedback. In addition, much gratitude to Kalyani and the Newgen KnowledgeWorks team for the fantastic job they have done on the copy editing and production of the book.

At Monmouth University, Ken Womack offered great support and many good recommendations; he has also given me the opportunity to write about the Beatles in several of his edited books. His own work on the Beatles has provided much insight and inspiration. I am incredibly grateful to Melissa Ziobro for serving as my oral history guru and all of her helpful guidance and advice. I would also like to thank Chris DeRosa, Maryanne Rhett, Hettie Williams, Judy Nye, and Bea Rogers, particularly for their support of my courses on the Beatles. Thanks to Owen Flanagan for his musical expertise. Sherry Xie always does an amazing job of tracking down all of the books I need through Interlibrary Loan. Beth Meszaros helped me talk through the possibilities for this project before I ever started working on it; I have also benefited from the numerous research presentations she gave over the years to my Beatles classes. I would be remiss if I did not say thank you to all of the students in those classes over the past ten years, as well as my peer learning assistants, especially Sarah Lewis who took the course as a freshman and worked as my PLA for the next three years. Chris Ellwood helped me with the student newspaper archive at Monmouth. Finally, Monmouth University generously supported this book with a Grant-in-Aid for Creativity and a Faculty Summer Fellowship in 2020 so I could finish it on time.

Oliver Lovesey gave me some great ideas and helped me formulate my thoughts on the Beatles at Woodstock; a longer treatment of that subject appears in a volume he edited for *Popular Music and Society* in 2019. Robert Brosh generously shared his recent book *Rock History: The Musician's Perspective* with me at a key stage in the process. Walter Everett kindly granted me permission to quote from his remarks at a conference in September 2019 commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of *Abbey Road*. His books have been a special source of inspiration.

I could not have written this book without the willing participation of all of the people I have interviewed or supplied me with their remembrances of the Beatles and their experience in the 1960s. These include the following: Mark Angellini, Claude Assante, Roy Auerbach, Jeff Ayers, Jane Barnes, Ivan Bell, Tom Blazuki, Ross Bloomfield, Alan Chevat, Julius D'Amelio, Artie Doskow, Rebecca Duncan, Ed Eichler, Bobby and

Nick Ercoline, Marbie Foster, Stan Green, Michael Halbreich, Robin Levine, Michael McEntarfer, Lenny Mandel, Ruth Mandel, Tom Noce, Janet Nugent, Peter Orenzoff, Len Pniewski, David Scher, Bob Schiffer, Allen Sorrentino, and James Vignapiano. In addition, it was great to interview Wade Lawrence, the director and senior curator at the museum at Bethel Woods, at the site of the original Woodstock Music and Arts Festival. I especially want to thank Larry Kane for talking with me and contributing a great perspective and unique insights based on his personal experiences with the Beatles. Eraldine Williams-Shakespeare and Debora Graas helped me with the transcriptions of the interviews that I conducted for the book.

I would also like to thank my family and friends, especially my friends, Ken (Hans) and Clare Fahnestock, for helping me to keep my sanity during a global pandemic.

My wife, Millie, to whom I have dedicated this book, used to sing, "Do You Want to Know a Secret?" to me when we were teenagers and deserves my lasting thanks for so many more wonderful memories in my life.

INTRODUCTION

This book places the Beatles' career and music into the context of the political and popular culture of the 1960s, with special attention to how listeners at the time would have heard and interpreted their songs and albums. This book also examines the complex interactions between the Beatles' lives, songs, and times. Taking for the most part a year-by-year approach, each chapter views the changing sensibility of the Beatles songs, less with a view to their internal development as artists, an approach skillfully employed by Walter Everett, Kenneth Womack, and others, and more with a view to the external influences absorbed, consciously or unconsciously, from the culture surrounding them. For the purposes of this book, I have conducted interviews with about three dozen individuals who were born between the years 1949 and 1957, almost all of whom were at least 12 or 13 when the Beatles first broke through—in 1963 in Britain and 1964 in the United States. I have also consulted numerous primary sources, including many contemporary reviews and articles, to gauge further the reception of the Beatles in the 1960s.

The Beatles are the most iconic rock/pop band in history and consequently, in all likelihood, the most written about as well. Numerous biographers and writers have scrutinized and detailed every aspect of their lives as individuals and a group, as well as the music and lyrics of every song. Thanks to the work of Bob Spitz, Mark Lewisohn, and others, we do not need a book that aims at uncovering new details of their day-to-day lives or personal histories. Nor is there any shortage of analytical works on the Beatles, including some excellent ones by Jonathan Gould, Steven Stark, Devin McKinney, Kenneth Womack, and Rob Sheffield. However, the 1960s was a complex and controversial time and the role the Beatles played in it so important that there will always be room for further thought and reflections on the topic. Furthermore, each period needs constant reevaluation based on how our understanding and perception of the period changes with the times. Today, we are living at a time in which Britain has voted to abandon the European Union (though the details of that exodus are still in the process of being worked out) and democratic, cosmopolitan norms are being challenged throughout Europe, the United States, and the world. Much of the rise of these conservative trends and acceptance of authoritarian leaders represents a backlash to the changes in the values and ideals that occurred in the 1960s, inspired by a revolutionary change in youth consciousness in which the Beatles played a very large part. This book represents an attempt to reevaluate the lives, career, and legacy of the Beatles by asking some new and re-asking some old questions about the lives, history, music, and times of the Beatles.

This book therefore focuses on the interpretation and reaction to the Beatles' work by a generation that not only shaped the political culture of the 1960s but also embodied

values and ideals that inspired a revolutionary change in consciousness for decades to come. Indeed, we are still living with the consequences of that change, which repulses as many as it attracts, contributing heavily to the culture wars experienced in Western democracies at the beginning of the third decade of the twenty-first century. The Beatles are very much a part of that story, making their relevance as great today as at any point in the past, aside from the enduring appeal of the music itself. Not just another biography of the Beatles, this book takes a fresh look at the role this iconic group played in the culture wars of the 1960s, and therefore of our own time.

This book places a special emphasis on audience reception theory, including a look at some of the reviews of and reactions to their work on college campuses during the revolutionary decade of the 1960s. It argues that contemporary events had a far greater impact on the evolution of the Beatles' song writing and lives than people generally recognize. Throughout the book, I will be exploring the triangular relationship between the news, the Beatles, and their audience.

Figure 0.1 illustrates the ways in which the Beatles' work does not exist in a vacuum, nor is the relationship with their fans merely a two-way street. The Beatles received feedback from their audience, all the while absorbing the impact of current events and changes in the culture of the 1960s. The Beatles' audience had lives independent of their Beatle fandom and were thus affected as well by current events and social and cultural changes. In addition, the Beatles themselves existed as news; their albums, lives, and words proved capable of generating important headlines, just as did their audience's protests, demonstrations, civil rights marches, and perpetuation of the counterculture. Young people in the 1960s made news, as much as the news affected them. This triangular relationship made for a period of dynamic and rapid change that did much to define the nature of the period in which the Beatles thrived as a group. One notorious example that illustrates well the nature of this triangular relationship occurred in 1969 when rumors that Paul McCartney had died became a news item in its own right. This story in turn had an impact on the Beatles and certainly on Beatles fans, who in turn did much to perpetuate the rumor and reinforce its importance as a news story (see Chapter 10).

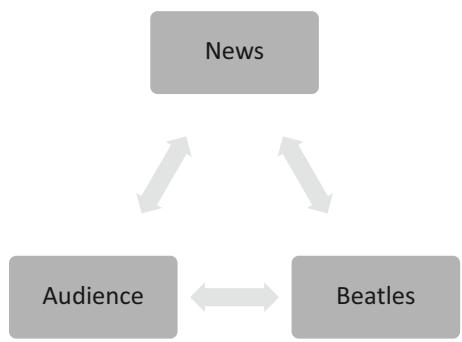

Figure 0.1 *Triangular relationship between the news, the Beatles, and their audience.*

In addition to the plethora of biographies and other books about the Beatles, a number of publications have featured reminiscences of Beatles fans. For example, in 1982 Marc Catone solicited letters from Beatles fans and published them anonymously, giving only the initials and hometown of each writer, in a volume called *As I Write This Letter*.[1] Such sources are too valuable to pass up for any author writing about the reception of the Beatles, but I have tried not to rely too heavily on them. My interviews, most conducted in 2019, have a different perspective from people of the same generation as Catone's epistlers, looking back not at a distance of ten or fifteen years, but at a distance of fifty years. Both perspectives are valuable and needed to assess the reception of the Beatles, but we can certainly expect people to have gained some additional wisdom and perspective as they have aged, and perhaps even to see the period of their youth in a clearer relief than when they were closer to it. In addition, instead of soliciting responses, having the opportunity to interview these individuals gave me an opportunity to ask probing questions for them to consider that might have helped them remember things they might not have thought of on their own. The reader will find these perspectives scattered throughout the book and can judge how much they contribute to it.

In addition, those writing on Beatlemania tend to focus on the enthusiasm and large number of female fans of the group at the height of their popularity from 1963 to 1965. This book does include the perspectives of some of those Beatlemaniacs but also includes the perspectives of male fans, many of whom the Beatles affected just as profoundly, even if male fans did not display their feelings in the same ways that girls did. To say this is not to diminish the revolutionary ways in which young females expressed themselves in public, which they did to a degree unheard of at the time. It is merely to assert that the Beatles exerted an amazing influence on an entire generation of baby boomers that included both males and females, an influence that did not end in 1965 after the first wave of Beatlemania had peaked. In fact, in many ways their influence became deeper, stronger, and more profound in the second half of the decade. The Beatles' lyrics became more serious, their music more diverse, and their lives more complicated, just as at the same time their fans became more mature and looked for something in a rock band besides pop love songs, no matter how catchy and well-crafted those of the Beatles might have been.

The Beatles drew their inspiration from a variety of sources already present in the culture of 1960s Britain and America, and the fusion of so many different popular trends in one rock band helps to account for their becoming such a cultural touchstone for so many people. Even those individuals in their teens or early twenties in the 1960s who did not consider themselves particularly avid fans of the Beatles could not escape their influence. The Beatles' music was ubiquitous, but they affected the culture in so many other ways, from their hairstyles to the controversy that arose when John Lennon remarked in a 1966 interview that the Beatles were more popular than Jesus. Even people who did not own a Beatles record would have been aware of the rumor that Paul McCartney had died.

The Beatles transmitted their influence to their fans and the culture at large in a variety of formats in addition to the records they released, further enhancing their

visibility and impact. They gave interviews to television and print reporters, as well as disk jockeys. Early in their career, they gave hundreds of live performances at clubs and assembly halls, which gave way to concerts at larger venues like arenas and stadiums when they began touring internationally in 1964. They performed on variety television shows such as *Sunday Night at the Palladium* in England and the *Ed Sullivan Show* in the United States. Especially in the early years, they frequently gave guest performances on the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). They even had a cartoon series based (very loosely) on their lives and exploits. Their images appeared on tons of merchandise (for which the Beatles received very little money). Perhaps most importantly, they made films that became almost as much a part of their legacy as their music, starting with *A Hard Day's Night* in 1964, and continuing with *Help!* (1965), *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967), the animated *Yellow Submarine* (1968), and at the end of their career, *Let It Be* (1970).

The fact that the Beatles' career occurred at a time of cultural revolution and social change magnified their importance. The 1960s was a decade of despair and hope, but above all hope. Racism and discrimination still flourished, but the Civil Rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr and the legislation it inspired provided hope that African Americans would have more opportunity and greater equality in the future. The Vietnam War loomed large over the decade and sent tens of thousands of young American men to their deaths while inflicting extensive damage, destruction, and death on Vietnam and its people. However, it also provoked widespread protests and demonstrations, not only in the United States but also in Britain and around the world, leading to the hope that the younger generation would bring about not just an end to that war but to all wars. Britain faced the loss of an empire, the waning of its international stature, and the relative decline of its economy, but the Beatles provided a huge economic boost (for which Queen Elizabeth II awarded them the prestigious designation of Members of the British Empire). The Beatles also provided hope that Britain could triumph culturally on the global stage if not in other ways. The Cold War not only contained within it the threat that at any moment nuclear war might wipe out a significant portion of humanity but also implied the possibility that war would prove too costly for either the United States or the Soviet Union to contemplate ever actually using nuclear weapons. In addition, young people hoped to create a new society based on ideals that rejected the premises of both capitalism and communism but rather on simple concepts like peace and love.

The Beatles did much to romanticize these concepts and help perpetuate the idea of a counterculture that became so central to the ethos of the 1960s generation and reached its apex at the Woodstock Music and Art Festival in Bethel, New York, in August 1969. When they arrived in New York City for the first time on February 7, 1964, the Fab Four immediately infused a breath of fresh air into a country still reeling from the assassination of President John F. Kennedy the previous November and in the midst of a struggle in the American Congress over proposed Civil Rights legislation. The response the group received during their first visit to the United States was unprecedented and amazed even the Beatles themselves. American teenagers in the 1950s had thrilled to the

first wave of rock and roll music, which appealed to their rebellious side, but now teenage girls were running down streets after the Beatles, trespassing, crossing police barriers, and generally acting out of control with impunity. The Beatles had inadvertently set off a revolution, even though at the time they mostly sang upbeat and catchy love songs such as "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You." As the decade went on their lyrics became more thoughtful and their music more ethereal, tapping into more adult concerns even as they reflected the psychedelic drug culture emerging in the second half of the decade. For example, they addressed the loneliness and alienation in modern society in "Eleanor Rigby," the bizarre imagery associated with acid trips in "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," and the ominous political radicalism stirring in youth around the world by 1968 in "Revolution." In the latter, they disavowed violent revolution and indicated they wanted to be part of the solution, not the problem. The solutions they offered revolved around those simple concepts of peace and love.

In one of his books, Beatles' biographer Philip Norman referred to the Beatles as "the Swinging Sixties incarnate."[2] While this moniker would carry positive overtones for some people, it would have an entirely pejorative meaning for others. Some people found the social changes and revolutionary atmosphere of the 1960s exhilarating, while others found them simply maddening. At the time, as a part of those changes, the Beatles inspired division and controversy. Yet we have now reached a point where almost everyone seems able to agree on the greatness and likeability of the Beatles, who have benefited from a kind of generic contemporary branding, which has taken them out of their historical context and sanitized them so that they can appeal to everyone from toddlers to the elderly. Even the frequently confrontational and irreverent John Lennon has benefited from the halo effect of his murder in December 1980. You rarely hear anyone speak of Lennon except in the most reverential terms anymore.

Meanwhile, fans of their music turn on the Beatles Channel on Sirius/XM radio or create their own playlists on Spotify or Apple Music and hit shuffle. Each of these listening formats has the potential to create new and interesting juxtapositions of their songs. There is nothing wrong with people having the freedom to listen to music in whatever ways they choose and the reordering of songs from their original placement on albums even has benefits and allows for comparisons that might spark interesting insights and ideas. For example, the *Love* soundtrack for the Cirque de Soleil show of the same name contains combinations of songs from different stages of the Beatles' career and reveals some pleasantly surprising musical effects and compatibilities between certain songs. However, if we are to understand the Beatles in the context of their times and comprehend what they meant to the people of that time, we have to return to the history and music of the period to reconsider their audience's response to listening to Beatles songs and albums they were hearing for the first time. To do so, as Julie Andrews sang in *The Sound of Music*, we have to "start at the very beginning"—at a time before the Beatles rose out of obscurity to help define a decade and shape a generation that would change the world.

CHAPTER 1
POSTWAR BRITAIN, AMERICAN ROCK AND ROLL, AND THE BIRTH OF THE BEATLES

Growing Up in Postwar Liverpool: The Geographical and Historical Context

On October 5, 1956, the *Empress of Britain*, the flagship of the Canadian Pacific line, prepared to set sail for Canada from the northeastern English port of Liverpool. In a wind analysis for the North Irish Sea published that same month, G. Reynolds provided an explanation of what made Liverpool, in particular, prone to uncommonly high-force winds.

> The physical explanation of these high gusts at Liverpool … must be that almost all abnormally strong winds there occur with a wind direction of 270" or 280". Winds from this direction blow approximately 4 mi over land before reaching the anemograph [a device that measures wind] (at low water, more than 6 mi overland owing to drying sandbanks), a greater overland fetch than at any of the other stations for their most prevalent gale direction. This, together with its hill-top position, would make for a more turbulent airstream at Liverpool.[1]

One of those gale-force winds slammed the *Empress* into a concrete wall before it could get out of the dock. Despite the loss of some rivet heads and some scraped-off paint, the *Empress* managed to make it out of port, though at least ten other ships experienced delays because of the hazardous wind conditions, while others remained offshore unable to enter the Mersey River that runs through the city. This episode, which made the *New York Times*, would have been an important story for a port city like Liverpool, which largely owed its existence to the shipping industry.

No one grew up in Liverpool without an awareness of the docks and the importance of shipping to their hometown. Liverpool in the 1950s was far from its heyday as the major hub for receiving cotton and exporting manufactured textiles from the mills of northern industrial towns such as Manchester when British industry made the country the leading power in the world in the nineteenth century, but shipping was still central to the city's livelihood. Much of the city revolved around the docks, with a massive infrastructure having risen up over time to support them and the people who worked there, from churches to railways and, by the 1950s, tramlines and bus routes. George Harrison, one of the original Beatles, described the Mersey as "very prominent with

Figure 1.1 *The Pier Head, a riverside location in the city center of Liverpool, Merseyside, England, 1952. It is part of the Liverpool Maritime Mercantile City UNESCO World Heritage Site. This photo includes a trio of landmarks collectively known as The Three Graces and comprising of Royal Liver Building, Cunard Building, and Port of Liverpool Building. Courtesy of Getty Images.*

all the ferry boats, and the big steamers coming in from America or Ireland."[2] Gerry Marsden, lead singer and songwriter for the popular Liverpool group Gerry & the Pacemakers, wrote one of his best-selling hits about the "Ferry 'Cross the Mersey." The song is a romantic ode to "the place I love."

The fondness Marsden expressed for his hometown is understandable, but it did not quite convey an accurate representation of the status of the city in the late 1950s and early 1960s. When one visits Liverpool today, with its thriving pedestrian mall downtown, its polished image, its redeveloped docks, and its lovely Beatles tours to the sites associated with their lives and immortalized in their songs, it is easy to view the past and the city of the Beatles' youth unrealistically and idealistically. Liverpool, which itself had eclipsed older cities like Bristol and Chester during its rise to economic prominence during the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had suffered a steep economic decline after the First World War, which the Great Depression of the 1930s only exacerbated. These harsh economic times preceded the Second World War, which inured Liverpudlians to further hardships and contributed to a sense of solidarity and pride of place such as people customarily cultivate when they find their city and

country under attack. Liverpool suffered particularly heavily from Hitler's bombers who launched their opening salvos on the city in August 1940. Liverpool experienced sixty-eight air raids and heard over five hundred air raid warnings between the first on August 17, 1940, and January 10, 1942.[3] Tim Riley points out that "Hitler dropped 454 tons of explosives and 1,029 tons of incendiaries on the town, more than the Luftwaffe dropped on any other British city that month [August 1940], including London."[4] Harrison recalled, "Even until the day in 1963 when I left Liverpool there were still many patches full of rubble from direct hits."[5]

Liverpool, like the rest of Britain, took time to recover from the devastation wreaked by the war. Rationing was commonplace, housing shortages abounded, and through the 1950s most Liverpool households did not have an indoor toilet (including the childhood homes of three of the four Beatles), let alone a television or an automobile. A survey of 12.4 million homes in England and Wales done in 1951 revealed that "1.9 million had three rooms or less; that 4.8 million had no fixed bath; and that nearly 2.8 million did not provide exclusive use of a lavatory."[6] As for rationing, many people who grew up in the 1950s, including Keith Richards and Cynthia Lennon, frequently mention their inability to buy sweets as one of the enduring memories of their childhood. By the late 1950s rationing ended, perhaps teaching British youth something about delayed gratification.

Liverpool, like the rest of Britain, would also have had a clearly demarcated class structure based on a variety of factors that went beyond mere economic status, including regional accents, level of education, and occupation. The Beatles provide an excellent illustration of this: Paul McCartney relished his experience at school and saw it as opening up new worlds for him, so he later came off as more middle class, despite his working-class background. John Lennon, the more reluctant student, grew up in a much more comfortable middle-class environment, but always came across as someone with working-class roots. Liverpool was an ethnically diverse city, with a large Irish population dating to the potato famine of the mid-nineteenth century, as well as sizable numbers of Welsh, Scots, and Italians, with separate Polish and German communities as well. By the 1950s, these groups had largely adopted a working-class identity, with class more of a defining characteristic than ethnicity. Both Paul and John had Irish ancestors, but do not seem to have identified much with their Celtic heritage. However, by the late 1950s class did not provide the only dividing line within British society, for a combination of fashion, language, attitudes, and especially taste in music had created an increasingly large divide between teenagers and their elders.

In late July 1956, British prime minister Anthony Eden, after the Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal, bungled his way into a diplomatic crisis that inflicted incalculable damage to British prestige. It brought home an inescapable reality that would have affected even those who at that point had largely reconciled themselves to Britain's postwar loss of status as an imperial power. It also highlighted the dividing line that had become clear to those on both sides of it in 1950s Britain: those who could remember the Second World War and those born after about 1940 who for the most part could not. In fact, Keith Richards wrote in his memoir, "The main effect of the war on me was just the phrase, 'Before the War.'" It might be difficult for anyone

who has studied the interwar period, scarred as it was by the lingering psychological and material effects of the First World War and hardships endured during the Depression, to understand why people in the 1950s would regard it at all favorably. That is, until one considers the even worse fears and deprivation experienced during the Second World War and the very real possibility that Britain might surrender or experience defeat at the hands of Hitler.

In John Osborne's 1957 play, *Look Back in Anger*, from which the "Angry Young Man" phenomenon in late-1950s English literature derived its name, the lead female character says to her father, "You're hurt because everything has changed. Jimmy is hurt because everything is the same." Her father is upset, because before—and during—the war he and his generation could cling to the vestiges of British power and prestige as providing meaning to their lives and affirming Britain's place in the world. Indian independence, which came in 1947, and the gradual diminution of the Empire thereafter, combined with Britain's humiliation in the Suez Crisis, had taken that away. It was a strong reminder that both the United States and the Soviet Union had eclipsed Britain as a world power. Cold War tensions between these two powers and the menacing threat of imminent nuclear annihilation only further antagonized the younger generation and contributed to both its anger and its apathy.

The bomb easily led to a live-for-today mentality, and the anger boiled over in a general attitude of revolt among British teenagers that belies the image of the 1950s cultivated over the ensuing decades as a period of placidity and conformity, especially in the United States. Yet it was from the United States that British teenagers took their cue. Consider the following exchange involving the teenage protagonist of Colin MacInnes's 1959 novel, *Absolute Beginners*:

> "Listen," I said to him. "No one in the world under twenty is interested in that bomb of yours one little bit."
>
> "Ah," said this diplomatic cat, his face coming all over crafty, "you may not be, here in Europe I mean, but what of young peoples in the Soviet Union and the USA?" "Young people in the Soviet Union and the USA," I told him, clearly and very slowly, "don't give a single lump of cat's shit for the bomb."
>
> "Man, it's only you adult numbers who want to destroy one another. And I must say, sincerely, speaking, speaking as what's called a minor, I'd not be sorry if you did: except that you'd probably kill a few millions of us innocent kiddos in the process."[7]

MacInnes's hero, based in London, is a jazz aficionado, who haunts the jazz clubs of the capital and loves Ella Fitzgerald, "who would soothe a volcano," and Billie Holiday, "who sends me even more than Ella does."[8] Meanwhile, teenagers in Liverpool and elsewhere were thunderstruck by a different kind of American music: rock and roll.

In Liverpool, in particular, the hardscrabble existence led by many in the grimy industrial city provides one explanation for the appeal to the youth of American skiffle and rock and roll steeped in the blues and country and western music emanating from

the hot fields, dusty towns, and intolerable prisons of the American south. Teenagers might not have had television (only about 30 percent of British households did), but they did have radio, which many of them used at night to tune into Radio Luxembourg, which broadcast the latest rock and roll music from the United States.

One wonders if the storm that hit Liverpool in October 1956 or the damage to the most important ship of a major shipping line provoked much reaction among the teenage residents of the city. If it did, it more likely than not provided some measure of excitement at a time when British teenagers were finding life particularly dull. It is possible that John Lennon and Paul McCartney would have discussed the weather that day with their friends and family. Had the incident occurred a year later, they might have discussed it with each other after meeting for the first time the following summer. Although no one could have known it at the time, that meeting would have far-reaching consequences for Britain, the United States, and the world. Their partnership and the impact of the group they would form still lay ahead. When John and Paul met, although still quite young, they both already had a past, as did the two young men who would later join their group. Both the city they came from and the specific childhood experiences of Lennon, McCartney, George Harrison, and Richard Starkey, aka Ringo Starr, had shaped them as individuals and affected significantly what each would eventually bring to the group that later became known as the Beatles. Moreover, like the *Empress of Britain*, no prevailing headwinds would prevent them from getting out of Liverpool either.

Origin Story # 1: The Beatles Reflect on Their Own Childhoods

The stories people tell about their own lives always have a bit of myth to them; memories prove unreliable, even when we completely convince ourselves they are true. However, we mostly forget details—names, dates, a particular sequence of events; we place people at a scene who were not there or forget people who were. Occasionally, we might convince ourselves that something happened that did not, or that something did not happen that did, but if we remember getting hurt in a car accident, the death of a loved one, getting married or divorced, we can be sure that those events happened, barring a more severe form of amnesia. We all tell our friends, families, romantic partners, ourselves narratives of our lives that conform to some kind of pattern, that help us explain our successes and failures, and reveal something of who we are and who we want to be. Celebrities are no different than anyone else, really, in this regard, but they perhaps see themselves as having more at stake in terms of the image they want to project to the public. All of these are reasons, not to dismiss the Beatles' later reflections on their childhoods but to regard them as critically as we would with anyone else and to bear the above points in mind when reading this section, which I have based on the Beatles' own words in printed sources and interviews, especially those compiled for *The Beatles Anthology*. Furthermore, the Beatles' reflections on their own childhood are, from the vantage point of being a Beatle, more than just individual memories—they are part of a larger story—an origin story and treated as such by everyone who writes about them. We can learn a

great deal about the Beatles and their later reception in the 1960s not just from learning about their childhoods but also from how they framed the narrative of their childhoods as the first origin story we will consider in connection with the band.

John Lennon had by far the most traumatic childhood of any of the four Beatles, even though Ringo suffered tremendously as a child and Paul experienced his own devastating loss with the early death of his mother. What made John's experience growing up almost unbelievably tragic owes primarily to his abandonment by both of his parents at a particularly young age. In one incident described especially well by Tim Riley, John's parents gave their 5-year-old son a choice between going to New Zealand with his father and remaining in Liverpool with his mother, with the prospect of never again seeing the parent he did not choose. John initially chose his father, before quickly reversing himself and staying with his mother, temporarily as it turned out, as she sent him to live with his aunt shortly thereafter. It is one thing to have a father leave, as Ringo's did, or a parent die, as Paul's mother did, but quite another for a young child from as early as he can remember to experience life through the prism of rejection by both parents. John himself said, "I was never really wanted," a feeling he linked to a longing for acceptance that he directly connected to his career as a Beatle. "The only reason I am a star is because of my repression," he said. This becomes a particularly key aspect of the Beatles' first origin story because, as important as each of the other Beatles were to the band's chemistry, history, and success, clearly without John Lennon there would have been no Beatles.

The question is, could the Beatles have existed if John lived what he called "a normal life"? John did not think so, saying, "Nothing would have driven me through all that if I was 'normal.'"[9] From the outside, it would not have appeared that John had it so bad. In fact, he grew up in a comfortable middle-class environment in the home of his mother's sister, his Aunt Mimi, and her husband, his Uncle George. John would later point out that he was the only Beatle who did not grow up in government-subsidized housing, something to which he and the others all attached some significance. As surrogate parents, Mimi and George seem to have not only treated John well but also brought him up in a literate and intellectually stimulating environment and encouraged his musical career when it came to that. John counted Lewis Carroll and Oscar Wilde among the most important literary influences from his childhood. Paul claimed Lewis Carroll as an influence of his own, one of the things that he and John had in common that helped forge the bond between them. John always saw himself as a rebel though, carrying through life a load of resentment that no amount of love or approval seemed to diminish. It is a stereotype to contrast the resentful, pessimistic John with the happy-go-lucky, optimistic Paul. This broad characterization does not do justice to the complexity of each person, but it survives because of the elements of truth within it. Even so, John had many positive memories from his childhood, including attending garden parties at Strawberry Field, an orphanage run by the Salvation Army, with his close friends Ivan Vaughan, Nigel Walley, and Pete Shotton.

Paul has admitted to being sentimental about his own childhood. He acknowledged that his family gave him a comfortable enough existence growing up, but affirmed, "We

were not rich by any means." Like many British families, his never owned a car, but the McCartneys did acquire a television, like many British households, around the time of Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1953.[10] Paul had many fond memories of his parents growing up, and the loss of his mother in October 1956 clearly devastated him, his brother, and his father, despite a taboo on open displays of grief among males. Nonetheless, Paul still had his father and brother, who both offered support and encouragement to the precocious musical genius. The McCartney household crackled with music of all sorts, and his father, a former entertainer himself who knew myriad songs, encouraged Paul to learn to play the trumpet and the piano, before rock and roll steered him in the direction of the guitar. The eclecticism of Paul's musical tastes and later compositions had its roots in the musical variety he heard as a child. Unlike the other Beatles, Paul enjoyed school, drawn to English and literature in particular. (John, although an avid reader at home, was a notoriously poor student.) Music drew Paul away from taking his other interests too far, however. According to Paul, "I nearly did very well at grammar school but I started to get interested in art instead of academic subjects. Then I started to see pictures of Elvis, and that started to pull me away from the academic path."[11]

George Harrison joined the Beatles while still virtually a child, which greatly affected his development, as well as his position within the group. If George had not joined the Beatles, or found success in another band, he would have undoubtedly followed a working-class profession for he hated school. At one point, he did train briefly for a career as an electrician, just as Ringo started to apprentice as an engineer at a local factory. Still, as much as George loathed school and recalled very few good memories about it, he said that he liked playing football and had a happy home life, with relatives constantly at the house and grown-up parties he longed to join a common occurrence. Music also featured prominently in the Harrison household, ranging from Bing Crosby on the radio to English music hall numbers playing on his parents' phonograph. Ringo had very few memories of his father, saying that he probably only saw him five times in his life, but he was not prone to the mawkishness that afflicted John when it came to the subject of parental abandonment. This was partly because Ringo's mother adored and doted on him from infancy, whereas John only developed a close and loving, if complicated, relationship with his mother during adolescence. This was also partly because John lost his mother when a car driven by an off duty police officer struck and killed her. Julia died just as she and John had started to grow close, reinforcing John's sense of hurt and abandonment, not to mention anger. Furthermore, Ringo grew up in an environment that did not encourage one to dwell on such feelings. "We were the last generation to be told, 'Just get on with it,'" he reflected. Paul recalled that "none of this sitting at home crying, after his mother died," before adding, "that would be recommended now, but not then."[12] John, of course, belonged to that generation as well and this attitude manifested itself, for example, in his stoic reaction to the death of his close friend, Stuart Sutcliffe. However, by the mid-1960s, John had begun to explore and express his feelings more in his music and his life, even more so with encouragement from his second wife, Yoko Ono, when they got together a few years later.